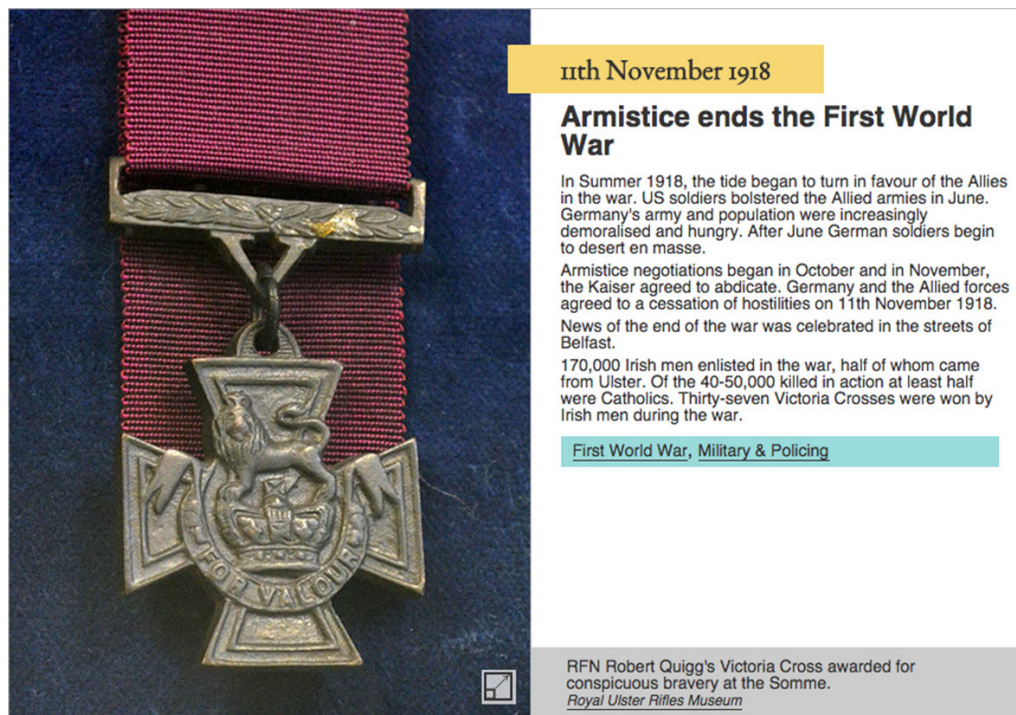


Theme 2: First World War

11th November 1918 [Armistice ends the First World War.](#)

“170,000 Irish men enlisted in the war, half of whom came from Ulster. Of the 40-50,000 killed in action at least half were Catholics. Thirty-seven Victoria Crosses were won by Irish men during the war.”



Activity 1: Bringing a Soldier's Story to Life

First World War memorials are a common fixture in the urban landscape. Now that the conflict is out of living memory, these familiar landmarks provide a connection with the past. By selecting names on a memorial plaque, we can use the range of archives available online and in libraries, museums and public record offices to build up a picture of an individual soldier's experience of First World War. This process can deepen our understanding of the conflict and bring the war experience to life. This activity involves selecting names on a local First World War memorial, researching the service personnel and uploading evidence onto [Lives of the First World War](#).

1. Locating a suitable local war memorial.

War memorials dedicated to the casualties of the First World War are located throughout UK and Ireland. Look in your local train station, library, bank, school, town hall, church or town centre. You can also use the online search facilities provided by [War Memorials](#) online and [Imperial War Museum](#) to locate your nearest memorial.

2. Selecting names.

Take the group/class to visit the memorial, discuss its site, role and purpose. If the memorial is associated with a building, ask it they have a record of the erection of the memorial. If you can find date of dedication, you can check local newspaper archives for newspaper articles or photographs of the event. Take photographs of the memorial, ensuring the names are legible. Divide group/class into smaller research groups. Copy 20 names from the memorial onto pieces of paper ensuring they represent a range of ranks and regiments. Ask each research group to select a name to research. Encourage each group to build up a picture of the soldier's home and war experiences. Information gathered can then be entered onto the [Lives of the First World War](#) website.

