SCHOOLING, SERVICE AND THE GREAT WAR
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Introduction

Schooling, Service and the Great War: A Resource for Secondary Schools enables students and teachers of Year 9 Australian Curriculum: History to explore the diverse experiences of Australian school communities during the Great War.

Rich in primary and secondary sources, questions and activities for students, and with further background for teachers, the resource models the preferred pedagogy of the Australian Curriculum—inquiry methodology.

Following an introduction to Australian schooling in the early 1900s, students and teachers may choose to work through seven investigations facilitating historical understandings of what their student and teacher peers learned during the Great War about the British Empire, its Allies and its enemies; the values expected of different students in different school settings; the consequences of the war for daily life in schools; the patriotic activities performed by students and teachers on the home front; the reasons why some students and teachers enlisted directly from their schools; and the ways members of school communities responded to the tragic scale of death and wounding of people they knew.

The final investigation enables students and teachers to research the experiences of their own or other schools locally, or of their wider local community.

Structure and components of this resource

This resource is available online and in hardcopy with a poster and a CD-ROM.

An opening essay provides a background to the Great War and Australia’s experiences of it. Written largely for teachers, the essay could be shared with more able students.

The essay is followed by an introductory investigation and seven further investigations. Each investigation is framed as an overarching inquiry question. Most investigations provide the following:

Advice to teachers
This section outlines for teachers several different approaches to students’ work with the overarching inquiry question and its related sources.

Background information
This section provides a brief historical context to assist teachers’ facilitation of their students’ work. Teachers may also choose to share this information with their more able students, but only after students have formed their own conclusions based on analysis of the sources.

Learning activities
This section uses the ‘Source Analysis Worksheet’ on page 18 and twelve sources for students to investigate.

The introductory investigation and investigations 1–6 offer ‘Tuning in’ and ‘Going further’ questions and activities.

The ‘Tuning in’ questions and activities prompt additional responses to the sources and help students to form conclusions related to the overarching inquiry question.

The ‘Going further’ questions and activities encourage deeper thinking and testing of students’ conclusions. Some investigations contain summary tables to assist students with the recording and development of their understandings. The questions and activities also encourage students to draw comparisons between education today and a century ago, to undertake further research, or to explore personal values and attitudes.
INTRODUCTION

**Sources and additional sources on the CD-ROM**

A strength of this resource is its provision of diverse primary and secondary sources. These include photographs of small items of the time (such as badges and brooches), larger items (such as honour boards and floats) and paper items (such as postcards and school certificates). Written sources also include excerpts from school magazines, official advice to teachers, letters, poems, significant quotes and reminiscences, school debating topics and excerpts from school histories. Each investigation is supported initially by twelve sources, with additional sources on the CD-ROM and online.

Several important considerations have determined the selection of the initial twelve sources and those offered elsewhere.

The nature and extent of what school systems and sectors, archives, historio-cultural institutions and individual schools currently hold in terms of wartime-related school records—and are able to make available—varies markedly across Australia. The sources presented in the initial twelve have been selected to develop students’ nuanced understandings of the breadth of war-related responses in school communities Australia-wide, including responses of dissenters, whilst giving students the opportunity to learn about schools of their type and schools in their State. A source may also have been chosen over another if it neatly offered multiple perspectives. The collection in total is not exhaustive but there have been concerted efforts to make it indicative.

Moreover, the resource is designed for Year 9 students whose mixed abilities and different cultural backgrounds in Australia’s classrooms necessitate the inclusion of sources that will facilitate the development of students’ historical understandings and skills, whilst other sources will challenge and extend the higher order abilities of other students.

While teachers may use the resource ‘as is’, they are encouraged to select from additional sources on the CD-ROM, and design learning sequences that suit the particular needs and interests of their students. The resource further provides the encouragement and means by which students and teachers may devise their own questions and locate other sources to better understand the responses of schools and local communities to the Great War.

