

EVERYDAY LIFE DURING WORLD WAR ONE

EUSTORY 2014-2015

INTRODUCTION

In 2014-2015, the centre for democracy and history BELvue, organised its 8th annual Eustory history competition. The topic this time around was:

100 Years since the First World War – Everyday life during World War One

THE BRIEF THAT WAS SENT TO TEACHERS

“Conduct a history project with your pupils about everyday life during the First World War, calling on the assistance of a Belga journalist.”

2014 marks the start of the commemorations of the first-ever major conflict to be fought on a truly global scale with as their theme “100 Years since the First World War 14-18”. In this context, a wide range of publications and events will remind us of the strategic and military factors and political interests that led to World War One.

But history is not only something to be found in books. History is above all experienced first-hand by men, women and children. Many thousands of people lost their lives in this war, while many thousands more carried with them for the rest of their days the scars of the oppression and hardships they faced during their time under occupation.

Historians consistently draw on eyewitness accounts and stories of people who actually experienced the events they are describing. Against this backdrop, Belga is teaming up with BELvue/the King Baudouin Foundation (KBF) to seek out the human story behind the broad historical canvas we are generally presented with. In our Eustory competition we invite you and your pupils to compile these accounts yourselves, thereby bringing everyday life during the First World War back to life. However, you will not be alone in this task. Every group that reaches the pre-selection stage will receive the assistance of an experienced Belga journalist.

The 2014-2015 project

From September 2014 until March 2015, you along with your class (or a group of pupils) will develop an original, creative project about a theme from everyday life in Belgium during the country's 1914-1918 occupation. Any facet of daily life can be addressed, e.g. school; food and nutrition; leisure time; children; women; everyday life at the front; and communications. You will contact experts or specialists in that domain and then adapt their accounts to the broader historical context and take a critical look at what they have said. You will then incorporate all this into a ground-breaking personal, original and creative piece of work. You can use whatever medium you like (written text, audio report, video, blog, newspaper, etc.), but each format should be accompanied by an explanatory text of up to 10 pages.

This edition, "Eustory 14-18", is a very special one, so don't miss out!

BELvue/KBF is working in partnership with Belga on this year's Eustory competition. Journalists from Belga will be actively supporting the projects they are mentoring, helping you with accessing certain archives, writing texts, interviewing eyewitnesses and making use of their stories, and analysing sources, or if necessary, with editing video or audio recordings.

Eustory 14-18 is the perfect opportunity to get young people interested in history, give them a better understanding of society and boost their personal development by putting them in touch with interesting new contacts.

PROCESS

The schools were given the time to consult sources and subsequently to use them as they themselves saw fit.

This time around, we placed additional emphasis on these sources. As the war forming the subject of this competition started 100 years ago, a lot of attention was paid to this conflict in the media and all kinds of organisations, for example, laid on exhibitions or other events, created websites and published books dedicated to this subject, providing ample inspiration for the pupils and giving them the chance to come into contact with various sources they could then delve into further.

We deliberately left the form in which these sources were integrated into their project wide open. We did not explicitly ask for a written text or paper or similar. Instead, we gave the young people's creativity free rein, so enabling technical and vocational colleges to involve their pupils in a way that suited them.

Our expectations in this regard were fulfilled. By and large, those following general curricula produced some kind of paper or book or an app richly illustrated with photos and information, while those taking technical and vocational subjects mainly came up with an exhibition, a model or for instance dishes prepared as they would have been in that period.

When they were analysing their sources, the schools were able to call on the assistance of a journalist from a press agency who could advise them on and help them with finding, selecting, evaluating and interpreting these sources.

At the end of the competition, the schools submitted their entries to a jury bringing together experts from a variety of museums involved in providing education about history. There was one jury for Dutch-speaking schools and another for French-speaking institutions.

The entries were judged on the basis of their historical accuracy and use of sources, their creativity, and their teamwork. There was one prize up for grabs for each criterion in each language group, so six prizes in total.

At the end of the school year, once the entries had been sent in and the jury had read through them, the schools were also asked to present the work they had submitted in a type of exhibition for the jury and the other schools. This resulted in a highly rewarding interaction taking place between the various types of projects (more theoretical or more practical) and across the two language groups. In addition, the young people were asked to award a prize for the public's favourite project (the public's prize), with each young person being invited to vote for both a Dutch-speaking project and a French-

speaking project. In this way, the youngsters were encouraged to also have a look at the projects from the other language group.

RESULTS

Prizes awarded to schools from the Flemish Community:

The prize for creativity was awarded to KSO Glorieux in Ronse for their project “A schizophrenically nationalistic country”, a cartoon strip about the dichotomy between resistance and collaboration during the First World War. Two pupils drew the cartoons while the rest of the class worked on the storyline and the texts. The strip will also be printed.

The pupils from sixth-year humanities at the Sint-Pietersinstituut in Turnhout won the prize for teamwork for their project “Childhood on the eve of and during WWI”. They had prepared various lessons about this subject in small groups and had then actually laid on these workshops for fourth-, fifth- and sixth-year primary-school children.

The prize for historical research went to MSKA in Roeselare for their project "The planet Jupiter is hiding behind the clouds to avoid seeing the misdeeds committed by humanity – A requisitory against the war by the headteacher of a school in an occupied town". Based on the school diaries kept from 1914 to 1921 by Emiel Benoot, head of the Wereldlijke School voor Jongens boys' school in Roeselare, the pupils developed web publications, an exhibition and two hands-on activities involving other pupils about war and education, assistance and peaceful resistance to the war.

The public's prize was won by the Sint-Pietersinstituut in Turnhout.

Prizes awarded to schools from the French Community:

The prize for creativity was awarded to the Institut Saint-Luc in Saint-Gilles for producing a magazine called *Le strapontin* (The folding seat) about the cultural sector in Brussels during the occupation. This multidisciplinary project brought together four classes of this art college, with the magazine's layout, articles and illustrations all being taken care of by the pupils of the various sections.

The prize for teamwork was won by CSL Georges Cousot in Dinant for their project “The 14-18 war as considered by 14-18-year-olds”, an exhibition dealing with various issues related to everyday life during the First World War, such as the position of women, children's everyday life, life in the trenches, the place of Dinant in the war and also technological development. Not only were various classes in the school involved in the project, but also a number of specialisms, e.g. designer, builder, cook and IT expert. The exhibition was held at the school and attracted a large number of visitors.

The prize for historical research went to the Athénée Royal René Magritte in Lessines for their project “Civilian deportees in Lessines and in the Collines hill region during the First World War”. The school conducted a large-scale project over a number of years about the town's civilian deportees. This year they not only performed extensive research in various previously unused archives but also produced a guided tour of the town led by the pupils, the script of a play about the civilian deportees, and the website <http://www.lessines-14-18.be> which brings together the whole project.

In the afternoon, the pupils also voted for their favourite project. The Institut Saint-Luc won the most votes from the other participants and so picked up the public's prize.