

# Navigators - Fighting Footballer

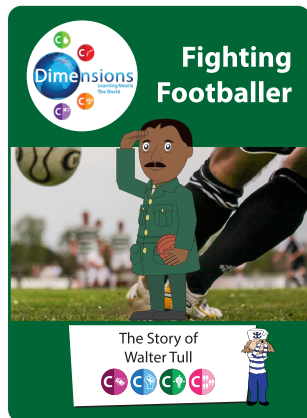
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I

Should

Know

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## Overview

Fighting Footballer is a competency-based thematic unit with a history focus, telling the compelling story of Walter Tull. He was one of Britain's first black footballers whose career was cut short by the First World War. During the war, however, he earned his commission as an officer in the British Army, the first black man to hold the title. The racial prejudice he faced both on the football field and in the army was significant but that never stopped him from displaying courage, commitment and care for his community.

## Walter Tull's Early Life

Walter was born on 28th April 1888 in Folkestone, Kent. His father, Daniel, was black and had moved to England from Barbados in the Caribbean. Daniel met Walter's mother, Alice, at their local church and they married. Alice was white so a mixed-race marriage was unusual at the time. Walter had five brothers and sisters.

## Football

Whilst at the orphanage, Walter was spotted as a talented footballer and signed for one of the most successful amateur teams, Clapton FC in 1908. He won an amateur FA cup medal and was playing brilliantly. He was soon picked up by Tottenham Hotspur in 1909 and made his debut in the English league in 1909. He was one of the first black players in the English league. Soon, however, the racist abuse and chanting aimed at Walter became too much; newspapers such as the Daily Chronicle wrote articles about it. Tottenham sold Walter to Northampton Town in 1910 and he had a much happier and more successful career.

## First World War

War broke out in Europe in 1914 and Walter was the first Northampton Town footballer to sign up to fight. He joined the 17th Middlesex Regiment. He fought at the first battle of the Somme and survived but he was struggling with his mental health. He was sent home, but was soon called back. He was sent to Northern Italy and led teams of men on difficult missions, usually at night. His bravery was noticed and his name was put forward to be promoted to the rank of officer. His skin colour was a problem, though. At the time, no black men could become officers, but an exception was made. Walter left the war to complete his training. He received his commission in 1917 and returned to France. He fought at the second battle of the Somme but sadly did not survive. He died on 25th March 1918.

## Time For Change

Whilst many of the men were away fighting, women took the roles the men used to have at work and in their leisure time. Women's football became so popular that some players were household names and thousands of people watched their matches. The FA, however, decided to ban women's football after the war when the men had returned as they did not think it was appropriate that women should play. The ban was only lifted in 1971.

Walter's courage, both on the football pitch and on the battlefield, was significant. He never let the abuse he received from football spectators stop him from playing and his commission as an officer showed that his actions outshone the prejudices against skin colour and race.



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## Vocabulary

<b>Colonist</b>	a person who lives in or is a member of a colony. Barbados, as well as many other Caribbean islands, were colonies of Great Britain.
<b>Commission</b>	a term used to give officers in the military a higher rank
<b>Orphanage</b>	a home for children whose parents have died or have no one to look after them
<b>Prejudice</b>	hatred or unfair treatment towards a person or group of people without any cause or reason, usually linked to race, religion or sometimes gender
<b>Racism</b>	unfair treatment of people based on the opinion of one race against another
<b>Sexism</b>	unfair treatment of people based on their gender or sex
<b>Shellshock</b>	a term used to describe a severe nervous condition after traumatic experiences in war. It is now often called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD.
<b>The Somme</b>	two battles of the First World War which took place north of the River Somme in Northern France, once in 1916 and again in 1918. Walter died at the second battle.

## Concept Flow

- To know the significant events of Walter Tull's life
- To know that events of the past can have an impact on the actions, prejudices and attitudes of today
- To know that, whilst there are many different types of prejudice in society today, there have been times in the past when this has been challenged
- To understand what makes Walter Tull an inspirational historical figure
- To understand the way in which the past impacts the present
- To understand that views and opinions can change over time
- To understand the importance of courage, commitment and community



## My Notes / Questions