



## How did Britain let 250,000 underage soldiers fight in WW1?

Narrated by Greg James, Radio 1 presenter

### Video transcript

Greg James: This is my old school. I left here quite a few years ago; ten in fact, which means I'm quite old. I knew exactly what I wanted to do; it was radio, TV stuff. Basically, a professional show off.

But not everyone who goes here wants to do that.

What do you want to do when you leave school? Any ideas?

Boy 1: Hopefully study English at university.

Boy 2: History at university.

Boy 3: I'd like to go to sixth form for the next two years after this year.

Boy 4: I'd definitely like to go to university, but I don't really know what to study yet.

GJ: Any of you thought about joining the army?

A hundred years ago, in August 1914, World War One began. The size of the British army was quite small, especially compared to other European armies, so they needed more men.

The rule was that you needed to be 19 or over to fight overseas, but incredibly, 250,000 boys and young men aged 18 and under also signed up.

If war broke out tomorrow, would you sign up and fight for your country?

Boy 4: Of course, I wouldn't want to, but if I had to do it, I'd do it.

Boy 2: I'd join up if I was the right age

Boy 3: I think I would, because if all your friends went, at home you'd be looked on as a coward.

GJ: At what age do you think you should be able to fight a war?

Boy 5: 18, 19

Boy 1: 18

Boy 3: If you want to start the army as your job, then maybe 18 is the right age to join.

In the First World War, teenagers... boys... some as young as 12, signed up to fight, finding themselves on the frontline. And many of them ended up with their lives cut short.

So why did young men and boys want to fight in the war, and how did the government, the schools, their parents and the army let this happen? How did Britain let 250,000 underage soldiers fight in WW1?

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