

We Die Like Brothers

Activity 11

An International Story

This pack compliments the teaching of history and citizenship at Key Stage 3 (England) and Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It can be used to support a visit to Delville Wood Memorial in France, where the We Die Like Brothers exhibition about the Mendi was opened in summer 2015, or it can be used to explore the First World War in the classroom. This pack was created to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the loss of the Mendi in 2017.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

An International Story worksheet on page 39.

Posters from pages 1-5.

Exploring Inequality sources from pages 18-19.

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

An International Story

This activity combines history and geography and explores places that are important to the Mendi's story. It is outlined on the following page.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will place the story of the Mendi, and subsequently the First World War, in a global context.

Pupils will be engaged in a cross-discipline activity which also reinforces their understanding of geography.

Homework/Extension activities

Read the worksheet called 'Belonging' on page 40.

Answer the questions about landmarks.

Contact the school you partnered with for Activity 7 – Making Links (pages 28-29).

Discuss with them their local landmarks. How do they differ from your own?

SS MENDI

Research the following places – they are all important to the story of the Mendi and are all included in the information in this resource pack. Find out where they are and add them to the map.

The Western Front

The site of the wreck

Delville Wood

Zaandvort, Holland

Glasgow

Le Havre

Cape Town

Plymouth

Liverpool

Belonging

Homelands are important to all people of the world. Sergeant MacTavish, who died on the Mendi, wrote to his wife:

'It was a very welcome sight to see the Eddystone Lighthouse standing out in the open sea miles from anywhere and then the view of Lands End, the Lizard and Cornish coast...'

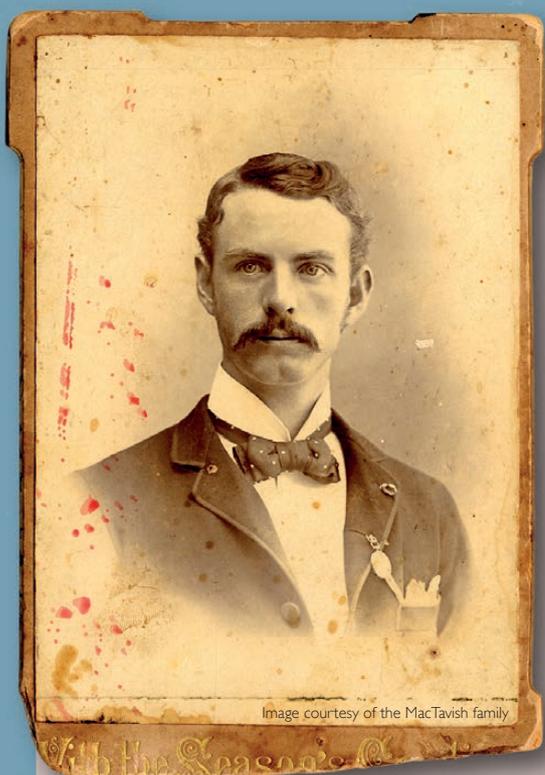
What landmarks are important to you?

What things do you recognise when returning from a trip that remind you that you are home?

These could be national landmarks (the White Cliffs of Dover are iconic in Britain), or local landmarks, like a church, street or park.

Members of the South African Native Labour Corps travelled a long way from their homes in order to support the British Army. Look again at the sources from Activity 4 – Exploring Inequality.

Which source confirms this?



The Natives Land Act was passed in South Africa in 1913. This gave 80% of the land in the country to white people, even though only 20% of the population were white. This was one of the reasons that South Africans joined the South African Native Labour Corps. They wanted to support Britain during the First World War as they hoped that by doing this, they would earn respect and be allowed to be involved in making political decisions. Sadly this did not happen and during the 20th century South Africa was divided by **apartheid**.

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Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

Information and question sheets on pages 42-53.

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We Die Like Brothers

Activity 12

Classroom Courtroom

Classroom Courtroom

After the Mendi sank, an inquiry was held to find out how the tragedy occurred. In this activity, you are challenged to set up your own classroom courtroom, to see if you agree with the verdict of the Mendi Inquiry.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will explore the English justice system.

Pupils will develop skills in producing clear and reasoned arguments for and against an outcome.

Homework/Extension activities

Summarise in your work books the arguments for and against Stump being guilty.

SS MENDI

The Mendi sank on February 21st 1917 shortly after 5am. It was a very foggy morning and in the thick fog the Captain of a mailship called the Darro did not see the Mendi. The Darro hit the Mendi causing catastrophic damage, leading to the deaths of over 600 men.

