

Women at Work in the First World War - Key Stage 2

Video Script

Memorials: The National Nursing Memorial, Women's Royal Naval Service Memorial Garden, The Women's Land Army and Timber Corp Memorial **Presenter:** Karen

The First World War brought changes to everyone, including British women. In the war, women served their country where the fighting was taking place, we call this the front line, and on the Home Front, which was all the work being done in Britain.

Although women were not allowed to fight as soldiers in the First World War, they did help on the front line in other ways

Before the war broke out there were about only 200 female doctors. A shortage of trained medical staff gave women opportunities to work in a wide range of important roles including nursing.

This is the National Nursing Memorial. It honours all nurses who died in both the First and Second World Wars providing care to members of the armed services. Stonemason Nick Johnson created the large stone globe and on this there are the names of 1,265 nurses who lost their lives in active service. The sculpted bronze hands were created by the artist Georgie Welch.

Conditions were dangerous for women travelling to the front line and they were at risk from enemy fire. They worked long hours going to bed late and getting up early for duty. Women on the front line were very brave. For many this was the first time they had ever been away from Britain.

One of the names etched onto this globe is Edith Cavell, who trained as a nurse at a London Hospital. After she finished, she worked in various hospitals, and then became a 'travelling nurse' visiting patients in their homes. Nursing was very different in the early days and their duties would mainly be making sure beds and patients were clean, dressing wounds, taking care of the laundry, and emptying bedpans.

In 1907, she became the matron of a new nursing school in Belgium. Belgium was then occupied by Germans, and the hospital soon filled with injured people. Edith treated all her patients well it did not matter to her where they were from, she said "I cannot stop while there are still lives to be saved".



She began sheltering British soldiers and helping them escape from Belgium to the Netherlands. This led to her being arrested by the Germans and tried for treason. She was found guilty and sentenced to death. Many pleas were made by the British government for her to be freed, but these were ignored. She was executed on 12 October 1915. The night before her execution, she said "Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone".

We are now at the Women's Royal Naval Service Memorial Garden. This garden is dedicated to all the women who served in this service. The garden is designed to encourage birds, insects and butterflies and the pathways form the shape of an anchor.

The Women's Royal Naval Service, known as the Wrens, was formed in 1917, they were the first of the three armed forces, army, navy and air force, to officially recruit women. Wrens were initially recruited so men could go off and serve at sea during the First World War. Their slogan during the war was "Join the Wrens today and free a man to join the Fleet."

As the wartime navy grew bigger so did the Wrens, not only did they work on the Home Front, but they were also sent overseas. As the war progressed, they began to take on more jobs, these included driving, cooking, clerical work, working radar and communication equipment and providing weather forecasts.

We are now by our final memorial; this is the Women's Land Army and Timber Corps Memorial. This is a tribute to the women, some as young as 17, who served on our farms during both the First and Second World Wars.

In 1917 during the First World War the Minister of Agriculture formed the Women's Land Army. There were 23,000 women who joined and worked full-time on the land, this freed the men working on farms to go to war. The women that joined were known as the Land Girls and they did all the jobs that men would do.

There were three sections to the Women's Land Army, agriculture, forage – making hay for horses – and timber cutting. Most women worked in agriculture.

You can see on the sides of the memorial the other jobs that the women did. They were involved in very important work and produced a lot of food for the country. They ploughed the fields, sowed seeds, singled – which is thinning out some of the plants so they could grow well and of course they harvested the crops. They looked after farm animals and milked cows. Some girls even learned to drive the newly introduced tractors.



Recruits would join for a year and were given a uniform of breeches, a knee-length overall, boots, a raincoat, jersey, and a soft hat. The revelation at the time is that the land girls were allowed to wear breeches, this gave them the same freedom of movement as men when doing physical work. Some of the girls cut their hair in bob hairstyle, this shocked some people living in the countryside. The Land Girls were viewed with suspicion and at first people were hostile towards them.

The Land Army Handbook said about the girl's appearance, "You are doing a man's work and you are dressed rather like a man but remember just because you wear a smock and breeches you should take care to behave like a British girl who expects chivalry and respect from everyone she meets."

After three months good service, the Land Girl would be given a green armband with a red crown. This showed she was on national service. There were also good service and length of service badges, these would be added to their uniform when they received them.

