

A legend.
A legacy.
A lifetime of inspiration.

To run or not to run

Key Information

Subject area: Drama

Time required: This resource is planned to be taught as one 50 minute lesson. Depending on the pace at which your class progresses through the activities you may wish to utilise the content over a series of lessons.

Activity: To explore the choice that Eric Liddell made not to run the 100m race at the Paris Olympics in 1924.

Eric Liddell values: Integrity

Curriculum Links: English, History

Key skills:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Imagination
- Performing
- Reflection

Learning intentions:

- To explore Eric Liddell's integrity when making a difficult choice about which events he would compete in at the 1924 Paris Olympics.
- To use the Drama techniques of Conscience Alley & Characterisation to consider Liddell's decisions.

Success criteria:

- I can work with others to explore a range of opinions and ideas.
- I can put myself in the position of someone else and reflect upon my own opinions in relation to theirs.

Experiences and outcomes:

- (EXA 2-13a) Inspired by a range of stimuli, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through drama.
- (EXA 3-15a) I can respond to the experience of drama by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comments on my own and others' work.

Equipment:

- Space for the Conscience Alley activity

Supporting Materials:

- [Presentation](#)
- [YouTube link](#) to the moment in 'Chariots of Fire' when Eric Liddell makes his decision not to run.
- [Values Sheet](#)



Uncle Eric Fact

A few months before Eric was due to compete at the 1924 Olympic Games, the Olympic schedule was released and he learned that the heats of the 100m, which was his best event and one he was expected to do well in, were to be run on a Sunday. Eric was a devout Christian and withdrew from the 100 metres event as he was not prepared to run on a Sunday. His action brought him under enormous pressure, from both the British Olympics management and the press, to compromise his faith and compete in the event. He refused to yield and began preparing for the 400m, a distance over which he was not expected to do well, but an event which meant he could keep his promise to God.

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Lesson Format

In this lesson pupils will explore Eric Liddell's integrity when making a difficult choice in the lead up to the 1924 Paris Olympic Games. Pupils will be introduced to the drama techniques of Conscience Alley and Characterisation and will use these techniques to help them reflect on their own opinions and the opinions of others, by putting themselves into the position of others.

If the class hasn't seen the '[Eric Liddell 100 introductory video](#)' please show this now.

Starter Task

Introduce the word Integrity to the class, you can use The Eric Liddell [Values Sheet](#) to help pupils explore the meaning of integrity. Introduce the Uncle Eric Fact to the class. Ask pupils to think about any moments of integrity they see happening in the moments mentioned within The Uncle Eric Fact.

Ask pupils to imagine that they are news reporters in 1924, reporting about the Scottish athlete, Eric Liddell who is refusing to run on a Sunday. Will their headline support or criticise Eric's decision? Put emphasis on pupils using vocal techniques including volume, pitch, pace and pause to try best to get across their point of view. You could ask for a newspaper headline from each pupil or pick a few pupils to share their examples with the class.

Task 1: Conscience Alley

Establish the focus on Liddell's dilemma as to whether to run or not. History focuses on the outcome of his decision, not the process of reaching it. The objective here is for pupils to consider the conflict between his religious values, which were echoed by his family versus his commitment to his teammates, country and sport.

Introduce the drama technique Conscience Alley to the class. Conscience alley provides an opportunity to analyse a decisive moment in greater detail. Pupils will use conscience alley to explore Eric Liddell's dilemma of deciding not to run in his favoured event.

Split the class into two. One group will focus on presenting an argument for why Eric should run and compete, whilst the other group focus on presenting an argument for why Liddell should stick to his values and not run on a Sunday. Both groups should be given time to discuss their opinions, sharing ideas on what they think their groups points should be. You could use the [Chariots of Fire Clip](#) to assist pupils in generating ideas.

Once groups have had time to discuss their ideas get the two groups to stand in two lines facing one another. Select a few pupils to walk between the lines so they can listen to the voices and opinions coming from either side. This task can be repeated so pupils can swap groups to allow them to explore the different opinions and allow more pupils the chance to 'be' Eric Liddell walking down the middle.

Once the task has been completed ask the class to reflect on the task. This can be done individually or in small or larger groups. Discussion points could include:

- How did it feel hearing different opinions and thoughts?
- Did it feel fair?
- How do you think the other Olympic athletes getting ready to compete felt?

Task 2: Character Development

In pairs or small groups pupils will role play as Eric Liddell and the members of the Olympic Committee. One person will develop the character of Eric Liddell and the other member(s) of the group will develop characters of member(s) of the Olympic Committee who are trying to make Eric change his mind and run in the 100m race.

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Pupils should use their physical skills (body language, eye contact, facial expressions, levels and space) to help with their character development. Make sure that pupils put a real focus on demonstrating the type of person Eric was and the values he was known for, within their performances of him.

Ensure groups have rehearsal time followed by performance opportunities, these can be 'spotlight moments' where the teacher hears a few sentences from a number of groups or more formal performances in front of the rest of the class.

Following the performances, discuss with the class the group performances either individually or as a whole. You could ask the class the following questions:

- What phrases struck you when watching the performances?
- Was physicality used to show the difference of opinion? If it was, how?
- Give me an example of a performance that showed Eric's integrity.

Plenary

Revisit the dilemma that Eric Liddell found himself in when he first heard that the heats for the 100m at the Olympic Games were being held on a Sunday. Discuss in pairs, groups or as a whole class how they felt Eric would have felt at the time. How did he come to his decision not to race? Pupils can discuss what they would have done if they had been in his position and the reasons why they would have made those choices.

Extension tasks

These tasks can be added into the lesson plan if wishing to extend the one lesson into several or they can be set as homework tasks.

- Write a diary entry as Eric reflecting on his decision.
- Write the news report commentating on Eric's decision.
- Create a monologue as Eric, exploring his dilemma and ultimate decision.