**Poster**

A poster collage of some of the artefacts and issues in this resource is provided for classroom display and supports further thinking about the investigations. A list of the artefacts and a PDF of the poster is provided on the CD-ROM.
**The Australian Curriculum**

This resource is aligned with the Australian Curriculum: History at Year 9 ‘The Making of the Modern World’, specifically Depth Study 3, World War I (1914–18), providing:

- An overview of the causes of World War I and the reasons why men enlisted to fight in the war,
- The impact of World War I, with a particular emphasis on Australia (such as the use of propaganda to influence the civilian population, the changing role of women, the conscription debates); and
- The commemoration of World War I.

Students’ historical knowledge and understandings are developed through experience of the key concepts of cause and effect, contestability, continuity and change, empathy, evidence, perspectives and significance.

Students develop the historical skills of analysis, comparison, explanation, interpretation, sequencing and research.

In terms of general capabilities, students develop critical and creative thinking, literacy, intercultural understanding, ethical understanding, and personal and social capabilities.

**Learning approach**

The resource models inquiry methodology. Students and teachers are not given simple and synthesised answers; rather, they are given open-ended questions and rich sources to scaffold their investigations.

In particular, Investigation 7 seeks to inspire teachers and students to devise questions and locate sources relevant to the wartime experiences of their own school or local community.

**Disclaimer**

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs cannot be assumed to agree with or endorse any content or opinions expressed in websites or publications quoted or referred to in this resource.

Teachers are advised to use due care and diligence according to their personal and school philosophies when using sources from any collection that may include language or values considered inappropriate today or content that could prove unduly distressing to students.

**Acknowledgements**

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs would like to thank the following individuals and groups for their generous support.

Dr Rosalie Triolo for items entitled ‘Private Collection’.

Dr Malcolm Beasley AM and Dr Geoffrey Burkhardt of the Australian National Museum of Education for papers, images and artefacts.

Presbyterian Ladies College, Pymble, NSW for access to their collection of photographs.

Elizabeth Burness from the Tuggeranong Homestead School, ACT for access to their collection of photographs.

Phil and Yvonne Robson from the Hall School Museum, ACT for access to their collection of photographs.

Kathy MacDonald and Alissa Ahearn for additional Townsville images.
INTRODUCTION

[In Victorian Schools, Arbor Days are held in June and July.]

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, VICTORIA (AUSTRALIA)

THE SCHOOL PAPER.
FOR GRADES VII. AND VIII. (1916).

No. 299.] MELBOURNE. Price 1d. [JUNE 1, 1916.

A LONESOME PINE.


Luxuri-ant, having abundant growth.

Per-lost, lost.

Lustro, brightness; reddish.

Re-ceds, fall back.

His-toric, noted in history.

Prunif-ly, keen, bear fruit.

Battle-ment-ed, having defined against it the outline of the tops of the cliffs, which, by their shape, suggest the battlements of a castle wall.

Re-quested; left by will; left for descendants.

Laurels, victor’s wreaths of the laurel, an evergreen shrub.

By the courtesy of the proprietors of The Leader, Melbourne.

LEAFY MEMORIALS: RETURNED ANZACS PLANTING MEMORIAL TREES ON ANZAC DAY, 25TH APRIL, IN THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE DOMAIN, MELBOURNE.

The trees planted were the scarlet-dusted gum, West Australian yew pine, Gippsland daisy plume, cedar, valdina, blackwood, tallowwood; jarrah, Queensland box, West Australian red gum, oolay oak, water gum of New South Wales, golden-splendour wattle, kerosene oak, box-leaf wattle, drooping willow, grey wattle, willow myrtle, sugar gum, and golden wattle.

1. Grow high, so that, in ages yet unborn.
   Your branches shall to heaven luxuriant wave.

To tell how, on you slopes, that hope forlorn
   Was held by Australia’s sons, so stout and brave.
The family of 1914 was well-dressed and comfortable. We would never again have such tidy clothes and we would never all be together again. The war would blow us apart. Lewis (p.108)

So it was for families all over the world. The outbreak of war in August 1914 pitted empires against one another and shaped the decades that followed in ways that none, whether they welcomed or dreaded the coming conflict, could have imagined. In far away Melbourne the author of this quote pondered the moment’s significance. Brian Lewis was just 8 years old in 1914; his brothers were all older – most were old enough to enlist or soon would be, and he wondered what might become of them, of his family and of his community.

