
Teacher's Guide

Teacher's Guide:

The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It

The Story of World War II conscientious objectors

A 58-minute film

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Produced and Directed by Judith Ehrlich and Rick Tejada-Flores

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By Judith Ehrlich, Steve Michelson and Dan Newitt

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PO Box 149 Oley, PA 19547

Phone (800) 543-3764

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**An Educators' Guide for
The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It
By Judith Ehrlich M.Ed.**

Overview

This program provides insights into profound questions of war and peace, fighting and killing, national security and citizen rights, and responsibilities in a democracy.

By telling a little-known story of conscientious objectors to World War II, ***The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It*** offers a new window on the current post-9/11 period of national crises, war and the challenges that face dissenters at such times.

Objective

The decision to take a public stand as a conscientious objector comes from a deep inner place. It is a decision rooted in one's spiritual life, faith or belief system rather than in logic or political persuasion. It is not a way to get out of the draft or to avoid life-threatening situations. This DVD and study guide challenge students to explore their own personal ethics and values in the face of war, military recruiting and the threat of a military draft. *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It* offers learners:

- A little-known point of view on "The Good War"
- An entrée to discussion of the non-violence philosophy of Thoreau, Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others
- An opportunity to develop critical thinking skills about what it means to be an American in a time of uncertainty and fear.
- An opportunity to clarify their thinking about participation in war and the possibility of involuntary conscription.

LESSON 1

The Challenge of War and Conscience

No one likes war, yet in a popular war like World War II most of the millions who were drafted answered the call to duty. In fact, outspoken pacifism has always been a minority position in the nation and the world. The non-violence position is considered by many to be elitist, utopian, cowardly or unsupportable when the country's interests are threatened. Yet these voices are an important part of the national dialogue in a time of war.

Objective: Use the experience of World War II conscientious objectors as a starting point for a discussion on issues of conscience, values, personal responsibility and war. The students will be stimulated to explore their own values and to become familiar with varied forms of dissent based on historical and current opposition to war.

For the Teacher

Explain the difference between a pacifist, a conscientious objector and a war resister.

- A pacifist opposes violence of all kinds.
- There are two legal classifications of conscientious objectors.
 - 1-O: Conscientious objectors are persons who, by reason of religious, ethical, or moral belief, are "conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form." These people may be discharged from military service. They are exempt from military service, in the event of a draft. If called up, they may perform alternative service as civilians.
 - 1-A-O: Noncombatant conscientious objectors are individuals conscientiously opposed to participation in war, but willing to serve in the military in noncombatant roles (such as being medics).
- War resisters base their opposition to war on political analysis rather than ethical beliefs. A war or draft resister who opposes a particular war but not all war is called a selective objector. Political or selective opposition is not recognized by the legal system.

Student Activities

- Have students identify the legal conscientious objectors and distinguish them from the war resisters in ***The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It***. Discuss the consequences of their actions. Were alternative service and/or prison sentences appropriate consequences for refusing to fight during World War II?
- Have students break into groups where they act out different types of opposition or cooperation with military participation. One group is made up of conscientious objectors, one of military resisters and one of enlistees or draft cooperators. Ask the students what these names mean and help them clarify the distinctions. Have each group write a manifesto of their beliefs and present them to the class. Use as a resource "What Do I Believe About War" on the Center for Conscience and War website at: http://www.centeronconscience.org/What_Do_I.htm.
- In-class or take-home writing assignment:
Like Bill Sutherland, George Houser and Dave Dellinger in ***The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It***, your classmate has been arrested and will be sent to prison because he is a war resister unless he signs a draft registration form. You have been given 15 minutes to write a one-paragraph letter to the prisoner. Compose a persuasive letter either advising the non-registrant to stick by his decision and face imprisonment or to reconsider and be released. Use strong, logical reasons to back up your advice. The class will consider the content of these letters as a Think-Pair-Share activity.

LESSON 2

“I Do This So The Country Won’t Change Me.”

In *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It* (Chapter 7, 34:03)

CO Bill Sutherland quotes A.J. Muste,

There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.