The fog was so thick that before the collision, the Mendi had slowed down, sounded a whistle and lit additional lamps. The Captain of the Darro did not reduce speed or sound a whistle.

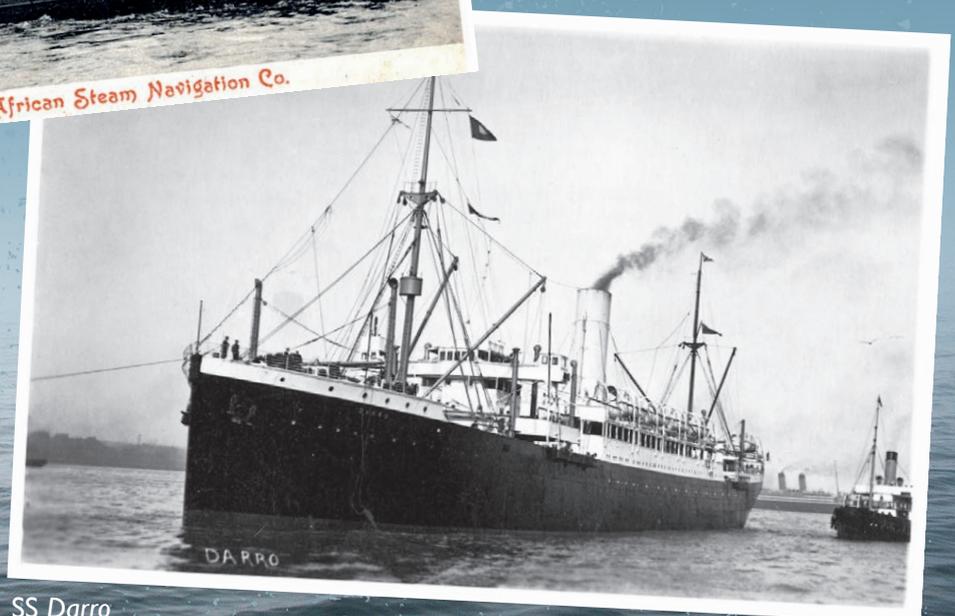
After the incident there was an inquiry to determine the facts of what happened and as a result of this Henry Stump, Captain of the Darro, was punished. There were calls for Stump to face trial because he did not help the men of the Mendi after the incident, but this did not happen.

Use the information below to set up a classroom courtroom to decide whether Stump can be held responsible for the tragedy, or whether it was an unfortunate accident. Do your jurors find him innocent or guilty of the charge of manslaughter relating to the deaths of the men of the Mendi? And if he is guilty, what punishment does your judge think he should receive?

You may like to divide the class in two to conduct this activity. There can be more than one person on the Council for the Defence and on the Council for the Prosecution, and 10 pupils should form the jury.



SS Mendi



SS Darro

We Die Like Brothers
Classroom Courtroom

The Roles

Judge

The role of the judge is to keep order in the courtroom, to oversee events and to pass sentencing if the **defendant** is found guilty.

The Defendant

Henry Stump

Captain of the Darro

Witness

Henry Yardley

Captain of the Mendi

Witness

Lieutenant-Commander Algernon Lyons

Captain of the Brisk. The Brisk was a Royal Navy ship that was accompanying the Mendi.

Witness

Carpenter from the Brisk

The Jury

The ten members of the jury listen to all of the evidence and decide whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

Council for the Prosecution

The role of the prosecution is to present all of the evidence that suggests that Stump is guilty. They can question witnesses to get their side of the story, and present evidence that they have learned from studying the case themselves to try and persuade the jury that Stump is guilty.

Council for the Defence

The role of the defence is to present all of the evidence that suggests that Stump is innocent. They can question witnesses to get their side of the story, and present evidence that they have learned themselves from studying the case to try and persuade the jury that Stump is innocent.

