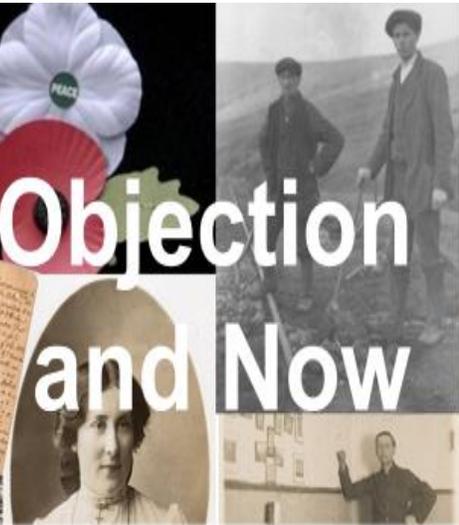
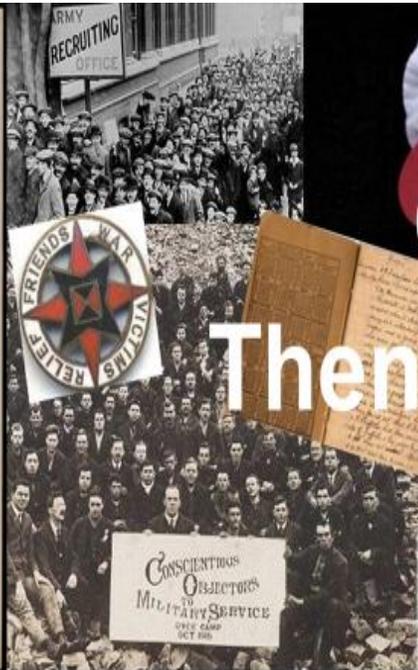


**I'R
FYDDYN
FECHGYN
GWALIA!**

**Cas gwr
nid cas ganddo
elyn ei wlad.**

CYMRU AM BYTH!



Objection Then and Now

A learning resource for Key Stages 3-4 in Wales

**CYMRU DROS
HEDDWRCH
WALES FOR
PEACE**

WCIA
WELSH CONSCIENTIOUS
OBJECTORS
INTERNATIONAL

**heritage
treftadaeth**
ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI
LOTTERY FUNDED



Introduction: What is 'Conscientious Objection'?

During the First World War (1914-18) and Second World War (1939-45), some people refused to serve in the Armed Forces on grounds of 'conscience'. They were known as *Conscientious Objectors* (CO's).



COS at Dyce Camp – Wikimedia Commons

In this Wales for Peace Thematic Pack, you will learn about who they were, why they would not serve, and what happened to them.

We'll also look at Conscientious Objection in the world today, and set you some challenges to help you understand about how people respond when asked to do something which goes against their conscience.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'conscience' as:

"A person's moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as acting as a guide to one's behaviour."

So... your conscience is your view of what's right and wrong.

Conscientious Objection is usually defined as 'refusal on moral or religious grounds to serve in the armed forces or to bear arms in a military conflict'.

The term first came to public notice during World War 1.

Note that it isn't only on religious grounds that people object to war: they also object on humanitarian grounds, on grounds of human rights and international law, and of course on purely political grounds.

And some people object on moral grounds to other issues, such as abortion, though we deal only with war in this Pack.

Activities

1. Look at the PowerPoint slides (reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Wales). Discuss: what do you think of the way COS were treated in WWI? Was it fair?
2. Your teacher will explain a situation to the class. Put yourself in the shoes of the young person in this situation. What do you think your conscience would tell you to do? What

if circumstances changed? Would you behave differently? After doing the exercise discuss as a class.

3. Hold a class debate – for and against the motion: “People should have the right to refuse to fight in a time of war

Other resources:

You can find more [information and stories about COs in Wales on the Wales for Peace website](#).

On the [WCIA Voices Blog-site](#) you can read the moving stories of CO's from Wales, including particular stories about [COs in Cardiff](#).

