

# Sounding the Somme – Somme Starts

## Lesson Plan

---

Introduce the class to the Somme100 FILM project and Sounding the Somme. Discuss your forthcoming Somme100 FILM performance visit if applicable.

### 1. WW1 in brief

Generate a quick class discussion about WW1 – ascertain what pupils do or don't know. Create a mind map or list of facts / information gathered from the class on the whiteboard.

Explore the topic in full by:

- Using the Sounding the Somme WW1 Fact File
- Exploring the resources on the Sounding the Somme pages of the Somme100 FILM website
- Asking pupils to complete their own research

Complete the list or mind map by summarising the main points of WW1.

We are aware this is potentially a huge and complex task, so we have summarised it as follow:

- WW1 began in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century after years of distrust between European nations.
- Groups of countries were allied together – this meant they had to go into war and support each other if required.
- Over four years, a long and bloody battle was fought all over the world causing unbelievable hardship, devastation and loss of life.
- Much of the fighting took place on the Western Front in France and the Eastern Front on the borders between Austria-Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria, Russia and Romania.
- The battle of the Somme took place two years into the conflict and was the first major offensive (attack) led by the British Military on the Western Front. It began on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 and ended on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1916.
- It was meant to be a 'big push' towards victory after a series of battles were lost around the world in 1915.
- It was a flawed battle and on the 1<sup>st</sup> July, the British Army suffered the greatest loss of life in a 24 hour period of the war and it remains Britain's bloodiest military battle today.
- The war effort continued at home with many women stepping into roles and jobs that would have previously been done by men.
- In 1918, two years after the battle of the Somme, soldiers and civilians alike were totally exhausted, demoralised and starving, so diplomatic efforts were brought in to bring an end to the fighting and suffering.
- WW1 ended at 11am on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 and changed the world forever.

### 2. The film *The Battle of the Somme* – why was it so important?

With some basic knowledge of WW1 from the previous exercise, discuss with pupils why a film was made for the War Office containing actual footage of soldiers on the front line for the British Government.

- Look at the Fact File – The Making of The *Battle of the Somme* Film
- Watch the Sounding the Somme film clip of Imperial War Museum Senior Curator, Dr Toby Haggith
- Watch clips of the actual film on the Somme100 FILM website
- Conduct individual research

©Sounding the Somme & Somme100 FILM | [soundingthesomme@gmail.com](mailto:soundingthesomme@gmail.com) | [www.somme100film.com](http://www.somme100film.com)



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL**  
**ENGLAND**



LED BY IWM

Discuss the following questions with pupils:

- What did you notice about the scenes and life in 1916 from the film?
- How do the scenes make you feel?
- How do you feel about the faked scene?
- Did the film achieve its aims?
- Why do you think it is an important film?

Summarise the answers and discussion on the whiteboard.

### 3. Activity

Imagine you are a journalist, it is November 18<sup>th</sup> 1916 and the end of the Somme battle has been announced by the Government.

In small groups, or pairs, get pupils to create a newspaper article using the template attached or by creating your own. It must demonstrate an understanding of:

- **How many lives were lost**

By the end of the first day on 1 July 1916, British forces had suffered **57,470** casualties, of which **19,240** were fatalities. This is the worst loss of life suffered by the British in a single day.

By the end of the battle, the British Army recorded **419,543** people wounded, missing or dead. The names of **72,000** British and Commonwealth soldiers who died are recorded on the British memorial at Thiepval in France. The French lost **200,000** men and the Germans nearly **500,000**.

- **The outcome of the battle**

The outcome was regarded as a success. The front line advanced by about six miles and towns were taken back from the Germans. But for some, the extreme loss of life made it a military disaster. Ask pupils to draw their own conclusion on the outcome of the battle.

- **Information about the film *The Battle of the Somme***

The ability to see film footage from the front line was a new thing in 1916, unlike today. The public flocked to see the film and an estimated 20 million Britons watched it within six weeks of its release in August 1916.

#### Top Tips!

Remind pupils about how a newspaper article is structured. It needs:

- A headline
- The leads – the main facts (who, what, when, where etc.)
- Background information
- An interview with a quote (this could be fictitious, although there is plenty of evidence out there that could be used)
- Conclusion

Complete the PowerPoint template with a headline, article, photos and captions. Or make your own template using desktop publishing software you might have in school. Remember to try and make it look like a paper from 1916. Take a look at the Royal British Legion example in the resource section for more inspiration.

### 4. Sharing

Get pupils to share their learning and display newspaper articles to the rest of the class.

©Sounding the Somme & Somme100 FILM | [soundingthesomme@gmail.com](mailto:soundingthesomme@gmail.com) | [www.somme100film.com](http://www.somme100film.com)



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**



LED BY IWM

The articles could be displayed in school foyer areas or read out as an introduction to a Somme100 FILM performance.

©Sounding the Somme & Somme100 FILM | [soundingthesomme@gmail.com](mailto:soundingthesomme@gmail.com) | [www.somme100film.com](http://www.somme100film.com)



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**



LED BY IWM