A.J. Muste was the leading pacifist of the 1940s and 50s in this country. Confronted by a reporter during an anti-war vigil at the White House, he was asked, "Mr. Muste, do you really think you are going to change the policies of this country by standing out here alone at night in front of the White House with a candle?" Muste replied, "Oh, I don't do this to change the country. I do this so the country won't change me."

Objective: Help students explore deeply held personal beliefs. By applying the examples of the World War II COs, learners will challenge themselves to understand any unshakeable principles that guide their lives.

For the Teacher

The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It provides examples of individuals who lived their lives based on principles of non-violence. This lesson is an opportunity for students to explore the principles that guide their lives. Ask students to consider whether the people in the film and in their real lives inspire them to live a meaningful life.

Student Activities

- Have students discuss their interpretations of Muste’s quote, “There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.” Can we reach a goal by pursuing its opposite? Can we attain peace by making war?
- Ask students what values they hope to be remembered by at the end of life. Have them design and write epitaphs for their imagined gravestones describing the accomplishments they hope to achieve and the principles they hope to stand for during their lifetimes.
- Have students write in their journals on this subject: Ask them: are there any values that are deeply important to you? How far would you go to maintain that principle? Is there anything you would never change regardless of pressure from the nation, peers, school, family or a desire to be accepted? Would you be willing to volunteer for a dangerous assignment for a principle you believed in?
- Watch the “Guinea Pig” section of the *Civilian Public Service* film on the DVD Special Features.
Read from the diary of starvation experiment guinea pig William Anderson.
July 8, 1945
The drive for survival
All Body function such as pulse rate, heart size, respiration rate are reduced to optimally utilize those limited calories, which are

available to sustain body functions. Cannibalism, death through starvation, grass salads and eating garbage are more than fleeting thoughts. We are told that we are starving so that thousands of starving people might be fed. Such thoughts are fleeting, and I'd give them up in a minute for a few slices of bread.

Postscript 1991: 50th anniversary of the starvation experiment
All of those present (16 of the 36) agreed that the experiment was the most impactful single experience of their lives. They all continue to be advocates for human service programs, including concerns about world hunger and promoters of justice and peacemaking.

For more diary entries, go to ***The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It*** PBS website at <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/thegoodwar/diary.html>. This website includes many other resources related to the film and the question of conscientious objection.

- Ask learners to share any personal experience with individuals who live lives based on deeply held values or faith. If those individuals are available and local, do an oral history in audio or video. If they are alive but not local conduct and tape a phone interview and transcribe your conversation. Share the project with the class.

LESSON 3

Thinking About War and Involuntary Conscription

War requires its participants to kill other human beings in order to further national interests. Is this right? When the military uses a draft to fill its quota of soldiers, participation in war is involuntary. Is this right? Conscientious objectors struggled with these questions during World War II, as they do today. This exercise also challenges students who accept the necessity for international conflict to consider if they are willing to volunteer or be drafted to participate in war.

World War II CO Steve Cary put it this way in the introduction to *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It* (Chapter 1, 2:50)

To a certain real degree in 1941, you were a CO knowing that you didn't have another answer.

The film provides a unique opportunity for viewers of all ages to consider unexamined assumptions about war itself. It is particularly relevant for young men, who must now register for the draft at age 18, and for young men and women facing a pervasive and sophisticated recruitment campaign and a possible draft.

Objective: The learner will gain an understanding of the ethical challenges that face 18-year-old draftees. This exercise will challenge young people to imagine the life-altering experience of military conscription. What are the ethical, moral and/or religious questions that a draftee must answer? How would a draftee weigh his duty to country versus religious and ethical proscriptions against killing and violence?