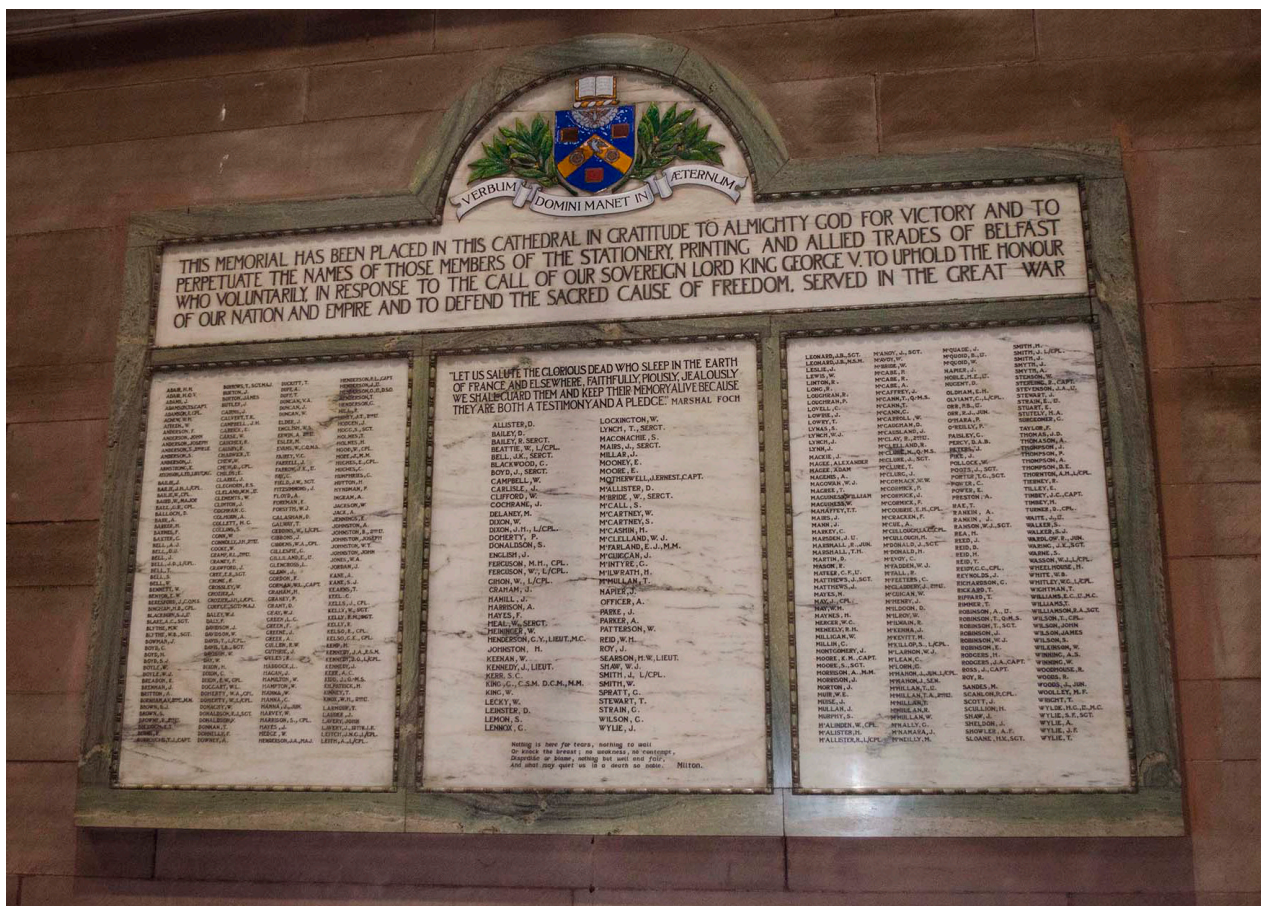
3. Explore Lives of the First World War website.

[Lives of the First World War](https://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.com/) is a digital memorial created by the Imperial War Museum (IWM) to remember men and women who saw active service during the First World War. The museum has uploaded the records of nearly 8 million service men and women from across Britain and the Commonwealth. Each entry acts as a personal timeline for an individual. IWM needs people to research and upload evidence to help build up the stories of these service personnel. The class/group can even form its own community around their location i.e.