Four years later Lewis’s questions had been answered. Friends and neighbours had donned the khaki of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) – the force that Australia sent to the war – and sailed on active service, some never to return. He had seen people work hard to provide comforts for the men overseas and learnt how divisive a war of such magnitude could be, even to a country on the far side of the world. His own family experienced the grief known to millions between 1914 and 1918 when his beloved brother Owen was killed in action.

Brian Lewis saw the war through a child’s eyes and at a distance. More than 300,000 other Australians saw it at far closer quarters. Service in the AIF took thousands of them to Gallipoli in 1915 and thousands more to the Holy Land of the Middle East between 1916 and 1918. For the majority though, the insatiable demands of the Western Front for men and materiel meant service in France and Belgium. There in the war’s main theatre, they engaged the Allies’ main enemy, Germany. They did so, as did those who served in the Middle East and on Gallipoli, very much as soldiers of the British Empire. Fighting alongside them were men from all over the British Isles and from as far away as India, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.

In 1914, Britain commanded the loyalty and affection of large sections of the Australian community and was known to many Australians as ‘the mother country’. More than 90 per cent of migrants to Australia in the eight years before the war came from Britain, a kingdom at the edge of a continent divided by empires and alliances.
Competing for influence and power in Europe and in far-flung imperial possessions, France, Britain and Russia were aligned against the central European powers of the German and the Austro-Hungarian Empires. The trigger for the outbreak of conflict in 1914 was literally pulled in Sarajevo on 28 June when a Bosnian Serb student, Gavrilo Princip, assassinated Austria-Hungary’s Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Alliances were invoked – Russia came to Serbia’s aid, Germany to Austria Hungary’s, France to Russia’s and, after German troops crossed Belgium’s neutral border, Britain declared war on Germany. Her empire followed willingly.

When war came thousands of Australian men offered to serve in Britain’s cause. Compulsory training had instilled in many an enthusiasm for military service; some had served in militia units or been members of rifle clubs. A cohort of older men had also fought in the Boer War or in other British colonial campaigns. With an initial requirement for 20,000 men the authorities set exacting standards, rejecting all but the biggest and fittest of those who crowded into barracks squares around Australia when recruiting opened on 10 August 1914.

Within days the first volunteers were in training camps, but they were not the first committed to action. Before the AIF sailed, the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force was despatched to capture the German colonies in New Guinea. Australia’s first campaign was fought on New Britain. It was a brief and relatively bloodless introduction to the war, a colonial relic that bore scant resemblance to the massive contest already underway on the other side of the world.

With Germany’s outposts in the Pacific secured, Australia’s attention turned to Europe. Believing at first that they were England bound, the men who sailed in the first convoy to leave Australia learned en route that they would instead be disembarking for further training in Egypt. They learned also that the Ottoman Empire, centred around present day Turkey and encompassing large areas of the Middle East, had joined the war on the side of Germany.

In February 1915, as the AIF drilled and trained outside Cairo a combined British and French naval force attempted to force a passage through the Dardanelles, a narrow waterway along the Gallipoli peninsula’s southern shore leading from the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmora and the Ottoman capital, Constantinople (present day Istanbul). The plan was to force an Ottoman surrender by bringing Constantinople under fire. After a month of trying and having suffered heavy losses the Allied fleet had made no progress. Infantry were then ordered to destroy the peninsula’s defences.

The Australians left Egypt and joined the throngs of military personnel on Lemnos Island in the Aegean Sea, just under a hundred kilometres from Gallipoli. There they continued their training, which now included the techniques of amphibious operations. On the eve of 25 April 1915 they prepared themselves for battle and before the sun had risen that morning the first members of the AIF to go into combat began landing at a small cove in the Ari Burnu area. To the south, far larger numbers of British and French troops invaded Cape Helles and Kum Kale on the opposite shore. By the end of the day soldiers from New Zealand had joined the Australians and the area of operations that they shared quickly came to be known as ‘Anzac’, after the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC).