Some individuals you could find out about are: Ithel Davies, George M LI Davies, Emrys Hughes and Niclas y Glais.

The Pearce Register is a list of the more than 16,000 men from the UK who refused to fight in WWI. It has been compiled by Bert Pearce formerly of Sheffield University. You can search the list and find out about people who lived in your area.

Visit the [Peace Pledge Union \(PPU\) website](#) for lots of information and learning resources.

Voices of Conscience <https://hwb.gov.wales/resources/resource/e7a67ebd-356e-4fb5-be5a-955a0d03d600>. 6 short films about conscientious objectors in Wales, produced by South Wales Quakers, with follow-up activities.

Standing up for your beliefs <https://hwb.gov.wales/resources/resource/9063a670-9d71-4706-b972-11ef774cd510/en> A Wales for Peace pack for primary learners with lots of ideas for interactive activities.

Conscience and Choice <https://hwb.gov.wales/resources/resource/87f77bd7-9339-4512-810e-424baa1cfd6a/en>. A Wales for Peace pack for secondary learners, suitable for history and Welsh Bac learners.

What would you do?

The Oxford English dictionary defines conscience as “*A person's moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as acting as a guide to one's behaviour.*”

How would you define conscience? Can you think of times when your conscience has been tested? If you are comfortable, share an example with your partner or in a small group. Is there anything you have learnt from your experiences?

Consider the situations below. What would you do, and why?

Situation 1: (Primary or Secondary)

A new boy / girl joined your class at the beginning of this term. They are not from your area, speak differently and tend to keep themselves to themselves.

A group of your friends have started teasing him / her. It started off with jokey comments, but it's now getting more serious, including name-calling. You can see it's getting to him / her.

Do you join in?

Would you change your behaviour if....

1. Your best friend refused to speak to you unless you joined in the 'teasing'
2. You were getting teased and left out to, because you refused to join in.
3. Some of your friends were sending you nasty messages.
4. You found out that the new pupil has a disability which makes it difficult for them to interact with others.

Other possible scenarios for Primary pupils:

- a. Your mum's made a lot of butterfly cakes for the Summer Fayre, and has told you not to touch them. She leaves the kitchen to get ready. She wouldn't miss just one, would she?
- b. A fight happened in the playground. You know who started it – it was one of your friends. However, some of your friends have lied to the teacher, blaming

someone else. You know that person will now be punished. What should you do?

Situation 2: (Secondary)

You've got a really important history test. You've revised thoroughly, and have nearly finished your answers. There's five minutes left and you're stuck on the last question. The teacher who is invigilating has just turned to greet another teacher coming into the room, and you know you could look at your neighbour's paper without being noticed.

What do you do?

Would you change your behaviour if.....

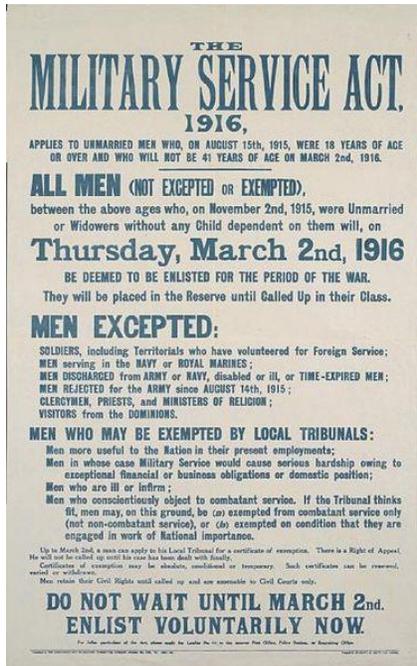
1. You were likely to get caught
2. You thought copying could have consequences (e.g. your paper being annulled)
3. The person sitting beside you wasn't likely to know the right answer anyway
4. You considered the moral consequences – e.g. how guilty this would make you feel

Other possible scenarios for Secondary pupils:

- a. You've been invited to a really cool party with your friends on Sunday afternoon. Your parents are ok with this, but what you haven't told them is that you have a Geography assignment to complete by Monday. You think it'll be ok, but you know they wouldn't have allowed you to go to the party if you'd told them. How are you feeling about this?
- b. A group of your friends has started smoking during break-time. You don't particularly like the smell of smoke, and you know it's not a good thing to do health-wise, but it feels like quite a cool thing to do. They ask you to join them. What do you do?