Order of Events

1. The judge introduces the case and gives the court background information about the tragedy. They should include a description of what happened including when and where. The judge should also mention how many people died. Everything the judge says should be factual, and should not be used to influence the jury's decision.
2. The judge then introduces the defendant – Henry Stump, Captain of the Darro. The Council for the Prosecution and the Council for the Defence can then ask him any relevant question about the tragedy and the pupil playing him should answer them as truthfully as they are able. Repeat this for each witness in turn.
3. We have given some example questions that you could start with, and you can come up with your own. There is background information to help the defendant and each of the witnesses to answer their questions.
4. When all of the witnesses have been called and questioned, the Council for the Prosecution summarises for the jury all of the reasons why they think Stump is guilty. The Council for the Defence then summarises for the jury all of the reasons why they think he is innocent.
5. The jury then need to decide whether they think Stump is innocent of the deaths of the men of the Mendi, or if he is guilty. A majority of the jury have to agree in order to pass a verdict.
6. A foreman for the jury then stands up and announces the verdict.
7. The Judge can then decide what sentence Henry Stump should have, if he is found guilty. Will you send him to prison? How long for?
8. Finally, the judge will read out the statement at the end of the activity which outlines what really happened at the inquiry, and the punishment that Stump was given. Do you think Stump's punishment was fair?

We Die Like Brothers
Classroom Courtroom

Questions for Henry Stump, Captain of the Darro

Council for the Prosecution

- Please describe in your own words what happened on the morning of February 21st 1917?
- What speed were you travelling at when your ship collided with the SS Mendi?
- What were the weather conditions like on the morning of the collision?
- Please describe to the court the actions you took to keep your vessel, and others around you, safe in the heavy fog?
- It is true, is it not Captain Stump, that after the collision you provided little or no assistance to the men who were in the water?
- Please explain the reasons behind this decision.

Council for the Defence

- Henry Stump, what were your first thoughts when you realised that the Darro had collided with another vessel?
- Please tell the court your reasons for travelling at speed on the morning in question.
- I present to the court the evidence of the radio transcript recorded shortly after the incident. In it the Darro reports damage to the ship. Could this explain why you did not offer assistance to those in the water? Were you instead concerned for the safety of your own crew?
- Some of the men from the Mendi were rescued from the water by the Darro – roughly how many men did your ship rescue Mr Stump?
- And despite the threat of submarines, did you leave the area immediately after the incident Mr Stump?

Henry Stump, Captain of the Darro Background information

Henry Winchester Stump was born in London in 1866. He was an experienced sailor having been awarded his certificate of competency in 1896, and from there worked his way up the ranks to command his first ship in 1906. Despite this Stump had had previous incidents – in 1916 in heavy fog and whilst in command of Darro’s sister ship Drina, Stump had hit another vessel. He also collided with a wall at the quay in the French port of Le Havre the day before the Mendi disaster. On the morning the Mendi sank, the Darro was sailing at the ship’s top speed of about 14 knots. It was a very foggy morning and given the poor visibility, this seems to have been an excessive speed. Stump also broke marine law by failing to sound the ship’s whistle. Stump claimed that he was concerned about the threat of submarines, and he claimed that he had orders to travel quickly, though when questioned he couldn’t remember who gave him these orders and the court thought he may have made them up. He did turn on the Darro’s navigation lights and he did post lookouts around the ship.

Stump saw the Mendi’s lights through the fog, and heard the Mendi’s whistle but by the time he noticed them, it was too late and a collision was unavoidable. After the collision Stump backed the Darro out of the hole in the Mendi, and retreated into the fog to anchor a short distance away. The crew of the Darro did not see the Mendi sink through the heavy fog.

The first radio transmission about the disaster was made by the Darro and was picked up by the Brisk, a Royal Navy ship accompanying the Mendi.

After the collision, the Darro anchored a short distance away and Stump ordered his carpenter to check the ship for damage. He also ordered his crew to go to the lifeboat stations and prepare the lifeboats for launching. At 5.40am he radioed the Brisk to say that the Darro was sinking. He made no attempt to find out what happened to the Mendi. About 50 minutes after the impact, a lifeboat from the Mendi came alongside the Darro and the Darro took the men onboard. The crew of the Darro did not take the lifeboat back to attempt to rescue any more men. The crew of the Darro reported being able to hear the men of the Mendi shouting in the water. The Darro left the scene at 10.12am having rescued 107 survivors from the water who had reached the Darro by lifeboat or life raft.

At the Inquiry Stump was evasive and contradicted himself, and was contradicted by members of his own crew. He claimed that he did not hear the men of the Mendi shouting in the water, that he didn’t send his own life boats to rescue the men of the Mendi because he didn’t want to lose the lifeboats in case his crew needed them and he claimed that he didn’t have enough crew members to man them, despite having 163 healthy men onboard. Even after two boat loads of men from the Mendi came alongside and boarded the Darro, Stump did nothing.

