

The idea behind this activity is to encourage students to engage with the human cost and consequences of war - a central theme in the poem - by looking at some headline statistics relating to recent conflicts involving the British Armed Forces.

Students work in groups and together explore what the numbers they are presented with *might* represent. You have a choice of cards or a PowerPoint presentation or a combination of the two.

If using the cards

- Ask students to work in groups and give each group a set of number cards (below). Within a limited timeframe (say five minutes), their task is to suggest what each of the numbers might represent in terms of conflict - costs, deaths, polls, etc. They could then feed back their ideas in class.
- For a quick-fire starter, you could ask students to match the number cards with the answer cards, and then compare their ideas as a class.

If using the PowerPoint

- Again, students can work in groups. Display each slide. Devise a scoring system or try one of the following ideas:
 - Encourage groups to confer and then 'buzz in' with their answer. The first group to give the correct answer (or the nearest guess) scores five points.
 - Give all groups the same time limit (say one minute) to discuss their ideas, and then ask for each group's answer. Any group with the correct answer scores five points.
 - If no group gets the correct answer, you could award marks for intelligent reasoning or sensible guess work.
- Alternatively, give less confident students the answer cards, and encourage them to 'play' the correct answer in response to each slide, by holding it up.

Extension

As an extension task, or for a more student-focused activity, explain how the 'game' works and ask students to find their own facts and figures, and create their own cards or PowerPoint.

Encourage students in groups to complete the poem tasks on the final slide of the PowerPoint, or use the task card below.

The human cost of war in 'Poppies' - group task

- Now look at the poem, and select any quotations that you feel suggest the speaker's sense of loss or pain.
- Look at how the son is presented. Which words convey an impression of his vulnerability or naivety, for example?
- Why do you think Weir uses these words?

Number cards	Answer cards
44 and 79	<p>Life expectancy in Afghanistan (44) compared to life expectancy in Britain (79)</p> <p>Sources: Unicef and Wikipedia</p>
94,279	<p>Estimated number of civilians who have been killed in Iraq due to violence between the beginning of the war in 2003 and 18 October 2009</p> <p>Source: iraqbodycount.org/</p>
56	<p>Percentage of people in a UK poll who said they were against the war in Afghanistan (in October 2009)</p> <p>Source: BBC News 12 October 2009</p>
1,500	<p>Estimated civilian casualties in war in Afghanistan (January-August 2009)</p> <p>Source: United Nations / Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian_casualties_in_the_war_in_Afghanistan_(2001%E2%80%93present)</p>
£3.2 billion	<p>Cost of war in Iraq and Afghanistan to Britain (up to March 2008)</p> <p>Source: 10 March 2008, timesonline.co.uk</p>
414	<p>Number of British servicemen and women killed in Iraq and Afghanistan (2002-October 2009)</p> <p>Source: guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2009/sep/17/afghanistan-casualties-dead-wounded-british-data</p>
50-70 million	<p>Total estimated dead as a consequence of World War Two</p> <p>Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II_casualties</p>