

# Notes for Teachers

This selection of resources from our archive is intended to provide material for the role of the Empire and Commonwealth during the Second World War for the History Curriculum. However, it could also be used to provide an historically-based route into the topic of the Commonwealth of the Citizenship curriculum at Key Stages 3 or 4.

## Suggested Activities

### 1. Using the website

Ask different groups to research the separate sections of the Together website, and present what they have found to the rest of the class. What have they learned about the kind of roles and jobs people performed during the war? What have they found out about the difficulties that some of them faced?

### 2. Recruitment

Why did so many people from the colonies volunteer to serve in the British forces? (An example of a recruitment poster aimed at people in the colonies and dominions can be seen in 'What Was it Really Like in the Second World War?': What do you think about war? section) Why was the recruitment of black peoples from the colonies a controversial issue during the war?

### 3. Identity

Ask the class to consider whether they would volunteer to fight for the Commonwealth today. Set up a debate with one group arguing for and the other against. Ask each group to think about those issues that would affect their decision: a sense of identity and belonging to the Commonwealth?: A commitment to it as representative of their views? (Do they vote for it? Have a say in its membership/constitution?): Its responsibility for international peace and cooperation?

### 4. Effect of the War

Ask the class to investigate the effects of the Second World War on the peoples of the Commonwealth and Empire: how did the experience of war lead them to re-examine their relationship to Britain? Did it accelerate the moves towards independence post-1945? Do any of their families have experiences or memories of the independence movements and wars of the post-war era? Perhaps they could record them for the rest of the class to hear.

What role does the Commonwealth fulfil today? Ask the class to investigate this using the web (news websites, website of The Commonwealth Institute), searching under different subjects, such as economics, international relations and culture.

What is the relationship between the present-day Commonwealth and other international organisations? See the separate resource on the roots of the European Union (accessible from the Citizenship pages of our website) for more information and activities on this topic.

### **Booklist**

Ben Bousquet & Colin Douglas: *West Indian Women at War*, (London 1991)

North Kensington Archive: *The Caribbean at War*, (London 1991)

Imperial War Museum: *Together* (a multi-media pack of black African, Asian and Caribbean peoples' experiences during the Second World War)

Angus Calder: *The People's War*, (London 1969) (has useful chapters on the effect of the American policy of segregation on Britain and on the social aspects of the war)

### **Websites**

[www.commonwealth.org.uk](http://www.commonwealth.org.uk)

The website of The Commonwealth Institute, including an explanation of the present-day Commonwealth, with maps.

[www.mod.uk/wewerethere](http://www.mod.uk/wewerethere)

An online resource by the Ministry of Defence about people of the old Empire, Commonwealth and of ethnic minorities serving in the Forces, from the First World War onwards.

[www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/](http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/)

An American website about African Americans including the Second World War, using photographs and personal stories.

[www.wotw.org.uk](http://www.wotw.org.uk)

A website by The British Council Education and Training Group that links schools together from across the world, to develop joint projects.

[www.montageplus.co.uk](http://www.montageplus.co.uk)

A website by The British Council that hosts virtual communities of teachers and students through projects focused on different areas of the curriculum, including Citizenship issues such as democracy, refugees and identity.