Receiving Ship	Transmitting Ship	Time of Day	Time of Day	Time of Day	Remarks	Message
All ships	s.s. Darro	5.0 am	Q	En clair (subbot)	S.S. Darro in collision ten miles South of St. Catherine's. Is there any assistance required, can you proceed and at what speed?	
s.s. Darro	"	5.4 am	Q	No answer		
s.s. Darro	"	5.35 am	Q	En clair	What is extent of damage?	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.39 am	Q	En clair	Will feed out.	
All ships	s.s. Darro	5.40 am	Q	En clair	S.S. Darro sinking twelve South of St. Catherine's.	
Capt. D II	Brisk	5.40 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton	0600. Goney Mendi in collision, damage unknown.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.40 am	Q	En clair	SS/DARRO (local)	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.40 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton	0600. Mendi sunk picking up survivors. Darro reports sinking.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.45 am	Q	En clair	Do you want any assistance? How are you getting on?	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	En clair	All O.K. so far.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	Commercial - made several times - no reply	Have you anything to communicate?	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	Commercial - made several times - no reply	0645 Steamer Darro reports: all O.K. so far.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	Commercial - made several times - no reply	0655 Inform Mendi's position at time of sinking. Have you anything to communicate?	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	Commercial - made several times - no reply	0700 Reply 0655. 10 miles South of St. Catherine's. Captain of MENDI onboard.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	En clair	O.K. here up to present.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	En clair	What is the extent of damage?	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	En clair	Still awaiting instructions from bridge.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	En clair	I have sent to bridge for instructions.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	DARRO collided with MENDI 8 miles South of St. Catherine's Point. Trying to make Southampton for proceeding emergency.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	If you do not require me to stand by I will shortly proceed to port.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	0650 "To what port should BRISK proceed?"	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	What is your present course and speed? When did you leave scene of collision?	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	0650 "Have picked up MENDI according to St. Helena at slow speed."	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	What had dead also just leaving scene.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	0650 Your 0610. To the most convenient defended port. After returning to base.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	1000 Am proceeding to St. Helena Roads with survivors of MENDI: Captain, 4 officers, 11 white ratings, 1 military officer, 3 sergeants, many coloured men saved.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	1100 Weather permitting expect arrive 12.45 pm. 70 natives saved, 10 dead on board.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	1106 Report what base you are proceeding to utilise local patrol boats for landing survivors if possible.	
Brisk	s.s. Darro	5.55 am	Q	General Service	1200 Proceeding to St. Helena arrive at 1 p.m.	

Log of radio messages sent and received by HMS Brisk which was in the vicinity of the Mendi when it sank. For a larger version see Source K on page xx from Activity 1 – Understanding Chronology

Questions for Henry Yardley, Captain of the Mendi

Council for the Prosecution

- Captain Yardley, please describe what happened on the morning of February 21st 1917.
- What precautions had you taken in order to safeguard your ship given the heavy fog?
- At what point did you become aware of the disaster that was about to unfold?

Council for the Defence

- Captain Yardley, how many lifeboats were on board the Mendi? How many men could the lifeboats hold?
- And how many men were onboard when the incident occurred?
- Do you think the number of lifeboats was adequate for such a big vessel in such dangerous waters?
- Did all of the men have lifebelts on? And did they all know how to use them properly?
- Is it possible that many men died because your vessel did not have adequate safety equipment on board and adequate training in how to use it?

Henry Yardley, Captain of the Mendi

Background information

Henry Arthur Yardley was born in the Midlands in 1862 and was a gifted mariner. Early in his career whilst shipwrecked in the South Pacific he took charge of a lifeboat and sailed it to the safety of Tahiti, saving the lives of the men onboard. He gained his Certificate of Competency as an Extra Master at the age of 27 – a remarkable achievement for someone so young and self-taught. He commanded his first steamship in 1898.

On her final voyage the Mendi was accompanied by HMS Brisk, a Royal Navy Ship and both travelled at the Mendi's top speed of 12 knots. As darkness fell, Yardley ordered the Mendi's oil lamps to be lit – he insisted on oil lamps instead of electric as he felt they were more visible in fog. At 11.30 the Mendi began to encounter patches of fog and Yardley ordered the ship's whistle to be sounded every minute as a warning to other vessels. As the fog worsened the Mendi slowed to between 6 and 8 knots. Several men of the labour corps were posted on deck as lookouts.