Conscientious Objectors (COs) in WWII

What were their choices and What happened to them?



From 1914 to 1916, service in the Armed Forces was voluntary. But the number of men lost in the fighting was so great that the UK government introduced [conscription](#) (compulsory military service), forcing men aged 18 to 41 to register for military service. It was known as 'being called up'.

Conscription is never popular: nobody likes to be forced to go to war. In [Canada](#) for instance, there was bitter opposition to it. But that's not what we call Conscientious Objection.

In the UK, some [16,600](#) men refused conscription on grounds of conscience. They were usually arrested and had to go before a tribunal (a sort of court). They were often harshly treated, either imprisoned or required to join the medical services or work on the land or roads.

Known abusively as 'Conchies', they and their families suffered abuse and were resented as cowards or traitors. It was too much for some, such as [Joseph Alfred Pearson](#) from New Brighton, who stopped being a CO after brutal treatment at Birkenhead Barracks, was sent to France and was killed near Ypres.

Activities

1. Search the [Pearce Register](#) of WWI COs on the Wales for Peace website and find out about the men from Wales listed in it. Are there any men from near where you live? Can you find out any more about them?
2. COs fell into 3 different categories – 'absolutists', 'alternativists' and 'non-combatants'. Find out [what these three categories mean](#). What difficult choices did people have to make? Did the tribunals treat people in these three categories differently?

For further activities see other Wales for Peace packs as follows:

1. Standing up for your Beliefs <https://hwb.gov.wales/resources/resource/9063a670-9d71-4706-b972-11ef774cd510/en> A Wales for Peace pack for primary learners with lots of ideas for interactive activities.
2. Conscience and Choice <https://hwb.gov.wales/resources/resource/87f77bd7-9339-4512-810e-424baa1cfd6a/en>. A Wales for Peace pack for secondary learners, suitable for history and Welsh Bac learners.

Conscientious Objectors (COs) in World War II

How was their situation different and why?

Despite the efforts of Britain and France during the 1930's to avoid war, the situation became too serious to prevent it and WWII broke out on 3rd September 1939.

Unlike in WWI, [conscription for men was introduced](#) immediately. In December 1941 it was introduced for women also. About 60,000 men and 1,000 women applied for exemption from armed service. However, they were dealt with more humanely than in WWI, when they were almost without support.



COS in WWII - Wikimedia Commons

Because of the horrors experienced during WWI, during the inter-war period people were very much against any more wars, and pacifists organised themselves to campaign against war.

The [Peace Pledge Union](#) was set up in 1934 and still exists. In 1934-35 the [Peace Ballot](#) was organised by the League of Nations Union and received strong popular support.

A number of other organisations supported them, all represented on the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors, set up in 1939 with government recognition. Nothing like that had existed during WWI. They still had to appear before tribunals, but there was no longer any military representative on the panel. By war's end some 6,500 had been imprisoned: the rest had either taken up civilian work or non-combatant duties such as medical services. However they still suffered abuse, resentment and accusations of cowardice.

A CO's life was never easy, but they were treated better in WWII than in WWI.

Activities

1. Find out more about the [Peace Ballot](#) of 1934 – 5. What do you think about it? What does it tell us? What would such a ballot look like today, and how would it be organised? What do you think the result would be, and why?
2. Read the stories of some COs from Wales in WWII – e.g. [Merfyn Turner and Dyfnallt Morgan](#), and [William Trevor Jones](#). What strikes you about their stories? Do you think they were brave to stick to their principles?
3. The situation in WWII was quite different from that at the beginning of WWI in that Europe faced a ruthless dictator, Adolf Hitler who posed a threat to the countries around him and undertook the mass extermination of Jewish people. If you had

been eligible to sign up, do you think this would have made you feel differently? Do you think there should be circumstances when Conscientious Objection is allowed, and some when it is not? Discuss.