- [Castleton Lanterns](https://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.com/castleton-lanterns/) is a community within the website that is hoping to research the men depicted on lantern slides found in Castleton Presbyterian Church.
- [Ballydehob at War](https://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.com/ballydehob-at-war/) is looking to find the life stories of the men who fought in the first world war from Ballydehob in the Mizen head Peninsula.

4. Reading the memorial.

The amount of information on a memorial relating to service personnel varies. Ideally the inscription will include full name, rank, regiment and gallantry awards, however some references are restricted to surname and initial.



Abbreviations after the name often represents gallantry awards. The following are abbreviations for awards from the First World War: VC (Victoria Cross), DSO (Distinguished Service Order), DSC (Distinguished Service Cross), MC (Military Cross), DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross), DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal), CGM (Conspicuous Gallantry Medal), DSM (Distinguished Service Medal), MM (Military Medal), DFM (Distinguished Flying Medal), AFM (Air Force Medal), MSM (Meritorious Service Medal), MID (Mentioned in Despatches).

IWM provides some information about [medals](https://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.com/medals/) and [Campaign medals](https://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.com/campaign-medals/). The Great War website has a detailed explanation of the [British Awards for Gallantry](https://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.com/british-awards-for-gallantry/).

Most common army rank abbreviations used:

MAJ Major; CAPT Captain; Lt, LIEU Lieutenant; 2nd LT Second Lieutenant; SGT-MAJ Sergeant Major; SERGT, SGT Sergeant; CPL Corporal; L. CPL Lance Corporal; PVT, PTe Private; RFN Rifleman.

5. Researching your soldier.

A great place to start is the [Find War Dead](#) search facility on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website. This will provide information on a soldier's service number, rank, regiment and grave location. Use the following links to build up a more detailed picture of the service personnel.

- The [1910 and 1911 censuses](#) will provide their address, date of birth, names of parents, children and siblings and type of housing.
- [Pension service records](#) are held at National Archives and can be searched online, however, the archive only contains 2% of the original records.
- A soldier's [medal index card](#) lists the name and date of the award and the issue of the London Gazette that contained the medal citation. BBC has a guide to [understanding a medal index card](#).
- [London Gazette World War I notices](#) contain the citations of bravery i.e.

**15572 C.S.M. R. Hamilton, M.M., R. Innis.
Fus. (Londonderry).**

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. During an attack he captured an enemy machine gun and three of its crew, single handed. While holding the line during the following days he rendered valuable assistance in reorganising the company and getting forward supplies of bombs and ammunition, on several occasions under fire. His example and cheerfulness throughout were magnificent.

- [Long, Long Tail](#) has a guide to each regiment, their theatres of war and links to regimental museums. Regimental Museums will contain copies of Battalion war diaries.

6. Tell your soldier's story.

Add the collected evidence to the soldier's timeline at Lives of the First World War and illustrate their life story. For help adding evidence to the individual life stories see [adding a life story](#).

Let's Remember Together

1. Find your connection [Learn how](#)
2. Sign up & press Remember
3. Share with friends & family

60,983 Members | [Log in](#)

Private James Ernest Beaney
Sign up and help to remember him forever.

Who will you Remember?
Together we can create Life Stories for more than 8 million men and women.

Search by surname and service #, e.g. "Tickle 13510"

7,128,436 Life Stories Added Search	99,880 Remembered View latest	513,817 Facts Added View most recent	1,831 Communities Browse latest
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KS3 Curricular Relevance

Areas of Learning: History

Key Elements:

- Investigate the impact of significant events/ideas of the 20th century on the world (Cultural Understanding).

Learning Outcomes:

- Research and manage information effectively to investigate historical issues, using Mathematics and ICT where appropriate;
- Communicate effectively in oral, visual, written, mathematical and ICT formats, showing clear awareness of audience and purpose.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities:

- Managing information;
- Thinking, problem-solving and decision-making;
- Working with others;
- Using ICT.

Developing Knowledge, Understanding and Skills:

- Continuity and change enquiry skills to undertake historical investigations;
- Critical thinking skills to evaluate a range of evidence and appreciate different interpretations;
- Chronological awareness and the ability to make connections between historical periods, events and turning points.