For The Teacher

The definition of conscientious objection was expanded during the Vietnam era to include people with secular and ethical objections, rather than strictly religious objections to war. The exemptions were more broadly defined. Proposals for a new draft are “leaner and meaner” than the Vietnam era draft. During that war draftees avoided military service for years by staying in school. Current regulations call for college deferments to be limited to one semester. There will be no exemption from military service for being a parent. Canada, which offered a refuge to draft dodgers during the Vietnam era has now closed its borders to war resisters. For official information on the draft you can download “A Teacher's Guide to the Selective Service System” at <http://www.sss.gov/PDFs/TeachersGuideBook.pdf>

Student Activities

- Challenge students to imagine receiving a draft notice in the morning mail. Conduct a mock draft lottery. Remember to include female students in the discussion, since they are likely to be drafted as well. Pass out 3 by 5 cards, each with a random number between 1 and 365. Have class members write their first names on their card (make the names big so everyone can read them). Explain that the number of the card corresponds to the number they might receive in a draft lottery and that roughly the first third (1 to 120) would be sent an induction notice. Draw the cards from a box in front of the room. Ask the students with numbers from 1-120 to step forward.

Registrants with low lottery numbers will be ordered to report for a physical, mental and moral evaluation at a Military Entrance Processing Station to determine whether they are fit for military service. If the registrant is considered fit, he/she will be given **10 days** to file a claim for exemption, postponement or deferment, or report for induction.

The draftees can choose two classmates who drew higher numbers and ask for help responding to induction by:

- preparing an application for CO status (see Handout #1 for guidance).
 - writing a final argument as if you were a lawyer defending a draft resister
 - writing a letter to loved ones about choosing to cooperate with the draft.
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- Have students explore the resources and arguments at “KQED/ You Decide: MilitaryDraft”, <http://www.kqed.org/topics/news/perspectives/youdecide/pop/draft>. Break the class into teams to debate the issue: “Resolve, the US will institute a new draft within the next two years”. Teams prepare note cards with arguments in favor and against a new draft and debate the pros and cons of returning to military conscription.

LESSON 4

Being Opposed to War Doesn't Mean Opposing Those Who Fight.

Recognizing the rights of conscientious objectors does not mean disrespecting the young men and women willing to put themselves in harm's way. Questions of personal conscience are just that, personal. While conscientious objectors shun violence, they offer no agenda for, or condemnation of, those who support our nation's war efforts.

Objective: Help students gain insight into deeply held beliefs about war from both sides of the fence. Young people face intense social pressures both to support and participate in war and to oppose it. As teachers we can help our students explore their own beliefs about this subject. Learners will grapple with the kinds of questions faced by the men in *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It*. They will also become familiar with arguments in favor of fighting for the nation.

For The Teacher

While currently students don't face involuntary conscription, a return to the draft seems quite possible. Potential draftees can make significantly better choices if they have adequate preparation. Even if there is no draft, these are questions appropriate to those coming of age in a country where military strength is arguably our highest economic and political priority.

Student Activities

- Invite a conscientious objector or a military veteran (or preferably both) to class. Ask them to tell the class their personal stories and discuss the ethics and harsh realities of choosing and/or refusing to fight. There are many Vietnam-era COs in the US. If you don't know one, try contacting your local Quaker meeting, Church of the Brethren congregation or Mennonite Church. Members of these three traditional peace churches share a peace testimony, but almost every major denomination has a peace witness in its teachings as well as a peace fellowship. The Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors at www.objector.org and the Center on War and Conscience at www.Centeronconscience.org can help you locate a C.O. in your area. The organizations Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans for Peace, and Vietnam Veterans Against the War have speakers who are available to visit schools in many areas.

- Have students prepare questions to discuss with the CO and/or veteran. Ask them to write a report on their response to the visit or debate.

Lesson 5

The Song Goes On and On and On...

As Mennonite CO, Sam Yoder, states in the film, (Chapter 9, 52:36)

*Our own two sons had to register and they both registered
as COs, so the song goes on and on and on.*

There is a long tradition of non-violent resistance to war and injustice. The writings of 19th century philosopher Henry David Thoreau were a major influence on Mahatma Gandhi, who liberated India from English colonial rule through non-violent resistance. Gandhi's writing and personal "experiments in non-violence" in turn inspired the World War II conscientious objectors. Among them was Bayard Rustin, who mentored Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the tactics of non-violent resistance to injustice. Dr. King and other leaders of the civil rights movement applied these methods successfully to change laws that discriminated against African Americans in the South.