When the early fighting subsided more than 2000 Australians had been killed and the campaign on Gallipoli was at an impasse. The Turks, as the Ottoman troops were generally known, could not force the Allies from the peninsula and the Allies could not advance beyond the thin strip of land they had occupied in the opening days. For the next two months sporadic fighting flared and then faded, and local contests – violent and intense – were fought for small pieces of ground that offered tactical, but never strategic, advantage. By June far more men were leaving the peninsula because of illness than because of wounds suffered in battle.

In August an Allied offensive sought to break the deadlock. At Lone Pine the Australians won a rare victory on Gallipoli, at a high cost in lives. But it was a feint, to draw Turkish reserves from the real objectives, the high ground to the north of the Anzac area. Everywhere else the plan failed. No Allied objectives were seized and by the end of August another 2000 Australians had been killed in action.

Stalemate returned. The campaign ground on for several more months until, realising the hopelessness of continuing, senior British military figures ordered an evacuation. The Anzacs left Gallipoli in December 1915, and the British and French followed in January 1916. For Australians this failed endeavour, the AIF’s first campaign of the war, became a cornerstone of national identity. The anniversary of the April 25th landings, Anzac Day, remains Australia’s most important national day of commemoration.
News from Gallipoli reached Australia in early May 1915. Families soon began receiving letters from men at the front and newspapers all over the country printed soldiers’ accounts. They also began publishing the casualty lists, which by the end of the year included the names of more than 8000 dead.

At the same time, news of the fighting on Gallipoli prompted thousands of men to enlist. In June, Britain accepted Australia’s offer to provide as many soldiers as could be recruited, and recruiting committees formed across the country. Posters urging eligible men to join up adorned public spaces, and in rural New South Wales a number of ‘snowball’ marches wended their way through the countryside picking up volunteers as they went. Young men were pressured to enlist; some received white feathers from women who called them cowards.

‘The Waratahs’, one of at least a dozen recruiting marches that made their way through the New South Wales countryside in 1915 picking up volunteers as they went, AWM P00707/026
After Gallipoli the AIF, reinforced by the 1915 volunteers, rested and refitted in Egypt before most Australians sailed for the Western Front. Only the mounted units remained in the Middle East, where they fought a war of movement over hundreds of kilometres against an Ottoman army that few regarded with the same seriousness as they did the Germans.

Members of the Australian Light Horse experienced some major battles in the Middle East: those at Romani, Beersheba, Gaza and the final offensive in Palestine were hard fought in conditions that tested the endurance of both men and horses. In loss of life, frequency and scale, however, they were of far less magnitude than the massive encounters that involved millions of soldiers on the Western Front. In December 1917, an Australian official photographer recently arrived in the Middle East from Flanders wrote:

*There is not the strain of war, nor the eternal fear of death. It would be a man’s bad luck to be killed here in action, whilst in France he might consider himself fortunate to escape with his life. France is hell, Palestine more or less a holiday.*

The war in the Middle East ended a month before the war in Europe. Australian mounted units had ridden and fought from the banks of the Suez Canal to Aleppo in Syria. Above them Allied airmen overcame their German adversaries and contributed substantially to the defeat of the Ottoman Empire.

On the Western Front, progress was measured in distances that in the Middle East might be travelled in mere hours. What began as a war of movement when German forces invaded Belgium and then France, became a seemingly intractable stalemate after French and British troops broke their momentum in September 1914.

Deep in French territory, unable to advance any further but very difficult to dislodge, the Germans sought to hold the ground on which their forces stood. By March 1916 when the Australians began arriving in France, the basic pattern of warfare on the Western Front was established. Machine guns and artillery made any assaults on enemy positions inordinately costly. Successful attacks across no-man’s-land were enormous logistical undertakings requiring careful, detailed planning.

To that point, much of the heaviest fighting on the Allied side had been borne by the French, most famously at Verdun. In 1916 they joined the British in preparing a major offensive against the Germans on the Somme front in northern France. Remembered as much for its disastrous first day, on which some 60,000 British soldiers were killed or wounded, as for the months of fighting that followed, the Battle of the Somme raged throughout the second half of 1916 and ended only when winter weather made further progress impossible.