Activity 2: Soldiers' Experiences of Passchendaele

During the First World War, the soldiers confined to trenches along the Western Front faced appalling conditions. Passchendaele was described by many as the nadir of their experience. The Imperial War Museum has collected a mixture of interviews, photographs and paintings that record the battle. This activity explores the use of audio, photographs and paintings to depict the horrific conditions of Passchendaele.

War Art during the First World War

During the First World War, the government commissioned and purchased art to create a record of and a memorial to the war. Initially cameras were banned on the Western Front and only surveyors from the Royal Engineers were allowed to take photographs. It wasn't until 1916 that the first two official press photographers were commissioned by the British Government to take photographs of conditions at the front. In July 1916 a government propaganda department initiated the first war art scheme, commissioning artists to provide eye witness images to illustrate their propaganda publications. In 1917 the Department of Information was established. They broadened the war art schemes, commissioning leading artists of the day; [William Orpen](#), [Paul Nash](#) and [C. R. W. Nevinson](#) to explore different aspects of the war. In 1917 The Imperial War Museum was established to collect and commission art. The following year, The Department of Information became the Ministry of Information and established the British War Memorials Committee. The new ministry widened the scope of the war art scheme further to include 'fighting subjects, home subjects and the war at sea and in the air' for a proposed but never realised Hall of Remembrance. The committee commissioned artists such as Percy Wyndham Lewis, [Stanley Spencer](#) and [John Singer Sargent](#) to depict events.

31st July – 10th November 1917 Third Battle of Ypres/ Passchendaele

During the [Third Battle of Ypres](#), soldiers experienced horrendous conditions of rain and mud that physically drained and demoralised combatants.



General Hubert Gough of Co. Waterford, described the scenes from the battle:

"The surplus water poured into the trenches as its natural outlet, and they became impassable for troops; nor was it possible to walk over the open field - men staggered warily over duckboard tracks. Wounded men falling headlong into the shell-holes were in danger of drowning. Mules slipped from the tracks and were often drowned in the giant shell-holes alongside. Guns sank till they became useless; rifles caked and would not fire; even food was tainted with the inevitable mud. No battle in history was ever fought under such conditions as that of Passchendaele."

1. Discuss the image of the stretcher bearers wading used to illustrate the [Third Battle of Ypres](#) timeline entry. Discuss the purpose of the image, the effect on the general public at the time and the probable experiences and feelings of the men depicted. Compare the image with one of Gilbert Rogers paintings of stretcher bearers - [First World War Stretcher bearers of the Royal Army Medical Corps](#) and [The Dead Stretcher-bearer](#).



Gilbert Rogers - First World War Stretcher-bearers of the Royal Army Medical Corps © Wellcome Library

2. The Imperial War Museum *Voices of the First World War* podcast: [Passchendaele](#) features soldiers describing the conditions during the battle. The podcast is 25 minutes long and time-codes have been provided for each excerpt. Ask the class/ group to listen to the descriptions.

"It rained for three solid weeks and the plight of the men in the trenches in the northern part of Belgium was absolutely impossible. It was so impossible that the men coming out of the trenches who were wounded had to get rid of their kilts because they couldn't walk because the pleats were covered in this horrible slime which made such a weight. I've never seen conditions like it; in every trench it was two feet of water!"

Walter Cook of the Royal Army medical Corps ([Passchendaele](#) 06.23 – 07.03)

"So we were marched into Ypres with the baggage and machine guns in a lorry and up through Hellfire Corner going up the Menin Road where old Jerry used to shell all day and night. We passed that alright up Menin Road about half a mile... oh! What ruin... the horses, mules, men, everything dead across. I never saw such destruction in my life. And big shells coming over, bursting. We managed and we didn't catch a shell at all. Then we had to advance up two small ridges from the main road and there we came across small tanks that had been knocked out or stuck in the mud; they were no damn good at all."

Thomas Phillips of the Machine Gun Corps ([Passchendaele](#) 13.02 – 13.54)

"But it stuck to you all over ... it slowed you down, it got into the bottom of your trousers, You were covered with mud. The mud there wasn't liquid, it wasn't porridge; it was a curious kind of sucking kind of mud. When you got off this track with your load, it 'drew' at you, not like a quicksand, but a real monster that sucked at you."