Resistance to War in Wales since WWI

On the [Wales for Peace website](#) and the [WCIA Voices Blog site](#) you'll find interesting stories of individuals and groups in Wales who have actively contributed to world peace in the last hundred years.

Some examples of great actions demonstrating opposition to war as a means of solving international conflict are:

- ⊙ [the North Wales Women's Peace March in 1926](#), a time when anti-war sentiment was very high in Wales and the UK. The suffering endured during WW1 was fresh in the memory and there was great support for international peace;



Courtesy of Bangor Archives

- ⊙ the opening of [the Temple of Peace](#) in 1938.



Greenham banner at Sain Ffagan - Wales for Peace

The political situation at the time was very dangerous, and sadly war broke out one year later.

- ⊙ The [peace march from Cardiff to Greenham Common nuclear base](#) in 1981, which ended with that base being closed in 1992.

Activity:

Find out about someone in your local community who has worked for peace in the last hundred years – or maybe you know of someone in your community today who is working for better community relations, is supporting refugees or asylum seekers, or is active in a local peace group.

Research or interview your chosen person. What is this person's story? What motivates them? What exactly do they do, and how does it affect others? Use the ideas and resources on the [Wales for Peace Hidden Histories](#) web page to help you in researching, producing and sharing your story.

If you're stuck for inspiration, you can find more stories on the [Wales for Peace website](#) and the [WCIA Voices blog site](#) about what people and groups have done for peace in the last hundred years in Wales. If you can't think of someone locally, you could look at an international figure, such as [Rosa Parks](#), [Anne Frank](#), [Martin Luther King](#) or [Malala Yousafzai](#).

What can I do if I'm opposed to war today?

How do people oppose war today? What can I do if I want to work for a more peaceful society here in Wales and for a more peaceful world internationally?

I can.....

- ⦿ Get news from a variety of different sources, and aim to be critical and open-minded about what I'm reading and hearing. (Ask yourself: who produced the report / piece of news? What are they aiming to achieve? What do they want me to think?)
- ⦿ [Write letters to MP's, Councillors and others](#) and try to influence them about things you feel strongly about. They do read their correspondence and you should get a response!
- ⦿ Use social media to express your opinion. (You can join platforms such as [38 Degrees](#) to start or join a petition, for instance).
- ⦿ Discuss international issues with my friends, and attend meetings where the issues of war and peace are being discussed. What about getting a debating society started in school, if you don't have one already?
- ⦿ Join or organise peaceful demonstrations.
- ⦿ Support a group or organisation dedicated to opposing war: search for 'peace organisations uk' in your browser and you'll find many. Is there one you might



consider supporting? Some organisations in Wales are [CND Cymru](#) and the [Fellowship of Reconciliation / Cymdeithas y Cymod](#).

- ⊙ There are also environmental groups such as [Fair Trade Wales](#) and organisations that take action for a fairer and more sustainable world such as [Christian Aid](#) and [Oxfam](#). What about starting a branch in your school?
- ⊙ Join the '[Conscience: Taxes for Peace not War](#)' campaign and become a modern-day Conscientious Objector and peacemaker! (You might need to ask your parents to sign up to this one!)

Activity:

Is there an issue relating to peace and justice that you feel really strongly about today? Find out more about it by reading from a variety of sources and talking to people. Now consider which of the actions above you feel comfortable in taking. Consider also whether you can take action as part of a group, as this is often more effective. Remember to discuss the possible consequences of any action you plan to take with adults, including your teachers and parents.

Conscientious Objection around the world today

So what is the situation of conscientious objectors in the world today? What happens to people who – on grounds of conscience - feel they cannot fight in wars and kill others? Some countries do not allow Conscientious Objection at all, while others allow it but still have conscription.