Objective: Help students understand that war resistance is a tradition in the U.S. that can be traced to the Revolutionary War.

For The Teacher

Remind learners that recognition of the right to refuse to fight goes back to the founders of our nation. George Washington exempted soldiers from service in his army on the basis of scruples against war. After the Revolution, there was widespread support for incorporating a conscientious objector exemption into the Bill of Rights. James Madison proposed such an exemption. It was defeated, not because the Congress disagreed, but because military service was limited to state-controlled militia and not relevant to the new federal legal system.

Student Activities

- Have students read Henry David Thoreau's essay, "Civil Disobedience." It can be downloaded at <http://eserver.org/thoreau/civil.html>.
- Screen the Daniel Ellsberg Special Feature on the DVD. What does Ellsberg have to say about Thoreau? Break into small groups of protesters and police officers and role-play an act of civil disobedience culminating in arrest. Have each group prepare statements to be delivered to the press from their prison cells or from the perspective of the law enforcement officers.

Lesson 6

Transforming Ideas into Action

Liz Rivera Goldstein saw this film at the Pt. Townsend Film Festival. She states on her website “***The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It*** is an incredible documentary that touched my heart and inspired me to take action.” As a mother home schooling draft-age children, she took action by starting the Pt. Townsend, Washington organization “Teen Peace.” The group evolved into a regional organization. Ms. Rivera Goldstein is now in the leadership of the national counter-recruitment network. She credits her transformation to seeing this film.

Objective: Challenge the students to use the principles and values they have learned by watching ***The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It***

For the Teacher

Read aloud from Liz Rivera Goldstein’s recent open letter, “Reflections on being a jailbird.” She wrote this letter after being arrested for civil disobedience, sitting down in front of the gate to a Trident submarine base on the 60th Anniversary of the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan. Note that Liz refers to her awakening as an activist three years ago. This is when she saw ***The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It***.

The main reason I stood on the road, as the sun rose, is to set a good example for my children. More parents should stand up or sit down for what they really believe or want to change. What may be symbolic to some is just one part of the every day work I do to oppose war and killing and hatred in this world. Almost three years ago, I promised that I would spend two hours each day working for peace—educating myself, writing and calling people, meeting with elected officials, sharing what I learn with others—especially young adults. I am amazed at how far this work has taken me, and how humbled I am by the parents and children who contact me and work with me.

Student Activities

- Ask the students if they agree with Liz Rivera Goldstein. How would they respond if their parent(s)/guardian(s) publicly stood up for their beliefs? Would it be more difficult if their ideas were outside the mainstream?
- Suggest students write an essay on the idea of passing on core values through books, magazines, newspapers, the Internet and films? Have them respond to these questions:
 - Did this film inspire you to think about your beliefs?
 - Has any book, film, newspaper or magazine article, sermon, lecture or play inspired you to rethink your values or beliefs?
 - Where would you say your beliefs come from?
 - Ask students to list the three books, films or articles that influenced their core values or inspired them to take action. Have them elaborate on their inspiration and the resultant actions.

Lesson 7

The Social Change Legacy of Non-Violence

When we set out to make this film it was strictly about refusing to fight during World War II, we didn't know about the remarkable social change legacy of this small group of conscientious objectors. The epilogue of the film documents some of the ways in which these men changed the social and political landscape of the nation in the decades after the war. The film documents the legacy of WWII COs as leaders in mental health reform, the civil rights movement, the anti-apartheid movement and the Vietnam War era anti-draft movement. There were many other ways in which the COs contributed after the war that did not fit into this film. Some examples are: The 1950's Beat Movement in San Francisco, The Heifer Project (which provides livestock and poultry to poor farmers in the developing world), the preservation of Costa Rica's rain forests, the Coop Movement and Pacifica Radio, the nation's first listener-sponsored media entity.

Objective: The learner will be able to trace examples of social change to individuals who refused to fight in war.

For The Teacher

Explain the legacy of non-violent social change attributable to the war resisters of World War II. Discuss historic and current applications of non-violence to solve social and political problems.

