

# Topic 5: On active service

## Work Sheet 5D: Whose Service?

### Hypothesis 1:

Over the past centuries, historians have often upheld the proposition that the important people of history are the leaders of movements, countries and military campaigns. It is critical that we recognise, understand and commemorate these achievements. It is the military leaders who have made 'the real stuff' of history. We need to understand their personalities, the challenges they faced and the living and fighting conditions under which they operated to truly understand the past and appreciate it. The men who made up their armies were only doing their duty and following orders.

### Hypothesis 2:

In recent decades historians have given more attention to the ordinary men and women in society. There has been a growing realisation that if we are to understand the past then we must also understand what the majority of people did and thought and how they lived and contributed to the wellbeing of their families, communities and nations. The leaders and decision-makers have played an important role in helping to create a better society and world in which all can live. However the contributions of ordinary men and women in these circumstances have been critical. When investigating our military history we need to know decisions governments and military leaders made in their endeavours to win the campaign. However, it is equally if not more important that we know why ordinary men and women served and made sacrifices and understand the conditions under which they lived and fought. Without due recognition of these ordinary servicemen and women, military history is only partly told.