Shortly before 5am, Yardley left the bridge to check his position in the chart room. Whilst he was absent officers in the **bridge** of the Mendi saw the lights of the Darro loom out of the fog, and heard the Darro's engines. The Mendi's whistle was sounded three times and the officer in the bridge put the Mendi's engines into reverse. It was too late however and the Darro hit the Mendi hard, throwing Yardley (who having heard the whistle was rushing to the bridge) off of his feet and onto the deck.

Yardley ordered the men to their lifeboat stations and ordered the lifeboats to be lowered into the water. Unfortunately, as water flooded into the Mendi and the ship listed to one side the three lifeboats on the **starboard** side could not be launched. Only two of the lifeboats from the **port** side were launched successfully. Over 800 men were on board and the two lifeboats could carry only 97 men. Even if all six lifeboats had been launched, they could only have held 298 men. The Mendi also carried life rafts capable of saving many lives, however in the panic the men attempted to untie the ropes that secured them to the deck, instead of cutting the ropes as intended. All of the men had lifebelts and had practiced putting them on during regular drills, however witness statements after the event suggest that many of the men drowned after succumbing to hypothermia because they did not have their lifebelts on properly.

Yardley stepped into the freezing water as the Mendi sank below the waves and was rescued by HMS Brisk. He went on to continue his career as a captain.

Questions for Lieutenant-Commander Algernon Lyons, Captain of the Brisk

Council for the Prosecution

- Please describe where your ship was in relation to the Mendi on the night in question.
- Why was the Brisk accompanying the Mendi on that fateful night?
- At what point did you realise there was a problem?
- Please describe the radio communications between your vessel, and the Darro.
- The Darro radioed to say that they were sinking. Did the Darro sink on that fateful night?

Council for the Defence

- Your ship was some distance behind the Mendi was it not?
- And in heavy fog your visibility of the incident was heavily impaired. Could you really see what happened that fateful morning?
- As a Naval man, please describe for the court the threat that submarines posed in this stretch of water.
- Is it entirely plausible that Captain Stump was simply trying to protect his ship and crew from submarines by reaching land quickly when he was in very dangerous waters?

Captain of the Brisk – Lieutenant-Commander Algernon Lyons

Background information

The Brisk was a Royal Navy Destroyer that was sent to accompany the Mendi as she crossed the Channel to protect the Mendi from enemy ships and submarines. German submarines were a very real threat to British ships in the English Channel - an unseen threat that could attack without warning. Travelling in **convoy** was an effective deterrent and so the troopship Mendi was accompanied by the heavily armed Brisk. The Darro was not travelling in convoy and Stump claimed that he had been given orders to make the journey quickly because of the submarine threat.

At the time of the incident the Brisk was behind the Mendi, following at a distance of approximately 180m. The Brisk could see through the fog the stern (rear) light of the Mendi.

The Brisk saw the Darro seconds before the collision and altered course to steer clear of danger. The Brisk then returned to the scene and tried to contact the Mendi by megaphone and by radio. The Brisk received no response from the Mendi but crew heard men shouting in the water. The Brisk lowered lifeboats to offer assistance and eventually rescued 137 men from the water, including Captain Yardley of the Mendi.

At 5.40 the Darro sent a radio message to the Brisk that read 'SOS SS Darro sinking twelve south of St Catherines'. SOS stands for save our souls and is a commonly used distress call. St Catherines is St Catherine's Point, a location on the Isle of Wight. At 6.25 the Darro follows with 'All O.K. so far'. The Brisk and the Darro left the scene in convoy shortly after 10am.

Carpenter of the Darro

Council for the Prosecution

- Stump sent you to check the Darro after the collision is that true?
- And did you notice any damage to the ship, such that would cause the Darro to sink?
- At what time did you inform Captain Stump that the Darro was not badly damaged by the collision?
- Stump radioed the Brisk at 5.40am to say that she was sinking. Is it likely that you made your report to him that the ship was not in fact sinking before he radioed to say that it was?

Council for the Defence

- Please describe what Stump was like as a captain.
- Is there a possibility that the events of the morning caused Stump to completely lose his nerve? Might his reaction have been less heartlessness, and more shock?

Carpenter of the Darro

Background information

None of the crew of the Darro expressed any negative comments about Stump at the inquiry and his employer gave him a good character reference. Whilst it may have been hard for the crew to criticise their captain, an experienced seaman, it is likely that one of them would have spoken truthfully had he been a poor captain in light of the tragedy that occurred.

