

Box 10: Silence of Gas



List of contents:

1. Parcel – a handkerchief with the photograph of Colonel Lipsett
(Colonel Louis James Lipsett by William Orpen (1918) *Amgueddfa ac Oriol Gelf Castell Cyfarthfa/ Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery*)
2. Information on Colonel Lipsett – in command of the Canadians suffering the first gas attack
3. Warning rattles (one large, one small)
4. Zappar code to story of Mrs Jenkins who washed her son's gas mask

Key information:

- Gas attacks were first used in WW1. It was an uncontrollable method of attack, as weather conditions determined if the attack would be successful. Sometimes the wind blew the chemicals back.
- Colonel Lipsett was in command of the Canadian forces when they suffered a gas attack. He told them to urinate on their handkerchiefs and place them over their nose and mouth. The chemicals in the urine provided some protection against the chemicals.
- Rattles were used to warn people of a gas attack.
- Canaries were used to gauge if a gas attack had taken place.
- Early gas masks were mainly cloth in structure but treated with a chemical. In the story from the Zappar code, when Mrs Jenkins washes her son's mask, she inadvertently destroyed the chemicals protecting her son.
- Damage to health caused by the chemicals used in the gas could last a life time. Mustard gas also damaged DNA.
- There were different sorts of gas and they were categorised by their effects:
 - Respiratory Irritants
 - Lachrymators (tear gases)
 - Sternutators (causing sneezing)
 - Vesicants (causing blistering)

Sometimes a cocktail of different gasses was used to maximise the damage caused.

- Gas was heavier than air so could float down into trenches. It caused anxiety and panic, impacting on morale, as no one had ever experienced it before.
- Gas warfare was unique to WW1. It was so horrendous that it has rarely been used since. In 1925, the Geneva Protocol prohibited the use of chemical weapons. However, they have been used since for example by USA in Vietnam and by Iraq in Iran/Iraq war 1980 – 1988.

Documents included:

Image of Colonel Lipsett: (Colonel Louis James Lipsett by William Orpen (1918) *Amgueddfa ac Oriel Gelf Castell Cyfarthfa/ Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery*)



Zappar code:

Story of Mrs Jenkins and the gas mask



10. Silence of Gas: questions



1. What do you think is inside this case?
2. Where do you think this case has travelled to?

3. Carefully unwrap the parcel. Who do you think the image is of and why has it been printed on a handkerchief?
4. Read the information sheet about Major Lipsett.
5. Try the rattles out – how do they sound? Why are they in this box?
6. Do you think they are an effective warning system?



7. Listen to the story from the Zappar code about Mrs Jenkins and her son.
8. What do you think about the story?
9. How do you think Mrs Jenkins felt?

Box 10. Silence of Gas

Suggested box combinations

- Box 6 Silence of the Aftermath of War
- Box 11 Silence of Surveillance

Suggested activities

- Listen to the story about Mrs Jenkins.
- Create a storyboard about the event. Start when her son came home on leave. Was it day or night, how did he/she feel to see each other? How did she welcome him home? Include a scene of her washing his gas mask and his journey back to the front line. When did he find out his gas mask didn't work? How did he feel? What happened after the war?

Caring for the box after use

- Please re wrap the handkerchief.
- Carefully place everything back in the box.
- Please let us know if the Zappar code included in the box does not work.