Lewis Gunner Jack Dillon ([Passchendaele](#) 18.15 – 18.46)

"It was a nightmare, because all you had was a couple of duckboards side by side and either side of it was about ten feet of mud with the top of a tank sticking out of it here and there. If you fell off, it would take a traction engine to pull you out, almost. It was that deep – it was absolute sucking mud. There were cases when one or two men slipped off the duckboards and it took a couple of their comrades to pull them out gradually, inch by inch, when they managed to keep their arms out and they pulled them out, inch by inch, out of the mud and got them on again, on the boards again..."

Stretcher-bearer William Collins ([Passchendaele](#) 19.55 – 20.33)

"One of things that I remember chiefly there was the smell because the ammunition for the artillery had to be taken up on pack horses, with three 18-pounders on each side of the horse. So if the poor animals got hit and killed their bodies were laid out as food for the rats, you see, and of course the stench was abominable."

British private Donald Hodge ([Passchendaele](#) 22.30 – 22.56)

"It was mud, mud, everywhere: mud in the trenches, mud in front of the trenches, behind the trenches. Every shell hole was a sea of filthy oozing mud. I was tired of seeing infantry sinking back in that morass never to come out alive again. I was tired of all the carnage, of all the sacrifice that we had there just to gain about twenty-five yards. And there were many days when actually I don't remember them; I don't remember what happened because I was so damned tired. The fatigue in that mud was something terrible. It did get you and you reached a point where there was no beyond, you just could not go any further. And that's the point I'd reached."

British gunner John Palmer ([Passchendaele](#) 23.13 – 24.03)

3. Review the photographic gallery that accompanies the Imperial War Museum podcast *Voices of the First World War*: [Passchendaele](#). Discuss whether the photographs adequately illustrate the conditions experienced by the soldiers.

4. Paul Nash saw active service with the Artists Rifles 1914-1917 and was commissioned as a war artist from 1917. Review [Paul Nash's images of Belgium](#). Discuss the purpose of Nash's paintings. Compare the photographic and painted depiction of the battle, which is more successful?

5. Ask the class/ group to select one of the quotes from the podcast and to create their own artistic interpretation of a soldier's experience. These can be displayed in the classroom alongside the quote.

Find out about soldiers' experiences with these other Imperial War Museum resources:

- Voices of the First World war [Trench Life](#) podcast;
- [Living in the Trenches](#);
- [The Western Front](#);
- [Fighting in The Trenches](#).

KS3 Curricular Relevance

Areas of Learning: History, Art & Design

Key Elements:

- Investigate the impact of significant events/ideas of the 20th century on the world (History & Cultural Understanding);
- Critically investigate and evaluate the power of the media in their representation of a significant historical event or individual (History & Media Awareness);
- Investigate the long and short term causes and consequences of the partition of Ireland and how it has influenced Northern Ireland today including key events and turning points (History & Citizenship);
- Make an informed and critical response to a social/environmental issue (Art & Citizenship).

Learning Outcomes:

- Communicate effectively in oral, visual, written, mathematical and ICT formats, showing clear awareness of audience and purpose;
- Demonstrate creativity and initiative when developing ideas and following them through.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities:

- Being creative;
- Self-management;
- Using ICT.

Knowledge, Understanding and Skills:

- Understanding different perspectives and interpretations;
- Developing critical thinking skills to evaluate a range of evidence and appreciate different interpretations;
- Developing creative thinking skills in their approach to solving problems and making decisions;
- Researching, gathering and interpreting information from direct experiences, observations, memory, imagination and a range of traditional and digital sources;
- Developing an appreciation of the work of artists, designers and craft workers from their own and other cultures, past and present.

Activity 3: Recruitment Posters

Lord Kitchener successfully used recruitment posters to encourage volunteers to join the war effort. The posters were skilfully designed to appeal to a range of motivations and were adapted for different regions within the United Kingdom. An analysis of the designs of Irish recruitment posters reveals the motivations and attitudes towards recruitment in Ireland during the First World War.



