

Making Sense of World Conflicts

Lesson plan 6: Conflict – are you buying it?

Age group: 14–17

Objectives

To show how the use of images and words in the media can convey powerful messages. To encourage pupils to express a considered personal opinion about an issue.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will have formed their own view, taking into account a range of evidence and opinions; and explored social and moral issues through ICT, texts and images.

You will need

Images of combat clothing from **The Outdoor Co** (<http://www.the-outdoor.co.uk/>) and **child soldier stories** for pairs of pupils (http://www.controlarms.org/real_lives/liberia-child-soldiers.htm)

The main aim of this activity is to encourage pupils to consider and critique the ways in which notions of conflict and weaponry can represent something ‘cool’ to be admired and desired. The activity will help pupils explore how images of combat are utilised in the world of advertising, fashion and designer living and their impact. It is best if you have already carried out some other activities on conflict and its effects before doing this activity. If you haven’t then you will need to introduce material from the **Control Arms website** for a brief discussion after the starter activity (http://www.controlarms.org/the_issues/).

What to do

Starter

1. Have a short discussion about pupils’ attitudes to combat gear. Do they wear combat gear? If so, why do they like it? If not, who does wear it? Why do people wear combat gear? Where do we see it being made to look cool?

Activity

2. Divide the class into two. Ask pupils in pairs in one half to look at the combat clothing catalogue images The Outdoor Co. Then brainstorm with the class other examples of the use of aspects of combat being used to sell products or as fashion items. You can find other online stores through search engines by typing in something like ‘fashion combat clothing’. If pupils have online access they can do this themselves. Ask the pupils to discuss their reaction to these clothes – the discussion should focus on whatever interests the pupils.

3. Give the other half of the class the source material on Liberia's child soldiers (or part of it depending on the age and ability of the class). Ask them to read the material and discuss their reactions to the stories.

4. Then ask each pair of pupils from one half of the class to get together with a pair from the other half of the class. Within each group of four, pairs should take it in turns to share the source material and report for one minute on their discussion whilst the other pair listen. They should then look for any connections between their source materials and note these down. Ask them to discuss their views on the question 'Do guns and fashion go together?' and note down three points to report back to the class.

5. Ask the class for feedback keeping the discussion as wide ranging as possible, encouraging pupils to come to their own conclusions. However, try to draw out any contradictions related to the use of military clothing as fashion items and the lives of the children who had become child soldiers. Point out that in some countries no-one wears combat gear unless they are soldiers and in some countries it is illegal to wear combat gear – why might that be? Why is combat gear fashionable for some in this country?

6. Ask pupils to write a short article for a fashion magazine or a music or celebrity website about combat gear and their views on the part it plays in the fashion industry. This could be finished for homework or be developed into an assignment if lesson time is short.

Closing discussion

7. Draw the discussion to a close by asking pupils to imagine what it's like to live in a country where there is a war, and to see soldiers in combat gear around them. How would they view combat gear in those circumstances?