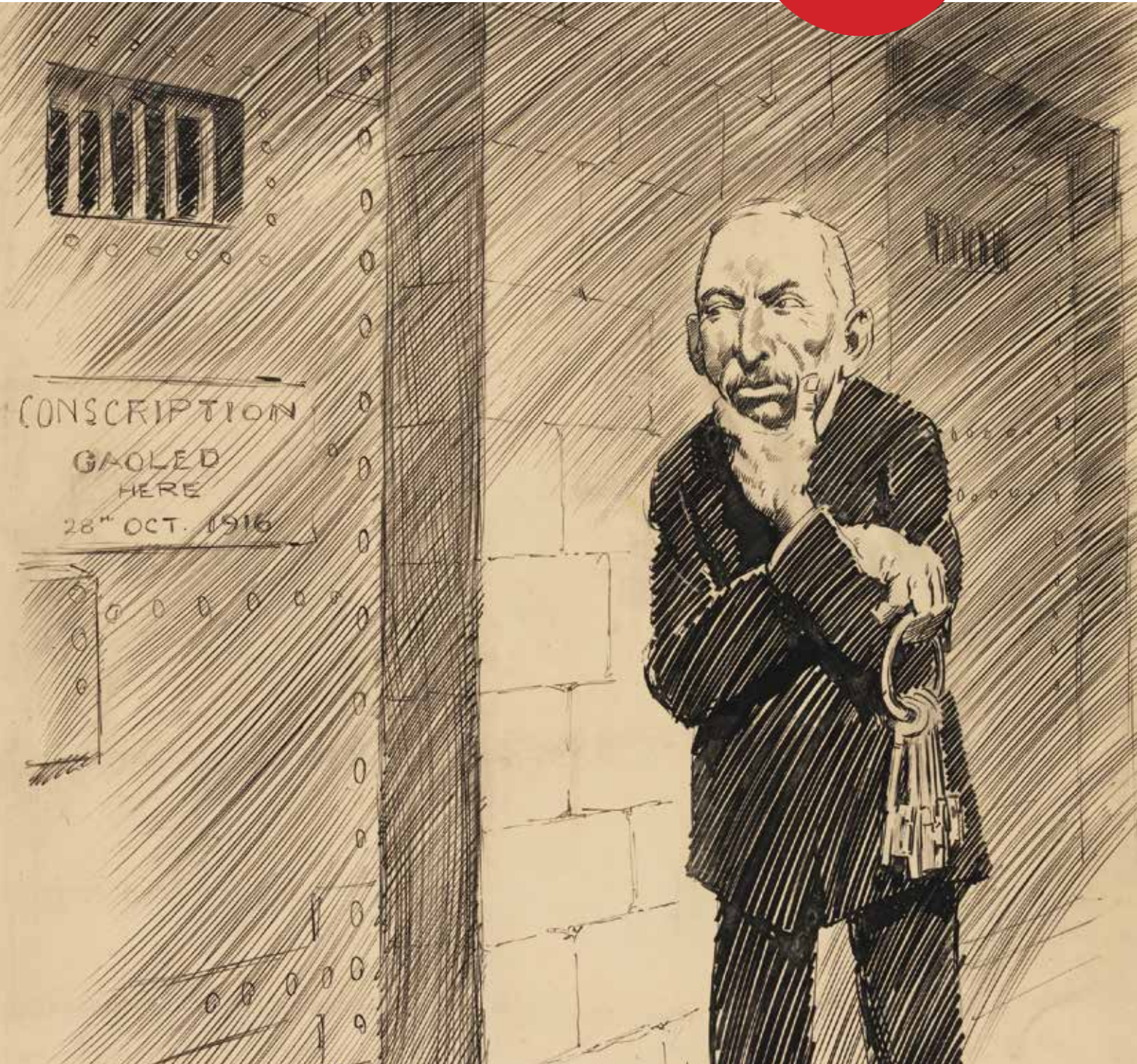




# GREAT DEBATES: CONSCRIPTION

**TEACHER'S  
GUIDE**



Great Debates: Conscription

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P03075

Published by the Department of Veterans' Affairs  
Designed by Fivefold Creative  
January 2016



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**



## INTRODUCTION

*Great Debates: Conscription* is designed for teachers and students of Year 9 Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences. It enables them to investigate the variety of attitudes Australians had toward conscription a century ago.

While an event may be significant in our nation's history, it will not always be of interest to young students. This resource is intended to engage students with, as well as educate them about, our political and wartime history.

## LEARNING APPROACH

*Great Debates: Conscription* is modelled on inquiry-based learning. It adopts a debate format using role-play of key characters. Students are not given the information synthesised but rather they are provided with primary and secondary sources to investigate from the perspective of an individual. Students must examine the evidence to ascertain what their character would most likely have felt about conscription.

## LESSON STRUCTURE

The amount of time that this unit of work takes will vary but teachers could expect it to take 4–7 lessons of 45-minutes duration.

In the first lesson, it is recommended that students be given time to analyse their sources. They should do this in teams of four. Another lesson may be provided so that students can conduct further research.