After the collision Stump sent his carpenter to check the ship. The Carpenter was able to quickly establish that the ship was sound and that she was not sinking. Several reports were sent to Captain Stump to tell him this, however 10 minutes after receiving these reports Stump radioed the Brisk to say that his ship was sinking. Stump gave no explanation for this at the inquiry.

At the inquiry it was said of Stump - *'Either the master was utterly callous to all sentiments of humanity or, as a result of the collision, his nerve deserted him to such an extent as to render him incapable of rational thought or action.'*

What actually happened at the Inquiry

The inquiry was held over 5 days in July and August 1917. Three captains from the Royal Navy and Naval Reserve assisted magistrate J G Halkett to oversee proceedings. This type of inquiry was unusual for the time and it shows that the British Government was keen to show the Government of South Africa that the tragedy was not being covered up, and that it was being properly investigated.

In total 18 witnesses were called to give evidence though there does not appear to have been any attempt to hear from black members of the South African Native Labour Corps. The inquiry found that most of the deaths were caused by hypothermia due to the extremely cold water of the Channel.

Yardley, Captain of the Mendi, was found to have acted appropriately and was not blamed in any way for the tragedy. Stump, Captain of the Darro, was found to be at fault. His ship had been travelling too fast, and he didn't provide help to the men of the Mendi after the incident. The court found his actions to be inexcusable.

Stump was punished with the loss of his Ship Master's Certificate for just one year. He was able to command a ship again before the war had ended. He did not stand trial for the loss of life caused by his actions.

We Die Like Brothers

Activity 13

Commemoration

This pack compliments the teaching of history and citizenship at Key Stage 3 (England) and Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It can be used to support a visit to Delville Wood Memorial in France, where the We Die Like Brothers exhibition about the Mendi was opened in summer 2015, or it can be used to explore the First World War in the classroom. This pack was created to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the loss of the Mendi in 2017.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

Commemoration statements on page 55.

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

Commemoration

2017 marked the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Mendi. People from South Africa and Britain marked the anniversary with services held in both countries, and over the wreck site itself.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will explore themes of commemoration and remembrance.

Pupils will understand the importance of commemorating past events.

Homework/Extension activities

Look online for news articles and newspaper stories about the 100 year commemorations of the sinking of the SS Mendi. Write a short blog post summarising the events that marked that anniversary and use the statements you have explored in this activity to explain why it was important to commemorate the sinking of the ship through these events.



2017 marked the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Mendi. People from South Africa and Britain marked the anniversary with services held in both countries, and over the wreck site itself. Remembrance and commemoration are very important. Read the statements below. Put the statements in order of importance - from the most important reason for commemoration and remembrance to the least important reason. Explain your answers.

- A** Remembrance events are important to honour the sacrifice made by people in the past, for our freedom today.
- B** Commemorative events are opportunities for groups to bond over a shared loss. They can help communities to come together.
- C** Acts of remembrance connect us with our past and our ancestors, and remind us of our place in the world today.
- D** Acts of commemoration remind us to learn from past mistakes. By remembering the war we are familiarising ourselves with the reasons that it happened, so that we might stop it happening again.
- E** These events allow us to be proud of the actions of men and women in the past – and recognise that many of them faced incredible danger with strength and bravery.

Events to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Mendi took place for all of the reasons above. The statements below are about the Mendi. Link each of the statements above with one of the numbered sentences below by writing its number in the box above.

1 The Mendi acted as a symbol for the people of South Africa to come together in the face of adversity. During years of racism and apartheid South Africans used the Mendi and the courage that the men showed as inspiration to unite and remain strong.

3 The commemorations focused on the bravery of the men who died when the Mendi sank. All of the accounts of the sinking tell of courage and bravery in the face of huge adversity. We should remember these men with pride.

5 Many aspects of the story of the Mendi have a theme of racism and racial oppression – from the way the South African Native Labour Corps were not trained to fight in case they turned on their white rulers after the war; to the inferior treatment of the black men on board the ship. We can learn from these terrible mistakes, to build a world in which racism is eradicated and unity and equality is promoted.

2 Over 600 people died when the Mendi sank. Many of them had volunteered to serve Britain in a war many miles from their home. Their sacrifice should be honoured.

4 Relatives of men who died in the Mendi tragedy came to honour their relatives at ceremonies to mark the 100th anniversary of the disaster. Keeping the story of the Mendi alive through commemorative events helps the relatives of those involved to understand the journey that their family has been on to result in their presence here today. Commemorative events can help us all to understand our place in the world by reminding us of the lessons of history.

**We Die Like Brothers
Commemoration**