Nineteen days after the offensive began Australian forces fought their first major battle on the Western Front, at Fromelles, north of the Somme. Fromelles was a feint, to draw German reserves away from the main fighting. On the night of 19–20 July 1916, more than 5500 Australians of the 5th Division’s 8th and 14th Brigades were killed or wounded in this failed attack on a strongly defended German strong point.
Four days later the 1st Australian Division was sent into action. It arrived on the Somme as British forces were approaching the village of Pozières, which had, by the time the Australians began their assault, been pounded to rubble by artillery fire. Meeting little resistance as they entered the village, the Australians quickly secured their objectives and fought off a series of counter-attacks. They were savouring their triumph when a storm of artillery fire fell upon them. Over the next six weeks the 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions rotated through Pozières, where 23,000 of their number were killed or wounded. Distressingly high though they were, Australian losses at Pozières were just a fraction of the 415,000 soldiers from Britain and her empire who became casualties on the Somme.

While the Allies planned to resume their offensive in the spring of 1917, the Germans, under pressure on all fronts, moved to strengthen their position. In late 1916 they began constructing a network of heavily fortified defences, known to the Germans as the Siegfried Line and to the Allies as the Hindenburg Line, between sixteen and fifty kilometres to the east of the Somme battlefields. The German withdrawal began in early 1917.

While their soldiers endured the harshest of northern European winters, at home Australians began 1917 in uncertainty and with a degree of pessimism. Peace and the victory of which most were certain remained distant prospects. In late October 1916, Australia voted on whether to introduce conscription. After a bitter, divisive campaign the proposal was defeated. In France and the Middle East soldiers voted ‘yes’ by a margin of more than 13,000, but at home the majority of Australians opposed forcing men into service. The dead and those whose wounds rendered them unfit for front-line service would continue to be replaced by volunteers.

Meanwhile patriotic organisations worked tirelessly to ensure that soldiers overseas were adequately supplied with comforts from home. Often those doing this work were the mothers, aunts or sisters of soldiers and school students. The women who gave of their time and emotional energy to support the war effort through such organisations as the Australian Comforts Fund, the Red Cross, and through their work in hospitals and in fund raising made an enormous contribution, often unsung and almost certainly unpaid. Having a relative on active service was a source of both worry and pride. Some women took to wearing jewellery in the colours of the battalion in which a man dear to them was serving.
INTRODUCTION

The AIF recovered from the Somme over the 1916–1917 winter, not seeing heavy fighting again until some 4th Division battalions assaulted the area around a German position known as Stormy Trench in mid-February 1917. The violent, close combat there hinted at what was to come, but for a brief moment later that month the war’s character changed. Patrols began to report the German front-line trenches deserted. The enemy was withdrawing to their new defensive positions and the Australians pursued them. For the first time on the Western Front, Australian soldiers experienced open warfare until they began to face increasing resistance around the Hindenburg Line outpost villages.

The German withdrawal hindered British plans to renew the Somme offensive but attacks went ahead around Arras in April 1917. On the southern flank the Australian 4th Division prepared to assault the Hindenburg Line east of the fortified village of Bullecourt, while a British division attacked the village itself.

Bullecourt was a disaster. Some 1170 Australians were taken prisoner in this battle, more than in any other engagement until the fall of Singapore in the Second World War. More than 3000 others were killed or wounded in less than 24 hours. The Australians, unsupported by artillery, broke into the German trenches but were cut off. A second attempt on Bullecourt on 3 May 1917 led to two weeks of brutal combat – some of the most pitiless of the war – with more than 7000 Australians being killed or wounded before the Germans finally withdrew.

After Bullecourt the Australians were rested. Elsewhere the war continued. In Russia mutiny in the army and revolution at home eroded the will to fight and ended the war on the Eastern Front in November 1917. In southern Europe the Germans and Austro-Hungarians were poised to inflict a major defeat on the Italian Army and in the Middle East Allied troops were stalled before Gaza. A French offensive on the Western Front had ended in failure and Britain’s main ally was, for a time, unable to resume an attacking role. The next great campaign on the Western Front was waged by soldiers from Britain and her empire.

