

WW1

Fact Sheet 2B

Inside a Salvation Army hut



It is recommended that you agree in advance with the class teacher how to organise the classroom and what food is acceptable.

Intro

Explain to the pupils that they are going to set up the classroom to look like a Salvation Army hut. Huts and tents - sometimes referred to as *hutments* - were first built in in UK training camps by August 1914. The first hut in France was erected in December 1914. By the end of the war there over 180 huts, with over 60 huts in France, although exact numbers cannot be established. This does not take into account the number of field kitchens that were also around. These were mobile and moved with the troops, usually close to the front line. Some huts could see up to 5,000 men in one day. The first hut in France was expanded to accommodate 1,000 men. Meetings varied in size - some huts saw audiences of 700-1,000 per night.

Take out each prop and explain the purpose while they are being set into position.

A3 Welcome signs (resource sheet 2A)

The huts were often called Soldiers' Rest. There were huts run by different countries: the UK, America, Australia and Germany. *Stick posters by the classroom door.*

Tablecloths (or large sheets of coloured paper), jars or vases with flowers

The hut was to be made as comfortable as possible, despite limited resources. It had to be of a standard that you might get at home. *Put tablecloths on most of the desks, each with a vase in the centre.*

Teapots, ready to be filled with juice or water

Tea was served to British soldiers. Coffee was preferred by the Americans and Australians. Cocoa was also popular. Coffee and buns would be delivered to soldiers on guard duty at night. *Explain the drink options available for the drama. Half-fill teapots so pupils can pour easily during the drama.*

Cups and saucers - enough for all involved

Cups of tea were very popular. The fashion of the time was to drink tea with a cup and a saucer. Some canteens served tea with just the cup, but 'that's not how your mother would serve it!' Attention to detail can help show that you care. *Ask an adult to set out cups and saucers on the tables.*



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Food, plates, and napkins: for example - sandwiches cut into small triangles, fairy cakes

In the UK a lot of the cakes would be supplied by a local baker. Meals were prepared by the Salvationists running the hut. In France this was all done on site by the officers. The food was to be of high quality, sold at cost and to be 'as good as you'd get at home'. British soldiers liked to eat egg and chips. American soldiers favoured doughnuts and apple pies. The Australians liked meat pies. If you didn't have enough money, you could still get food. When soldiers left for the front or had just returned, it was always free.

Over 2,000 eggs would be required per day. One hut recorded going through 1,200 scones and 3,000 meat pies in one evening. *Display food on a table that pupils will be able to line up against safely.*

A5 sheets of paper and envelopes.

A3 letter-writing posters (resource sheet 2A) postcards (resource sheet 2B)

Letter writing was encouraged. It kept soldiers in contact with friends and family. It helped with the isolation and reminded soldiers of who they were and what they had to go home for. Writing materials were supplied for free. Postcards were also available. Soldiers wrote about anything and everything - favourite memories, what they were eating, what the weather was like. All letters had to be read before they were sent to make sure there was no mention of places or any military secrets. 'I am somewhere in France' was often used to describe where they were. Soldiers often wrote a 'goodbye' letter just before they went to the front line, to be sent if they didn't make it back. One hut recorded using over 2,500 sheets of paper every weekend. *Put a selection of resources on every table or create a writing table. Stick writing posters around the room.*

A3 Copies of Children's War Cry (resource sheet 2C) - photocopied back to back

A reading room was very popular. Newspapers, magazines and books were made available. *Put a selection on every table or create a reading area.*

Discussion cue cards (resource sheet 2D)

Discussion was always encouraged. Topics ranged from the light-hearted to in-depth and serious issues. *Put the cut-out discussion cards, face down, on every table or create a discussion area.*

WW1 music on slide 9

Music was important to lift people's spirits. Musical instruments or record players were made available where possible. Popular tunes of the time included 'Pack up your troubles in your old kitbag' and 'It's a long way to Tipperary'. Religious songs - hymns - were also popular. *Play a short section of each song.*



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Store poster (resource sheet 2A)

Soldiers could purchase, at cost, items that they required. Little luxuries became quite scarce during the war. Some supplies were brought in by truck but sometimes the officer would travel quite far to get items for soldiers. *Display poster.*

Needle and thread

If soldiers needed a button sewn on or any mending done, he could ask for it to be done here - 'Just like he'd get at home.'