10th August 1914

BEF travel to France and Belgium

On declaration of war with Germany the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) began to leave for France and Belgium. The BEF contained regulars, reservists and former soldiers from a number of different Irish battalions including 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, 5th Royal Irish Lancers, North Irish Horse, Irish Guards, 2nd Connaught Rangers, 2nd Royal Irish Regiment, Royal Irish Fusiliers, 2nd Royal Irish Rifles and 2nd Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

Additional forces were required for the front and Lord Kitchener, secretary of state for war, launched a recruitment campaign for volunteers. The Unionists offered the army 35,000 men from the Ulster Volunteer Force. These men went on to form their own division, the 36th (Ulster) division, whereas the National Volunteers joined the new 10th (Irish) and 16th (Irish) Divisions. The recruits to Kitchener's new divisions remained behind to train at Fermoy and Newcastle before travelling to Seaford and Aldershot to finish their training. By April 1916, there were 150,000 Irishmen on active service in the war.

First World War, Military & Policing, Nationalism, Unionism

WWI recruitment poster showing a man dressed in green addressing a soldier.
Library of Congress

The [British Expeditionary Forces \(BEF\)](#) consisting of regulars, reservists and former soldiers began to leave for France and Belgium in August 1914. Extra British Army recruits were required to face Germany's formidable army of four million soldiers. Lord Kitchener, secretary of state for war, launched a recruitment campaign for volunteers. Recruitment offices were set up all over the UK and millions of recruitment posters were designed and printed.

The recruitment campaign initially targeted all able-bodied men aged between 19 & 35 years of age who were over 5ft 3in. The poster campaign targeted these young men as well as those who had influence over potential recruits such as friends, spouses, girlfriends and relatives. Recruitment posters were designed to exploit motivations of national duty, sympathy, virility, guilt, fear, shame, comradeship and financial benefit. As the war progressed the upper age limit of volunteers increased and conscription was introduced in Britain in 1916.

1. Compare the two posters included in the Decade of Centenaries timeline. '[I'll go too!](#)' & [Mr John Redmond MP & The War](#). Ask the class to compare and contrast the styles of design. What message do the posters convey? Does the class/ group think they target the same audience?

2. Review the following Irish recruitment posters. Identify the primary target audience and the motivation exploited. Explore the combination of layout, language and graphics used. Discuss the effectiveness of the different styles of posters.

- [Irish Men avenge the Lusitania](#)
- [Give us a hand Old Man](#)
- [Irish Regiments want more men.](#)
- [Have you any women folk worth defending?](#)

- [An Irish Hero](#)
- [Will you make a Fourth?](#)
- [Have you a relation of friend serving?](#)
- [Ireland's war map](#)
- [The isle of Saints and Scholars](#)
- [Farmers of Ireland defend your possessions](#)
- [The Huns have desecrated and destroyed the cathedrals of France and Belgium.](#)
- [Come Join the happy throng](#)
- [Do you understand horses?](#)
- [Royal Marine Labour Corps](#)

3. Discuss the potency of the imagery used in these recruitment posters. Would the posters have the same impact today as they did 100 years ago, encouraging 20,000 men in the UK to join up everyday?

4. Discuss with the class/group whether attitudes towards British Army recruitment in Ireland might have changed during the war. Can they find evidence of this in changes in the content and design of recruitment posters?

Other sources for examples of recruitment posters:

- [Imperial War Museum Recruitment Posters slide show:](#)
- [Slide show of First World War posters from Journal.ie.](#)

KS3 Curricular Relevance

Areas of Learning: History, Art & Design

Key Elements:

- Investigate the impact of significant events/ideas of the 20th century on the world (Cultural Understanding);
- Critically investigate and evaluate the power of the media in their representation of a significant historical event or individual (Media Awareness);
- Investigate the long and short term causes and consequences of the partition of Ireland and how it has influenced Northern Ireland today including key events and turning points (Citizenship);
- Investigate and respond to the use of visual language, logos and catchphrases in advertising (Art & Design & Media Awareness).

Learning Outcomes:

- Communicate effectively in oral, visual, written, mathematical and ICT formats, showing clear awareness of audience and purpose.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities:

- Managing information;
- Thinking, problem-solving and decision-making;
- Using ICT.

Knowledge Understanding and skills:

- Understanding cause and effect;
- Developing critical thinking skills to evaluate a range of evidence and appreciate different interpretations.