This time the fighting took place in Belgium, beginning with a British, Australian and New Zealand assault on Messines Ridge. In the largest man-made explosion to that time nineteen massive mines were detonated beneath the German lines, killing thousands and leaving the survivors too shocked to offer coordinated resistance. The assaulting troops quickly gained their objectives but had to withstand fierce counter-attacks before the Germans yielded the ridge, leaving this important high ground in Allied hands.
Australian wounded in the Menin Road fighting that lie on stretchers awaiting removal to a casualty clearing station. AWM E00713

Prime Minister William Morris Hughes addressing a crowd of soldiers and civilians in Sydney’s Martin Place c. 1916. AWM A03376

Messines was the forerunner to the British offensive in front of the ancient town of Ypres that began six weeks later. Australian troops fought in five of the campaign’s major battles: Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde, Poelcapelle and Passchendaele. Having met with early success in fine weather, the offensive ended with men fighting their way through low-lying countryside turned into a quagmire by rain and churned by shellfire into a morass that made further progress impossible. Each of Australia’s five Western Front divisions fought in the offensive and each suffered grievous casualties. More than 38,000 Australians were killed or wounded in just over three weeks during September and October 1917. Bullecourt, Messines and Ypres made this the bloodiest year in Australia’s wartime history.

The AIF was in crisis. Further losses of that magnitude threatened the force’s ability to field its much-depleted battalions in 1918. At home eligible men continued to face pressure and abuse, regardless of their personal circumstances or views. As they reached enlistment age, younger volunteers came forward but never in sufficient numbers to make good the AIF’s losses. New Zealand had introduced conscription in August 1916, Canada a year later, Britain relied on conscripts and so did the newest belligerent, the United States. Australia continued to rely on volunteers, and in November 1917 Prime Minister Billy Hughes announced a second conscription referendum. Again Australia voted ‘no’.

The year 1918 began badly for the Allies. Russia’s armistice with Germany freed German divisions in the east to reinforce the Western Front. A brief opportunity to win the war before the United States could fully deploy its vast army presented itself. On 21 March 1918, German storm troops swept through the Allied lines, advancing across ground fought over and lost to them more than a year before and threatening to drive a wedge between the British and French armies. The Allies reeled before the onslaught, but in the weeks that followed, German momentum slowed, the Allies began to recover and Australian troops still in Belgium were sent south to help repel the offensive.

Their most famous engagement in this phase of the war was at Villers-Bretonneux, near Amiens. When they occupied the village on 24 April 1918, the Germans were at the limit of their westward advance. They could see Amiens as they dug in, but could get no closer. That night Australian troops broke the German line in a ferocious assault that earned them the lasting gratitude of the townsfolk.
The Germans’ offensive had made large gains and inflicted heavy losses. But they had also abandoned well constructed defensive positions and now occupied large bulges in the Allied line, a long way from their own bases of supply and with few reserves to replace the thousands of men killed or wounded in the previous month’s fighting. An exhausted Germany’s chance for victory was passing.

When the Allies launched their own offensive on 8 August 1918, the war was reaching its climax. Drawing on the hard lessons of four years of fighting and with American soldiers arriving in France in the tens of thousands every month – from 24,000 in April 1918 to 61,000 in August – the Allies planned a series of battles intended to deny the Germans a chance to regroup, to keep them retreating and to wear at their remaining strength until they could fight on no more. German military leaders now recognised that they could no longer win the war.

Australia’s much depleted divisions continued to play their part, most notably at Mont St. Quentin at the beginning of September 1918, in a victory described as one of the most audacious martial feats of the war. Later that month the Germans were forced back to the Hindenburg Line from which their offensive had begun more than five months before. When this bastion fell, the German retreat continued in the face of relentless Allied pressure. In early October the exhausted Australian divisions were withdrawn for a rest. They were beginning to return to the front when the war ended on 11 November 1918.
Many soldiers greeted news of the Armistice with subdued relief and sorrow at the loss of friends. Behind the lines, in the towns and cities of the victorious nations there were wild celebrations. In Australia, 1918 had been a difficult year. Legacies of bitterness remained in the wake of two conscription referenda and even though news of the sweeping German success in March prompted a small revival in enlistments fewer and fewer men were volunteering for the AIF.