General Booth poster (resource sheet 2A)

The walls were decorated where possible. Flags, photos, photos of soldiers who had been killed. A picture of the King could be found on the wall. Often there were pictures of the leaders of The Salvation Army - General Bramwell Booth and his wife, Mrs Florence Booth - and of the Founder of the Army, William Booth. *Display Booth poster on the wall.*

Salvation Army caps, bonnets, aprons

The hut is nothing without the people inside it. It was the men and women who made the hut the welcoming place. Everything was clean, fresh, and home-made. Every soldier was given a smile. Every soldier was made to feel welcome and special. Despite being busy cooking, serving and cleaning, the Salvationists also found time to speak to the soldiers and to help in any way they could. In general, each hut was manned by a married couple. The woman was often referred to as *Mother* or *Mum*, as she looked after the boys as if they were her own. They would be supported by men and women Salvationists including men too young to enlist. They were all volunteers, leaving families and jobs behind, so they could support the troops. A typical day could start at 4.30 am and sometimes continue till midnight.

Box with some addressed envelopes, a Bible and a ring inside.

Officers were often asked to hold on to the letters or valuable keepsakes for soldiers who were heading off to the front. These would be sent home to the soldier's loved ones if the soldier didn't come back. *Show contents then put box safely to one side.*

Stories

The following is an excerpt from a Colonel in the British Army stationed in a large soldiers' camp:

'I cannot speak too highly of the way in which Adjutant Payne and his wife have worked for the good of the men. They have also looked after the officers who have passed through the camp, and one and all are loud in their praises. The great thing about all your people is that they are so very *human*.'



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A young Salvationist noticed one soldier looking downcast. He asked, 'Now, lad, you look tired. I am going to make you an extra strong cup of tea.' The soldier then burst into tears at this kindness. He had been feeling that nobody in the world cared whether he lived or died.

A young soldier turned up at the hut, asking for hot water so he could soak his feet in the yard. The woman took him into the kitchen so he could sit and soak his feet in comfort. She gave him food and a hot drink because 'that is what his Mum would have done'. She took no money from him, as it would have taken away from the pleasure. Why? - Yes, you need money but sometimes it does good not to have let the money come in.

One Salvationist woman running a hut was affectionately known to the boys as 'Ma' - she was from Texas. She noticed that lots of soldiers were lining up for seconds but there was a group hanging back. She stopped and called out, 'All of the men who have already had pie, please step out of line; and all of those boys who want coffee and pie but have no money, step into line and get some, *anyhow!*'

Army officers noticed an effect that the huts had on soldiers. They noticed that the men worked better, concentrated better, performed better and were keen to do their jobs.

An audit was done on some of the preaching that was done in the tents. The message was 'To take heed of the law, of moral and military laws. To be better men and better soldiers.' And the final conclusion of the audit? That there was a need for a *Ma* in every battalion!

There was an attitude of 'Always can'. One day the evening service was just starting. A message arrived saying that 100 men were arriving to be fed and they needed to leave by 9.30. But the helpers had gone and the fire was out - but not to worry. The meeting was conducted and finished before 9pm. Then, with the help of two soldier volunteers, biscuits were baked and the soldiers were all served and on their way on time.

Before the soldiers went on a raid, a prayer meeting was popular, with prayer and singing. Trinkets would be left behind for safekeeping. One soldier remarked, 'I'm going over the top. If I don't come back, you tell my mother to bear up.'

One soldier said, 'In the trenches we have days of rain - you sleep in a blanket and hope that your body heat dries your clothes. The hut is warm and dry.'

One hut helper was asked why they were doing it. 'We're here to help the boys from the front and we want to help them because we are proud of them.'



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