Student Activities

- Have students explore the website www.transformingviolence.org * and report on social change worldwide that is informed by those committed to non-violence.

* The creator of this website and organization, Karen Payne, was the consulting producer of *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It*.

- Screen the James Farmer special feature on the DVD. The Freedom Ride he led in 1961 followed earlier attempts to integrate the Southern interstate bus system. The Journey of Reconciliation in 1947 was also led by WWII CO's. George Houser and Bayard Rustin were among the courageous leaders of these early acts of civil disobedience against unjust "Jim Crow" laws of the south. Have students write a diary imagining themselves on the 1961 "Freedom Ride" with James Farmer. For details on the ride refer to <http://www.iwfr.org/civilhistory.asp#mlk>.

Lesson 8

“Being a Pacifist Between Wars Is Like Being a Vegetarian Between Meals.” **- WWII CO Ammon Hennessey**

Does it matter if you stand up against war in a time of peace? Did the savage attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon make you and your students less willing to “turn the other cheek”? In the weeks after the attacks on NY and Washington, our nation was more united than at any time since Pearl Harbor. Dissent becomes much more problematic in times of war or national crises. Should dissenters just keep quiet until the crisis has passed?

Objective: To help students gain insight into the increased challenge of dissent in times of crisis.

For The Teacher

Explain that during the Vietnam-era, being a conscientious objector was much more common and acceptable than during World War II. Of the two million drafted, 170,000 men were officially recognized as Conscientious Objectors during the Vietnam conflict. By comparison, a very insignificant number, only 31,000 were recognized as CO's of the 16 million drafted for service during “The Good War.” Being a CO during World War II was extremely unpopular and considered treasonous by some and unpatriotic by most.

Student Activities

- What did Ammon Hennessey mean by his statement? Ask students to work in teams of three and write a poem, make a poster board or a skit based on this concept, and present it to the class.

- When your community supports you, is it easier to “do the right thing?” Ask learners to give an example. Ask students to tell or write about a time they didn't stand up for someone or something they should have, because they were afraid their peers or family would criticize them.

Lesson 9

War Then and Now

Kim Stafford states in the film (Chapter 9, 46:38)

What will be victory for a CO?

I think the only sure victory is to be true to your belief and your witness.

But you're going to be alone, almost always.

Most of the current military conscientious objectors to the war in Iraq have served time in military prison for their witness against war. There are very few public resisters, and most faced court martial and the derision of their fellow service members.

Objective: Help students gain insight into the moral questions raised by conscientious objectors during World War II versus current COs. How is the political climate for resisters to these wars similar and different? Learners will be stimulated to explore what all wars have in common, and what makes a particular war "good", "just" or "popular."

For The Teacher

Play the "Iraq CO" bonus section on the DVD. Remember to explain that these conscientious objectors volunteered for military service and experienced a change of heart after serving in the armed forces. The World War II COs were conscripted into the military.

Student Activities

- Ask the students to make a list of the differences between the Iraq War military conscientious objectors and the COs of WWII
- Break into teams and debate this question: "Can a person of conscience join the military and then refuse to fight a war?"
- In small groups write a press release for the court martial of a military CO. Record it and play it to the class.

Lesson 10

We Flapped our Butterfly Wings

The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight it closes with this statement from CO William Roberts (Chapter 9, 54:29):

*Was our protest and our witness of any benefit to society?
Perhaps the answer to that lies in the findings of the new science
of chaos and complexity, which has discovered that something
as apparently insignificant as the fluttering of a butterfly's wings
can trigger a cascade of events that in due time drastically affect the
weather halfway around the globe. We flapped our butterfly wings
in prison. Who can know their effect in our interconnected world?*

Objective: Help students gain insight into the power of the individual to make social change.

For The Teacher

Briefly explain chaos theory. This theory conjectures that seemingly minor events can trigger major repercussions.

Student Activities

- Challenge students to consider whether one person's action can have a larger ripple effect. Have students write an essay about an event that started small and made an unexpected impact.
- Ask the students to discuss any action they have taken that affected others. Have them write about or discuss the actions of someone they know personally or have read about, how they took a small action that made major change.