

## Audio file

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## Transcript

00:00:01 Speaker 2

Welcome to a writers war, a National Lottery Heritage fund, First World War Centenary project produced by Chrome Radio for the University of Oxford, faculty of Mediaeval and Modern Languages. In partnership with year 10 students from Oxford Spires Academy. The university organised a series.

00:00:21 Speaker 2

Of workshops for their students looking at responses of British, French and German writers to the First World War. This is the second of four podcasts in which we hear from the students.

00:00:42 Speaker 3

My name is Mira.

00:00:43 Speaker 3

I go to.

00:00:44 Speaker 3

Oxford Spires Academy and running it, and we've been looking at some British poems and also some French poems.

00:00:52 Speaker 3

In my case, 'cause I study French, annotating them and looking at the context. I quite like the differences.

00:00:58 Speaker 3

Between the French and British poems, the British ones were much more to do with what it was to be in that moment watching the war, whereas I found for the front ones they were much more patchy.

00:01:11 Speaker 3

Rotic and it felt more like they were talking about what it felt like to have the war in their country rather than being actually in the action.

00:01:21 Speaker 3

I felt much more connected to the British ones because I've read a lot more like that and we've studied it in English. But then when I read the French ones

00:01:30 Speaker 3

I saw that.

00:01:31 Speaker 3

Although they were going through the same experiences, it felt very different. And when I read it, I got a different feel. From that we went to modelling college to see the archives there, which I found very.

00:01:42 Speaker 3

Very interesting, I enjoyed looking at how people reacted to the war. I wasn't very good at reading the letter because I'm not very good at reading handwriting, even my own.

00:01:56 Speaker 3

We were asked to write a poem about Modern Warfare using annotations so that it could explain for future generations what it was like to be in the war so.

00:02:07 Speaker 3

That they could feel.

00:02:08 Speaker 3

It a bit.

00:02:08 Speaker 3

Better I enjoy writing poetry.

00:02:12 Speaker 3

And we've done competitions at our school before, which I like, but I kind of struggled because I haven't really had a feel for what warfare is actually like, so I couldn't really say from personal experience what it was like to be in the war or in any future wars. I think the workshops did.

00:02:32 Speaker 3

Make me more aware of what was happening, but also it helped me to understand the First World War a bit more than that I think and what it was like.

00:02:52 Speaker 1

Corrupted landscapes, garbled grief in agony. The rhythm of ammunition, deafening the people. The violent crashes of bombs, obliterating the scene.

00:03:01 Speaker 1

The innocent lives snatched away by warfare. The blue skies lighting the day. The flourishing nature green and bright.

00:03:09 Speaker 1

I'm George and I'm going to Oxford Spies Academy.

00:03:13 Speaker 1

I wrote that poem to contrast the warfare from 100 years ago to now. Now we have quite a peaceful society.

00:03:23 Speaker 1

100 years ago, France was struck with war. People went off to fight. Many innocent lives were taken.

00:03:29 Speaker 1

During this project could give me an insight of my ancestors, how they were in the war. My mum is Japanese and my dad lets you French, so in part French.

00:03:40 Speaker 1

I've been looking at French and English poems. There's quite a contrast between the French and English poems. The French are quite romantic.

00:03:48 Speaker 1

Whereas the English are quite gritty, nasty. Even though France was struck with war the most with Germany wading them.

00:03:55 Speaker 1

The French talk about the joys of going to war, whereas the English, their anti war and England wasn't really hit that much by the war. Some poems were quite emotional with the goriness.

00:04:08 Speaker 1

Even some romantic ones, they hit you quite hard. Apolinar wrote a poem which described the many joys of war.

00:04:16 Speaker 1

We studied Wolford Ohms Dulcedo contest and it really did show the reality of being in the trenches. There was a base gas gas which was highlighted in upper case. It showed the dangers. People would probably scared in the trenches in the war. The workshops.

00:04:37 Speaker 1

They've given me a insight from the fighters. The people in the trenches, what they were thinking, what was on their mind. It was quite inspirational with the poetry and yeah, it could inspire me to write some more poetry.

00:05:04 Speaker 5

Hello, my name is Garrincha and we're in Oxford Spies Academy. My family's from Team Leicester near Australia, but South of Indonesia.

00:05:13 Speaker 5

We've been learning about French and German perks views on the war. You seem like a variety of different perspectives. The poets are soldiers and also people who are.

00:05:24 Speaker 5

Being defended from the front lines.

00:05:26 Speaker 5

But things that made impression on me. Well, a polymer is quite weird. One. The way he describes the war, I think it was his way of coping with it, because despite being in this horrible, devastating war, he still through his art.

00:05:40 Speaker 5

It was fun. He had described it to be leisurely in one of his poems, along the lines of the cavalry. He was writing a poem.

00:05:47 Speaker 5

To his girlfriend, it was quite intimate and he went on to describe the explosions to be bright and pink, like the \*\*\*\*\* a whole woman breast.

00:05:58 Speaker 5

And I was very confused 'cause I saw a poem from Milford Owen don't share the core missed and he described the war as this terrible, horrific place where people are dying all around you.

00:06:11 Speaker 5

I feel like the first world rule is a real eye opener to everyone around the world.

00:06:16 Speaker 5

And even though I've never experienced combat on the front lines, I still resonate with the people who suffered and so writing a poem was quite intimate.