Still living in Melbourne and now 12 years old, Brian Lewis recalled that the war had become ‘dreary’. No longer did his family rush for the paper before breakfast: ‘we did not believe in victories anymore’, he wrote. With one brother dead, another maimed and two more still in uniform, his family had little to celebrate and much to worry about.

Children as young as Lewis remembered little of the years before 1914. Returning soldiers remembered much more of a world that was gone. They returned to a country many had believed they would never see again, to enthusiastic and heartfelt welcomes. Australia’s gratitude was genuine, but fitting back in was not always easy. Marriages were common in the years immediately after the war. So were divorces. Most returned soldiers came back to jobs and families, some drifted and others had to live with physical or mental wounds that made the war impossible to leave behind.

People all over the world had been affected. The war had brought down the empires whose armies marched into battle in 1914, cost millions of lives and driven belligerent countries into economic ruin. Its scale, its waste and its horror prompted the hope that it would be ‘the war to end all wars’. It was not to be. In Germany’s defeat were laid the foundations for a second, more destructive conflict just two decades later. When the next generation of Australians were called to arms in 1939, they had few illusions about what was in store.

Brian Lewis, Our War, Penguin, Ringwood, Australia, 1980.
INTRODUCTORY INVESTIGATION:

What types of schools existed in Australia during the Great War, and what were the methods of learning and teaching at that time?

Advice to teachers

This investigation introduces some of the different types of schools that existed in Australia during the Great War, and the methods of learning and teaching at that time.

1. You are encouraged to read the Background information as context before you commence work with students.

2. Provide your students with sources Intro.1–Intro.3.

3. You may distribute the Source Analysis Worksheet on page 18 and ask students to make notes, or ask them to complete the Tuning in activities.

4. Discuss with students what they have learned from the sources and Tuning in activities along with their answers to the overall investigation question.

5. To help them answer the questions, you may choose to provide sources from other investigations in this resource or from the CD-ROM. You may also choose to provide the Background information, but this should be done only after students have formed conclusions based on analysis of the sources.

6. Students may draw comparisons between education today and a century ago, undertake further research or explore personal values and attitudes through the questions and activities in Going further.
INTRODUCTION

Background information

The three main types of Australian schools in the early 1900s and their funding and philosophical underpinnings are summarised neatly in Source Intro.1. A very few Quaker and German Lutheran schools also existed. In each type of school, the abilities principally to read, listen, write and remember well were crucial to a student’s success. Ideally, such skills were valued by different education authorities to different degrees for reasons associated with civic and citizenship ideals. These included ideals of good character; health, temperance and fitness; responsible democracy; national identity; national prosperity; national defence; and the beginnings of movements for responsible stewardship of the environment. Each ideal was couched also to varying degrees in terms of being a good citizen of one’s State, the Australian nation, one’s religious affiliation and, often, the Empire.

But there were less lofty explanations for highly teacher-centred teaching strategies in the nation’s classrooms. In the early 1900s, one teacher could be responsible for the teaching of many more students than would be permitted in any Australian classroom today. A classroom, especially in a one-room and one-teacher school of a type found often in rural and remote districts, could also house students across multiple grade levels – indeed, across all grade levels – and Source Intro.3 presents a not-uncommon ‘student to teacher’ ratio of the time. A teacher’s distribution and discussion of readings and other activities – recommended by education administrators for grade levels based on students’ ages and the expected ‘grade level’ of reading ability for that age – was often the sole possible means of instruction of large numbers of students. And it was often the most effective means of classroom management.

Even so, an awareness of ‘multiple intelligences’ and ‘differentiated learning’ was beginning to make itself known in a very few settings but by other names, often summarised under the one heading of the time: ‘the New Education’. The New Education encouraged teachers to recognise and develop students’ other skills, such as visual, musical and kinaesthetic skills, and Source Intro.2 idealises the theory in practice. Some basic scientific equipment is visible, and students are learning from illustrations and notes on the blackboard about the life-cycle of the mosquito, Captain James Cook, and weights and measures. Yet, even in that source, the setting is highly teacher-centred, the students are positioned to receive his instruction and management. ‘Reading, writing and ‘rithmetic’ by rote would have been the students’ main experiences. The lessons the teacher was expected to dispense on the eve of the Great War – and throughout it - were almost certainly outlined most precisely in memoranda, education gazettes, recommended books and other documents to him along with readings for students beyond the photograph’s frame.
## INVESTIGATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>What is the source? Who created it?</th>
<th>What information or perspective does the source provide?</th>
<th>Is the information in the source reliable? Why or why not?</th>
<th>What questions are you left asking?</th>
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</table>
Community members were encouraged to support the war effort at home.
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTORY INVESTIGATION:
What types of schools existed in Australia during the Great War, and what were the methods of learning and teaching at that time?

