

How do we remember World War One? Images of a familiar war

Narrated by Michael Portillo

There is no-one alive today who fought in World War One. Our view of the war is shaped by what we've read, seen or heard.

As cameras became cheaper and more portable, photos could be taken closer to the battlefield. Images of the grim realities of war were widespread for the first time.

Artists were producing huge numbers of pictures. Some, like Paul Nash's paintings of landscape shattered by war, or John Singer Sargent's famous work 'Gassed', made such an impression on book publishers and editors that they were reproduced time and again.

The work of war poets like Wilfred Owen has also had a profound influence on the way we see the war.

The patriotic tones of Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier' were highly popular during and after the war. This poem was later joined as a standard text in schools, by Owen's harrowing description of the effects of chemical weapons in 'Dulce et Decorum Est'.

Official ceremonies are also a big part of the way we think about the war. Originally intended as a small part of the Peace Day events that followed the end of the war, the Cenotaph in central London captured the public imagination, and was then designated as Britain's official national war memorial.

Since the 1960s, film and television have reimagined the war, and shaped it for generations that didn't experience it:

From the 1964 musical theatre production *Oh What A Lovely War*, which portrayed its futility, to the 1986 TV drama series the *Monocled Mutineer*, which dramatised the story of a rebellious soldier, and sparked controversy with its anti-establishment take.

More recently novels and plays, such as *Warhorse*, *Birdsong* and the *Regeneration* trilogy have created a new literature of war.

Fascinating, harrowing and sometimes even comic, these artistic interpretations of the war have helped us to imagine what it was like – but they do not show the whole picture.