The bronze sculpture was created by the artist Denise Dutton. The Land Girl is holding a sprig of corn in one hand and a pitchfork in the other, these symbolise the agriculture she works with.

For the women that worked in these new roles during the First World War, whether on the Home Front or the front line, they had learned new skills working as nurses, mechanics and on farms, this would have been unthinkable before the war.

Women had tasted independence and they did not want it to end.

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WOMEN AT WORK IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR ANSWERS

Session One

Questions after watching the film.

What were conditions like for nurses on the front line?

Anything similar to the sentence below.

Conditions were dangerous for women travelling to the frontline and they were at risk from enemy fire. They worked long hours going to bed late and getting up early for duty.

Edith Cavell was a nurse in Belgium.
Who did she help to escape?

She began sheltering British soldiers and helping them escape from Belgium to the Netherlands.

What was the nickname for the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS)?

Wrens

What was the nickname for the women in the Women's Land Army (WLA)?

Land Girls

What did women in the Women's Land Army wear for their uniform?

This sentence below is what was said in the video, it would be good if two or three of these were noted.

They were given a uniform of breeches, a knee length overall, boots, a raincoat, jersey, and a soft hat.

Women at Work in the First World War

Why did women do more jobs in the First World War?

Many men were away fighting so more women had to go to work.

Name three jobs that women did in the First World War.

Any three jobs from the following: munitions worker, bus driver, farmer, police officer, jobs in the armed forces.

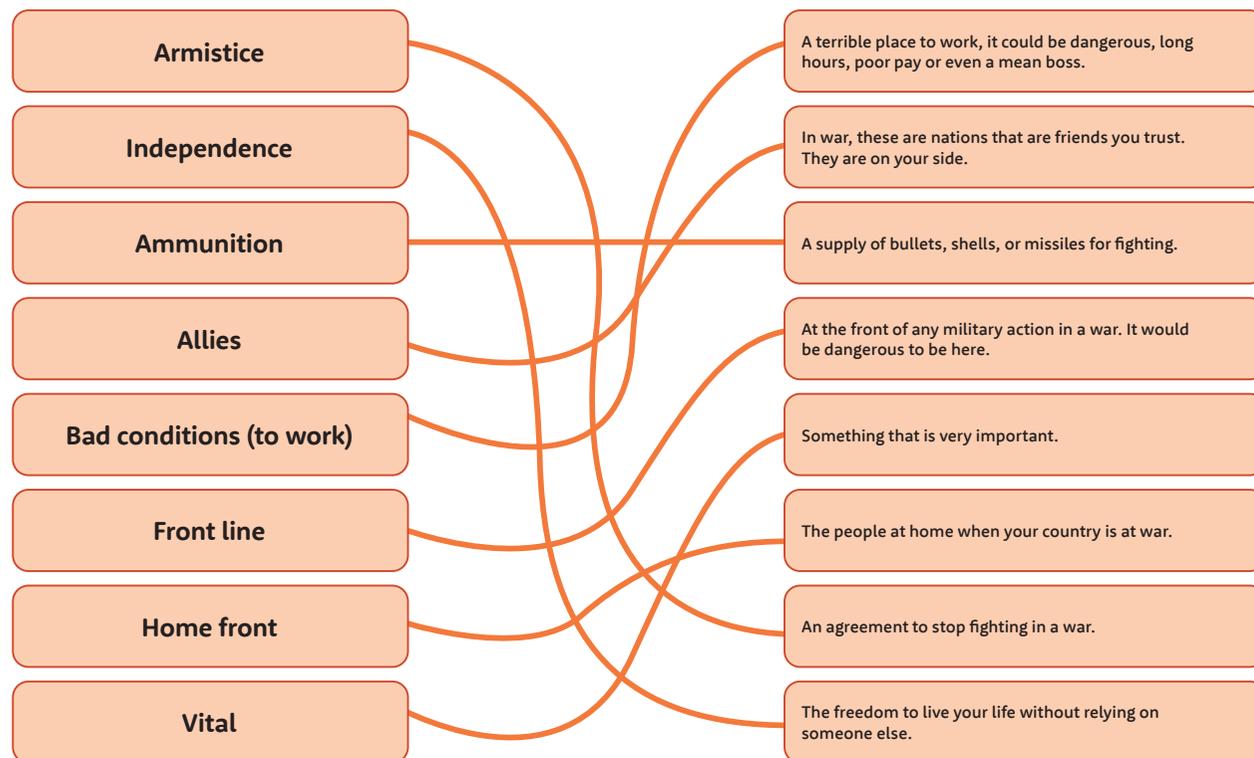
One job was very dangerous. Which do you think it was?