Learning activities

**Tuning in**

Read Source Intro.1.

1. What were the three main types of Australian schools in the 1910s? Describe each in your own words.
   
   Look closely at the Australian classroom in Source Intro.2.

2. How is the teacher positioned in relation to the students? What does this positioning say about methods of teaching and learning in the early 1910s?

3. How are the students seated in relation to each other? Why do you think this was so?

4. Create and complete a table identifying the teaching and learning items found in a classroom of the 1910s and the skills students may have developed by using them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items in the 1910s classroom</th>
<th>Students’ skills developed by the items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>listening, singing, playing the piano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Look at the students and teachers in Source Intro.3.

5. How many students are taught by how many teachers?

6. What sorts of methods and resources may teachers have chosen to help them teach so many students at one time?
Going further

1. Is your classroom set up in the same way as Source Intro.2? Explain why, or why not.

2. Create and complete a table identifying the teaching and learning items found in your classroom and the skills you may develop by using them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items in my classroom for teaching and learning</th>
<th>My skills developed by the items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboard</td>
<td>looking, reading, note-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Circle the items in your classroom for teaching and learning that are similar to those of the early 1910s. Be able to explain why you have chosen them.

4. Circle the skills you develop today that are similar to those developed in the early 1910s. Can you identify one or two that receive more attention in your school day than others? Explain why this is so.

5. List the main differences you can identify between methods of education in Australia in the 1910s and education in Australia now.

6. What may have been some of the challenges for students in a day at school in the early 1900s?

7. What may have been some of the challenges for teachers?

8. Compare the cultural makeup of the groups of students shown in Sources Intro.2 and Intro.3 with the cultural makeup of your class. Why are there similarities or differences?
INTRODUCTION

Source Intro.1

‘By 1914 the school system throughout Australia was divided into three sections.

First there were the government schools, funded and staffed from the public purse, established in the 1870s and 1880s to provide ‘free, secular [non-religious] and compulsory’ education ... Neutral on the question of religion, they were far from neutral about the ideals and duties of citizenship. School texts emphasised the extent of the [British] Empire ... [and] taught children their duty to the Empire ...

Catholic bishops determined to set up their own schools to provide the religious element they believed essential ... Devotion to Ireland and Australia replaced that single-minded devotion to Empire found in the government schools, which led ... to a slightly less enthusiastic acceptance of the war by Catholic scholars. Still, patriotism, as a Christian virtue, received due prominence in the Catholic schools ...

[The] Australian private school system made up the third strand ... [its schools] existed by dint of the fees charged, and so drew pupils from amongst the moderately affluent, middle-class Australians. They imitated their English progenitors in the values they enshrined, the classical education that they adopted, their emphasis on games, and the ‘old-world’ ivy-covered buildings they erected.’


Source Intro.2

An unidentified Victorian government school classroom, probably primary, in March 1914, five months before war was declared. The original caption states, ‘Note piano and pictures’.

*Education Department, Victoria, Education Gazette*, Mar. 1914, p. 78.
Source Intro.3

The two teachers and all students across Grades I–VIII at Perth State School, Tasmania, 1916. The girl squinting in the sun on the far left near the female teacher is Edith Dennis. At the right of centre circled, is her sister, Bessie. To the right, circled near the male teacher, is her other sister, Dorrie. The boy with the dog at the bottom left is her youngest brother, Lloyd.

Edith, Bessie, Dorrie and Lloyd had two older brothers, Archibald (Archie) and Roland (Roly), die in the Great War.

You will learn more about Edith and the Dennis family of Perth State School later in this resource.