



# HIDDEN HEROES: SOLDIERS FROM THE EMPIRE EDUCATION: PHOTO ACTIVITY



- Download the ten individual jpeg photos from the EDUCATION page of the Soldiers From The Empire
- Print out each photo and distribute amongst small groups, discuss in groups any questions they may have of the photos. Focus on questions of who, what, when where and why.
- Come together as a class and work through each group's photos from 1- 10 using either the powerpoint or individual jpegs.
- Use prompt sheet below for questions and answers for each image. Allow students to ask their own questions of each photo.
  - All photos were collected during the Hidden Heroes oral history project from descendents of the soldiers (grandchildren and children).  
Sometimes there are no answers!

**Image 1** *All of these soldiers were born in Britain and fought for the Middlesex Regiment in the First World War. Except for one! Which soldier do you think it is?*

*Where do you think he is from?*

*What year was the photo taken -before, during or after the war? Do they look happy or sad?*

**Image 2** *- Who do you see in the photo? Where are they from?*

*When do you think this photo was taken?*

The dark-haired, smiling man in the middle row, second from the left, is Kish Naoroji.

He is from Bombay, in India, which is now called Mumbai. His grandfather was the first Indian Member of Parliament in the UK.

The photo was taken in 1915, in training before they went to war. He holds a stripe on his right arm showing that he is a lieutenant, 2nd in command of the group in the photo.

The soldier is Harry O'Hara. The woman is his wife and the baby is their child. He is from Japan, and she is from London.

This photo was taken probably in 1917 while Harry was on a break from the war. He had been injured and given time to heal.



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*Image 2 cont.*

*Can anyone guess what Harry did in the army? (There is a clue in the picture!)*

*Do you think they were seen as a 'normal' family In London in 1917?*

*Image 3 Who is in the photo? What jobs did they do? Where are they?*

*Where is Kamal Churchie from? Why was he fighting for Britain?*

*What's a colony? Where is Sri Lanka?*

At the time of the photo he was in the Royal Flying Corp, which is what later became the Royal Air Force (RAF). You can see this from the badge on his arm. He also fought in the trenches in France .

Harry's wife had a hard time with her family who disapproved of her being with a foreigner. A newspaper boy once shouted out as they walked past: **'read all about it! Our boys are fighting abroad while foreigners steal our women!'**

In this photo is Kamal Churchie (centre) with other injured soldiers on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea. They had been injured and are photographed here with nurses and doctors.

He is from Sri Lanka. His father was the head of the Malay Muslims in the country. He came to country for the excitement of joining the army and fighting for the empire. Sri Lanka was called Ceylon and was a colony of the British Empire.

A colony was a country under the control of the Britain Empire. During the First World War, Britain had over 15 million miles of land mass under its territory, including most of the Caribbean , India, Australia and Canada. Sri Lanka is a large island off India.



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## *Image 4*

*Who do you think are the group of men?*

They are soldiers of the Middlesex Regiment.

*One of the soldiers was not born in the UK. Can you guess which one?*

The tall soldier is simply named 'Drummer Roberts' and is from Trinidad in the Caribbean.

*Why was Roberts fighting with the British soldiers?*

Trinidad was part of the British West Indies (including Jamaica, Tobago, Bahamas, Guyana and many more countries). Overall these countries sent 15,600 soldiers to fight for Britain. Many of these soldiers were happy to fight for their King and Empire, and were thankful to the 'motherland'. Others were told they were fighting for the freedom of themselves, and independence for their country. Others fought because they had no other options in the Caribbean.

## *Image 5*

*Where was this photo taken? (Clues are in his outfit and the background)*

This photo was taken in Mesopotamia, which in the Middle East now is part of the country known as Iraq. Much fighting was done against Germans, Austro-Hungarians and Bulgarians in the sands of Northern Africa and the Middle East during the First and Second World Wars.

*Does anyone recognise the soldier from another photo?*

This soldier is Kish Naoroji, the soldier from India from Image 1. He served in the army up until 1921 when this photo was taken - 3 years after the end of the First World War!



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## *Image 6*

*Where is this soldier from?*

This is Harry O'Hara, from Japan. He was injured in the hand, stomach, arm, scalp, shoulder and head. He even had to have his jaw repaired by a surgeon. He was injured many times but returned to fight at the Front numerous times once he was better. Despite being Japanese, Harry served in the Sikh regiment of the British Army, which explains why he is wearing a Sikh turban in the picture on the right.

*Does anyone recognise this photo from another photo?*

This is the same Harry O'Hara from Image 2, with his wife and baby.

## *Image 7*

*Who do you think this soldier is? (clue: it is written below his photo!)*

Private (Pte) Owen Gittens. A soldier of the Middlesex Regiment.

*Why is his photo there? What does it remind you of? (school/class yearbook etc.)*

This is from a regimental photobook. All soldiers got a photograph to put together in a book. These were often given to friends or family's as gifts. Sadly, Gittens died when he was fighting in the war.

*How old are you (the class)? How old do you think Gittens was when he died?*

Gittens was only 19 when he died.

*Where do you think he was born?*

He was from Trinidad in the Caribbean. His name is written on a memorial statue in their capital city.



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## *Image 8*

*Where do you think the photo was taken?*

*Do they look happy, sad, excited? How do you think they felt?*

*One of the soldiers is from Sri Lanka, do you recognise him from another photo?*

It was taken in France, taken during a break from the fighting to have a group photograph. Photography was not very common in those days, so soldiers would jump at the chance to have their photo taken to send home to loved ones.

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The darker skinned man is Kamal Chunchie from Sri Lanka. He served in the Middlesex Regiment and we saw him in Image 3. He later worked in Canning Town in East London helping poor black and Asian workers on ships docked on the River Thames.

## *Image 9*

*When was this photo taken - before, during or after the war? How do you know?*

*Do you recognise this man from other photos?*

This photo was taken after the war and is an ex-Middlesex soldier playing Cricket for Essex County Cricket Club.

This is Kamal Chunchie from Image 8 (with soldiers in France) and Image 3 (in Malta). He served for the Middlesex Regiment for the duration of the war until he was injured.

## *Image 10*

*Where do you think this man was born?*

This Anil Rudra, who served in the Middlesex Regiment during the First World War. He was born in India

*What position/status do you think he had in the army?*

During the First World War he was a private. Then he was promoted to Lieutenant and in charge of a few soldiers. In this picture he is a Major General, in charge of 1000s of soldiers. He was one of the first India-born soldiers to be promoted in the Indian Army, while it was under the control of the British Empire.