UK

Conscription – called 'National Service' - was abolished in the UK in 1960. Under the National Service Act of 1947, healthy males aged 18 or over were obliged to serve in the Armed Forces for 18 months, then two years – unless they were black or Asian or from Northern Ireland! The last conscripts were not demobilized ('demobbed') until 1963. At the time, they couldn't vote until they were 21, so many felt aggrieved when they

We're both needed to serve the Guns!



National Library of Wales



were called up at 18 and didn't hide their discontent.

In reality, the UK was no longer a global superpower and it couldn't afford to keep large military forces. It had started to decolonize its Empire in 1948 and increasingly after 1957. Professional soldiers disliked having to train so many unwilling young men. They wanted professional armed forces. There really was no need for National Service and no government has ever tried to bring it back.

But that doesn't mean it might not come back one day, when once again we might hear of people refusing.

Currently, in English and Welsh law there are only three instances where there is a clear legal right to object on grounds of conscience, namely regarding abortion, technological procedures to achieve conception and pregnancy e.g. IVF treatment, and military service in times of conscription.

Non-religious organisations supporting CO's include the Peace Pledge Union and the [Conscience Tax Campaign](#).

Other groups such as the [Fellowship of Reconciliation](#) and [War Resisters International](#) oppose war on religious, humanitarian and political grounds.

There is also a [Humanist perspective](#) on Conscientious Objection.

Below you will find examples of what is happening in two other countries across the world – the United States and Israel.

Israel

Some young Israelis refuse to serve in their armed forces and are penalised for doing so.

[Free the Shministim](#) (refusers) is a campaign sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace, America's largest national Jewish grassroots peace group dedicated to reaching a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians based on the principles of international human rights law.

Find out more about the Shministim. Why do they refuse to serve in the Israeli army? What do you think of their stance? What happens to them as a result?



Israeli refusers at a demonstration - Creative commons

USA

CO's were [recognised in the USA](#) as far back as colonial times. Conscription was called 'the draft', and during [the Vietnam War](#), many refused to serve and burned their callup papers ('draft cards'). This included the famous boxer [Mohammed Ali](#).

The first American CO to receive a medal was [Private Desmond Doss](#).

Sources:

More information about Conscientious Objection world-wide can be found on the [Peace Pledge Union](#) website.

See also campaigns and stories by [War Resisters International](#) and [Amnesty International](#).

Activities

1. Identify a country in the European Union which still has conscription and find out what you can about Conscientious Objection in that country. Write a short report summarising your results.
2. How many members of the United Nations Security Council still have conscription?
3. The famous American boxer Muhammad Ali refused the Vietnam draft. Find out why he did so, and what happened to him. Write a short report with your results.

Conscientious Objection – then and now

Follow-up activities

Debate and discussion

Here are some suggestions for discussion and debate:

1. Summarize the reasons CO's gave to justify their choices and then the counter-arguments used against them. How do you feel about these arguments?

2. What causes war and why is it so hard to avoid it?

Study the causes of one war in particular and discuss why it wasn't avoided.

3. Will Mankind ever stop making war? Can it be stopped or is it something we will always do because we are human?



Creative activities



1. Imagine conscription was re-introduced and you were required to register. How would you feel about that? Would you do so or would you object? Whether you're for or against, write your reasons in the form of a letter to your local newspaper or a social media post.

2. Find out about 'the Tribunal' newspaper at the [Peace Pledge Union](#). Look at the Worksheet, Teacher's Notes and Sources. How would you use social media to create such a newspaper today?

3. Do you know anyone who would be likely to be a CO if conscription were introduced in Wales? Interview them to find out their reasons and create a blog or vlog about them.

Some further sources:

Guardian book review on National Service

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/aug/20/national-service-conscription-britain-richard-vinen-review>

Wikipedia article on [Conscientious Objector](#)

<https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/human-rights-and-equality/conscientious-objection/>

<http://www.ppu.org.uk/>



Ideas for contemporary Young Peacemakers

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