Part of a lesson should be dedicated to discussing the procedures of a debate and the qualities of a good argument. Students can also be given the assessment rubric to see how they will be assessed. For the remainder of the lesson it is suggested they be given some time to plan their debate as a team.

Students may be given a lesson to compile their arguments for the debate, or this could be given as a homework task. Students should have an opportunity to discuss their completed debates with their fellow team members and to make adjustments.

The final lesson could include conducting the debate, discussing the results, and exploring the debrief questions.

## LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This resource is aligned with the Year 9 Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences (History) focus, 'The Making of the Modern World', specifically Depth Study 3: World War I (1914–1918), providing:

- An overview of the causes of World War I and the reasons why men enlisted to fight in the war (ACDSEH021)
- The places where Australians fought and the nature of warfare during World War I, including the Gallipoli campaign (ACDSEH095)
- The impact of World War I, with a particular emphasis on Australia including the changing role of women (ACDSEH096)

## STRUCTURE AND COMPONENTS OF THIS RESOURCE

This resource is available as both a PDF and Word document on the Anzac Portal at [www.anzacportal.dva.gov.au](http://www.anzacportal.dva.gov.au).

## ADVICE TO TEACHERS

This section provides teachers with the overarching inquiry question and debate topic, with guidance and suggestions for conducting the investigation and debate.

## BACKGROUND

This section provides teachers with a brief historical context on the conscription debates in Australia during the First World War. Teachers may choose to share this information with the students – however, students should first form their own conclusions based on analysis of the sources provided.

## ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

Two rubrics are included in this resource. The first is designed for teachers to assess students' performance.

The second is designed so that students can conduct a peer assessment. This is used to inform the vote that they cast and to avoid votes being cast based on popularity, rather than the quality of argument.

## DEBRIEF

This section provides guidance for the teacher on how to end the activity and includes some questions for further exploration.

## CHARACTER FOLDERS

There are eight roles to be played in the debate: four in favour of the proposal and four against.

## BIOGRAPHIES

This section provides a brief biography of the character to further students' understanding of them and the opinions they were likely to have held.

## SOURCES

Each character has six sources for students to investigate. These include speeches, excerpts from newspaper articles, graphs, political cartoons, propaganda posters and significant quotes.

The students' investigations are scaffolded by the 'Source Analysis Worksheet'. The questions are designed to help students form conclusions related to the debate topic.

# GREAT DEBATES: CONSCRIPTION

## DEBATE TOPIC

The second conscription referendum question as posed to Australians on 20 December 1917:

**Are you in favour of the proposal of the Commonwealth Government for reinforcing the Australian Imperial Force overseas?**

## ADVICE TO TEACHERS

1. Before commencing work with the students, read the background information. Let the students complete the debate before sharing this information with them.
2. Split your class into teams of four and distribute a character folder to each student.
3. Ask students to fill out the 'Source Analysis Worksheet'. This is located at the front of each character profile to assist in their investigation and note-taking on their character.
4. Discuss with students what they have learned from the sources in relation to the referendum question.
5. You may choose to give students further time to research their characters.
6. Discuss how debates are conducted with students. See Helpsheet: Effective debating (used with permission of the Teaching and Learning Unit, University of Melbourne) for more information on running debates.
7. Give students time to work in their team and formulate a general idea of the arguments they will each deliver.
8. Give students time to write their arguments.
9. Allow students to consult with their team and make final changes.
10. Conduct the debate. Students who are watching can use the rubrics to help guide their voting.
11. Go through the questions in the 'Debrief' section.

## BACKGROUND

Before the First World War began, Australia already had compulsory military training and service. Military service within Australia was compulsory for all males between eighteen and sixty years of age.

At the outbreak of war, enlistment numbers were high. Recruiting standards were strict and some volunteers were rejected.

As the war progressed, the number of casualties began to increase. This coincided with a decrease in the number of new enlistments. The Australian Imperial Force (AIF) began to accept those who had previously been rejected but still failed to meet recruiting targets.

By 1916, the AIF was struggling to maintain the full strength of its divisions. To reinforce the troops at the front, Prime Minister William Morris 'Billy' Hughes determined it necessary to introduce a referendum asking the people if they would agree to compulsory military service outside Australia.

The referendum was held on 28 October 1916. The referendum was defeated by a narrow margin: 49% were in favour, while 51% were against. The AIF voted 'yes' by a narrow majority.

The referendum divided the Australian community and split the Australian Labor Party.

In the aftermath, the Labor caucus passed a vote of no-confidence in Hughes as leader. He left the party with some of his supporters, creating the National Labor Party, later merging with the Liberal Party to form the Nationalist Party. Winning the next election in 1917, Hughes promised not to introduce conscription again, unless Germany looked like prevailing in the war. In November 1917, this seemed possible so Hughes announced another referendum for December.

The lead-up to the second referendum was just as divisive as the first for the Australian community. It was held on 20 December 1917. Australians, again, voted 'No'. This time, slightly more people voted against the proposal.

## DEBRIEF

Following the debate, reveal the outcome of the actual referendum of 1917 to students – you may decide to read the 'Background' to them – and discuss the following questions:

- How might Australians vote on a conscription referendum today?
- What people/groups of people would be for or against conscription?
- What arguments would they make to support their positions?