00:06:26 Speaker 5

I found the challenging at first, but as I delve deeper I've got into the mindset of how a soldier would think of what.

00:06:33 Speaker 5

He would experience.

00:06:35 Speaker 5

Because these other parts they didn't just describe it to us. They gave us an image where was like I loved the workshop.

00:06:43 Speaker 5

Personally, it was an eye opener for me 'cause there was some stuff that I didn't know before. I didn't even know that French and English relations before the war were quite tense. 'cause now in the modern era.

00:06:55 Speaker 5

The peaceful it inspires me that we can't just forget about this stuff that happened before because these poets, what they wrote wasn't just to tell people it was also to leave a mark to show the world that we can't go through this stuff again.

00:07:20 Speaker 6

I'm joining another student talks aspires Academy. We've been doing workshops on different poets in the First World War from different countries. So poets from England, like Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon poets from France.

00:07:36 Speaker 6

Germany, I'm actually doing both German and French, but I decided to look at the French poets because I'm better at French.

00:07:44 Speaker 6

It was really interesting to see how that sheets were very different between English and the French. We were talking about how the French were much more patriotic. There was one.

00:07:56 Speaker 6

Extract from a book written by a French interpreter, working with both the French and English armies, trying to get them to see the same side.

00:08:04 Speaker 6

He noticed a difference in that cheers to war and said to get a Frenchman interested in a boxing match.

00:08:11 Speaker 6

You should tell him that his national honour is at stake, but to get an Englishman interested in.

00:08:17 Speaker 6

A war you.

00:08:18 Speaker 6

Should compare it to a boxing match. Then after school he went to maudlin college to look at the archives.

00:08:24 Speaker 6

That was really interesting because you got to see actual letters. Soldiers had written home.

00:08:29 Speaker 6

There was a letter that a soldier had written home to the head of the college, and then there was another letter which was the boy's parents replying to the head of the college because the soldier had died and the head of the college had written to his parents and it was really poignant to see the actual handwriting of these people. What we also did.

00:08:49 Speaker 6

As we try to write our own poems about wool, I actually found it a bit tricky because I've been very lucky and haven't had to experience any war in my life.

00:08:59 Speaker 6

We just learned about the 1st and 2nd world wars and heard about wars that are going on in other countries and then.

00:09:06 Speaker 6

Use and I can really only imagine what that's like. I feel it's almost slightly hypocritical to write about war if you haven't actually experienced it.

00:09:18 Speaker 6

I'd almost rather write about not having experienced war and the feelings that come with that when I hear about other people who are caught.

00:09:26 Speaker 6

Up in wars across the world.

00:09:29 Speaker 6

The workshops reminded me about the horrible reality that was World War One that loads of people died and loads of lives were ruined because of it.

00:09:39 Speaker 6

Hopefully nothing like that will ever happen again, and I think we should use Remembrance, sing or us to remember them, but also to remember that we shouldn't let that happen again.

00:09:49 Speaker 6

I'm going on exchange to Germany. This is artist in Germany who makes these things called stumbling stones which are really small rocks and metal about the size of cobblestones, and they're inscribed with names and dates of birth and death of people who were killed in World War Two by the Nazis.

00:10:05 Speaker 6

We're going to go and look at those and clean them, and we're researching certain people who were killed by the Nazis. So it's interesting relating those people to what we've done here. Thinking about both the world wars.

00:10:25 Speaker 7

My name is John Luca Walker. I am at Oxford Spires Academy. Over the past few weeks we've been analysing some raw poetry from World War One. Looking at both the English and French perspective.

00:10:35 Speaker 7

But what really interested me was the attitudes towards war. The French were very patriotic and they saw war as not just a fight, but also an act of art, whereas the English, for example Wilfred Owen in his poem dot cheque, the calmest was very visceral. The saw was quite disgusting thing.

00:10:55 Speaker 7

And he was deeply against it.

00:10:57 Speaker 7

I think the reason that the English and French opinions were so different was the French sense of patriotism. We don't really have as much England.

00:11:05 Speaker 7

What's really going to stick with me is how there's always multiple sides. Even if people are in agreement about something or working together, they'll still be multiple sides to even that story.

00:11:16 Speaker 7

Before these workshops, I knew a lot more about World War Two tangible one, but this has really educated me about what went on and what the opinions of the public were. In World War One compared to world.

00:11:27 Speaker 7

Two, we wrote poems that were based on what would happen in a modern world world with modern technologies. So either the outbreak of war shatters the silence of innocent happiness, which shows how.

00:11:39 Speaker 7

The outbreak of.

00:11:40 Speaker 7

War completely destroys the peacetime happiness that goes on and replaces it with a very vigorous sense of.

00:11:47 Speaker 7

Fighting of written marching feet and beating hearts drowned out by machines which shows that in the modern era machines are what are used to fight wars. Not really people. It's more drones or bomb.

00:12:00 Speaker 7

And then the last few lines show that this is the pinnacle, and if we let a nuclear world break out, world will fall. We fought with sticks and stones and we're going to go back to a kind of Stone Age.

00:12:14 Speaker 7

The outbreak of war shatters the silence of innocent happiness. Our marching feet and beating hearts drowned out by machines evacuation of our homes, leaving behind all we own. Now I know how World War fears fought and I long for the days of sticks and stones.

00:12:36 Speaker 2

You have been listening to a writers wall. I do hope you'll join us for the next podcast in the series.