Munitions worker

Do you think women enjoyed working in the First World War? Why?

Yes. They were earning money that helped their families and they were independent making new friends through their jobs.

Vocabulary mix-and-match



After the War

When the war ended men returned and many women lost their jobs. They were expected to go back to working in their old jobs or stay at home as they did before. How do you think this made women feel?

As this is a free writing exercise, any answer would be acceptable with a good reason.

I think the women would be sad / angry / happy, because they enjoyed their jobs and didn't want to stop working / because they didn't think they should stop working / because they didn't like their jobs and wanted to go back home.

Women's jobs in the First World War

See next page for full answer table.

Women's jobs in the First World War Answers should include two of the jobs in the table below.

	Nurses	Canary Girls	Land Girls	Bus Conductors
Where did the women work in this job? Was it in Britain (on the Home Front)? Or overseas (near the front line)? Or both?	Both, on the Home Front and front line.	Home Front	Home Front	Home Front
What kind of thing do you think women would need to do in these jobs?	Nursing injured soldiers. Helping doctors.	Making bombs, bullets, and missiles. They would have to work with dangerous chemicals, like TNT.	They would work in one of the 3 areas. Agriculture: ploughing, harvesting, milking and looking after farm animals. Timber cutting: measuring trees, cutting them down, stacking them and working in sawmills. Foraging: making hay for horse feed and straw for horses' beds.	They would stop the bus so passengers could get on. They would sell the passenger a ticket.
Would the women doing these jobs wear a uniform? Do you think they wore trousers?	Yes. They would not have worn trousers.	Yes. Because they would be working with dangerous chemicals, they would wear protective clothing. They may have worn trousers.	Yes. They wore breeches, they are short trousers.	Yes. They would not have worn trousers.
Do you think these were nice jobs to do? Why do you think this?	It could be nice, but it could be dangerous. Nurses on the front line were very brave.	It could be nice as they would make new friends and it was well paid. But it could be dangerous working with the chemicals. Sometimes there were side effects, working with TNT turned the women's skin yellow and sometimes they were sick and has skin sores and chest pains.	It could be nice but also hard work on the farms. The women would be working outside and working with animals.	It could be nice. They would be standing up all day but would be meeting lots of people.

Session Two

Kasturba Gandhi and Indian Army Hospitals

How do you think Indian soldiers felt in a hospital so far away from home?

As this is a free writing exercise, any answer would be acceptable with a good reason.

I think the soldiers would feel homesick and sad as they were injured and couldn't see their friends and family.

I think it would be difficult for them as they were in a country they did not know. They may not know the language and the food may be different to their usual food. This may make them feel sad and lonely.

Kasturba cared for patients who were a different religion to her. Why is it important that we are considerate of other people's beliefs?

As this is a free writing exercise, any answer would be acceptable with a good reason.

Being considerate of other people's beliefs helps us accept people for who they are even when they are different to us.

Respect and consideration of other people's beliefs helps us build feelings of trust, safety and wellbeing.

Olive Crosswell: Life as a Land Girl

How many farms did Olive work on?

She worked on 2 farms. The first one she learned how to milk a cow, the second she worked for a lady who bred goats.

Do you think Olive enjoyed being a Land Girl?

Any answer would be acceptable with a good reason.

I think Olive enjoyed being a Land Girl as she was proving to everyone that she could do a good job.

I don't think Olive enjoyed being a Land Girl because the work was very hard and the animals were difficult.

What other jobs would you do on a farm?

There are a range of jobs, any of these answers would be good, or any other jobs that would be done on a farm.

Agriculture – ploughing, harvesting, milking, and looking after farm animals.

Timber-cutting – measuring trees, cutting them down, stacking them and working in sawmills.

Foraging – producing bales of hay for horse feed and straw for Army and farm horses' bedding.

Write a Letter

Imagine that you are working on a farm for the first time in the First World War. Write a letter home to you family telling them about your life.

As the letter is an informal letter it could be like a conversation with a friend. Informal writing is friendly and natural.

The letter should try and answer the 3 questions:

- What do you do every day?
- How do you feel?
- Do you like it on the farm?