

# Topic 8: What makes a hero?

## Work Sheet 8C: Imperial Awards for Bravery

The main awards for bravery during World War I and World War II were:

### Victoria Cross (VC) (1856)

The Victoria Cross – the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy. It was available to all ranks in British and Commonwealth defence forces.

### Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) (1854)

The Distinguished Conduct Medal – the oldest British award for gallantry. It was awarded to non-commissioned officers and privates in the Army for distinguished conduct in the field.

### Distinguished Service Order (DSO) (1886)

The Distinguished Service Order was awarded to recognise acts of gallantry by military officers for which a Victoria Cross was not considered appropriate. In 1942 regulations were amended to allow the award to be made to officers of the Merchant Navy for gallantry in the presence of the enemy.

### Military Medal (MM) (1916)

The Military Medal was awarded to non-commissioned officers and other ranks for acts of bravery for which a Distinguished Conduct Medal was not considered appropriate.

### Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) (1914)

The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to junior naval officers and senior naval ratings for courage and devotion to duty on active service. It was later extended to officers of the Merchant Navy and to Army and Air Force officers serving on British ships.

### Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) (1918)

The Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded to junior officers and senior non-commissioned officers of the Air Force for courage and devotion to duty on active service.

### Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) (1918)

The Distinguished Flying Medal was awarded to non-commissioned officers and men of the Air Force for displaying courage and devotion to duty while flying on active operations. During World War II it was extended to Army and Fleet Air Arm personnel engaged in similar operations.

### Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (CGM) (1855)

The Conspicuous Gallantry Medal was the Navy's equivalent to the Army's Distinguished Conduct Medal. It was awarded to senior and junior ratings for conspicuous acts of bravery in the face of the enemy. In 1943 it was extended to Air Force personnel of equivalent rank serving with the Navy.

### Mentioned in Despatches (MID)

Defence force personnel could be 'Mentioned in Despatches' for acts of bravery. This was a form of recognition included in service records.

### George Cross (GC) (1940)

The George Cross was the highest gallantry award available to civilians. It was also awarded to military personnel for acts of outstanding courage while not in action with an enemy. A George Cross was awarded to the island of Malta for the sustained heroism and gallantry of its citizens in World War II.

### George Medal (GM)

The George Medal was awarded to civilians for acts of bravery which did not merit the award of the George Cross.

Using the descriptions of the main bravery awards, select the awards that would have been recommended in the following circumstances.

- 1 An officer in the Merchant Navy who showed gallantry in the presence of the enemy in World War II.

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- 2 A junior officer in the Air Force who showed courage and devotion to duty on active service.

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- 3 A civilian who showed outstanding courage by helping World War II prisoners of war to escape.

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4 A non-commissioned officer in the Army who showed bravery by rescuing wounded comrades from no-man's-land.

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5 An Army pilot who showed courage and devotion to duty while flying on active operations.

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6 A soldier who showed conspicuous bravery by single-handedly attacking and capturing an enemy machine gun emplacement.

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7 An Army nurse who rescued patients from a burning casualty clearing station.

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8 Why were so few women nominated for Imperial bravery awards in World War I and World War II?

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9 Which is the oldest Imperial award for bravery? When was it instituted?

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10 Which is the highest award for bravery? Which ranks and which services did it apply to?

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