INVESTIGATION 2

What sorts of values were expected of students in different schools during the Great War?

Advice to teachers

Through information provided to students and activities undertaken in schools a century ago, this investigation explores values expected of students in different schools during the Great War.

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

2. Provide your students with sources 2.1–2.12.

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.
Background information

Between 1914 and 1918, the term ‘self-denial’ featured often in the language of education policy, school publications and the daily life of Australian schools. Members of most school communities were encouraged to ‘go without something’ and contribute their energy, money or goods in kind to the war effort. Initially, the displaced European citizens of war were the intended beneficiaries, but they were followed soon after by Australian soldiers at the battle fronts or convalescing overseas, and large numbers of Australian soldiers returning to convalesce on the Australian home front.

For government and private schools, ‘self-denial’ was couched often in terms of ‘duty’ which the Empire Day Movement, with its ‘Rallying Cry’ of ‘For God, Duty and Empire’, had also championed in the years immediately preceding the war. Yet, the practice of self-denial also fitted the Catholic ethos even when the war had become too obviously an Imperial cause with which many Australians of Irish origins could not agree; for them, too, there were too many fellow Australians at the battle front and on the home front deserving of comfort and support of some kind. By 1916, positive thoughts, deeds and gifts were especially necessary. Rather than require their teachers and students to imagine what needed to be done, some educational officials determined to spell out exactly the values and activities required. Some messages were directed at ‘you’, whilst ‘we’ invoked shared responsibility and success if all played their parts ‘right to the end’.

Aside from the general expectation that every individual should ‘go without’ or ‘make do’, there were gender-specific expectations in many settings, for example, ‘the boys to fight and the girls to nurse’. Messages about the ‘waste’ and ‘ills’ of tobacco and alcohol consumption were not only aimed at boys but also their teachers, families and wider communities. Girls and women were excluded from calls to abstain from smoking or drinking either because such behaviour was inconceivable or no-one dared give girls the idea. Girls were, however, informed of the evils so as to discourage males from partaking; and they were expected to be publicly brave and strong no matter what trials they were suffering. Even so, the fewer references to girls or women meant that even when females contributed their utmost physically or mentally, their contributions never matched or exceeded those of males.

The conservative authorities of most education departments and private schools spoke publicly, or conveyed subtly in readings, their dislike of shirkers, strikers and slackers. During the conscription debates, the same authorities tended to favour the ‘Yes’ vote. Again, if not stated overtly, fables or other readings, such as about baby birds dying in nests because no-one helped them, subtly conveyed the same. The opposition to conscription was voiced foremost by Dr. Daniel Mannix, the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, and disillusion grew particularly in the Catholic schools as the war progressed.
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Learning activities

Tuning in

1. A value is a belief that something is good or bad. How did students learn about the positive values expected of them?

2. Many positive values are named or represented in the sources. Use a dictionary to assist with words whose meanings you do not know. Create and complete a table naming the values and tick those that were associated mainly with males, or females, or with both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive values</th>
<th>Associated with males</th>
<th>Associated with females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give up pleasures</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What sorts of circumstances could have influenced students’ values at different times during the war?
Going further

1. a) What positive values does your school expect you to uphold?
   b) How does your school teach you its values?
   c) Who else teaches you your values?
   d) Would you have upheld the values expected by your type of school during the war? Choose any two of its values of the time and explain why or why not.

2. Look again at Source Intro.3 of the Dennis children at Perth State School. Before the war was over, the children’s two older brothers, Archibald and Roland, had died as a result of the war. Edith’s response to them being at war and then dying was to work extra hard for the Red Cross, not only during the war but all her life. In 1994, she received a certificate and medal for 80 years of continuous service.

   But not everyone responded in the same way to war-related deaths and sufferings.
   a) How else may people have reacted to the deaths and sufferings of people in the Great War? Why?
   b) Can you begin to imagine how you would feel and act if what happened to Edith happened to you now? What do you think you would do? Why?
   c) When we look back at the past and make judgements about how people acted, what factors should we consider?

3. a) Why do you think Edith kept all the postcards from the Great War?
   b) What sorts of things do you own now that you can imagine keeping for the rest of your life? What factors would influence your decisions?

4. Do you buy or sell badges for any causes today? If so, for which ones, and why? Are there other equivalents to ‘selling badges’? If so, what?

5. a) What sorts of things do you imagine the girls at Presbyterian Ladies College, Pymble, New South Wales, may have ‘gone without’ to earn their certificates in 1919?
   b) Do you ever choose to ‘go without’ anything in your life today? Do you do this for charity purposes, such as for the World Vision Forty Hour Famine, or for religious reasons, or other reasons? Explain.

6. a) Identify any three positive values you uphold in your daily life today. You may choose values associated with people or the environment. Why are those values important to you?
   b) Make a conscious decision to uphold two of the values today. Report on your experiences to others in your class including how you felt about the experiences.

7. Find out about organisations at the time whose values were to question their governments and oppose the war. For example, Vida Goldstein and members of the Women’s Political Association (later the Women’s Peace Army) complained to Victoria’s Education Department that it was teaching uncritical loyalty to the Empire and emphasising the heroics rather than tragedies of war. Similar organisations included the Australian Peace Alliance and Industrial Workers of the World.
Source 2.1


Source 2.2

‘This is the time when our boys would like to be men, and our girls to be women – the boys to fight and the girls to nurse … [although, a girl will more likely be] a capable home-maker. Without good homes, no nation can be strong; and girls can help quite as much as the boys.’

Education Department, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, ‘What are we Fighting for?’, School Paper, Grades VII–VIII, Sept. 1914, p. 150.

Source 2.3

A South Australian fund-raising badge, c. 1917, typical of the many sold and bought by Australian school children.

‘I Will Help Until The War is Won’. AWM REL39131
Source 2.4

‘Right to the End

... Gallipoli. Anzac and Lonesome Pine!
If still there be on earth a glory-shine,
‘Tis there; where, far from home and wife and friend,
The southern brave their deathless laurels won,
And dauntless [undeterred] faced the Vandal and the Hun
Right to the end.

We will not blench [flinch]; ‘twere better, nobler far
To perish ‘mid the hecatombs [sacrifices] of war
Than live inglorious [without glory], failing to defend
The innocent oppressed. Whate’er betide [happens],
Our place is in the van [at the front], by Honour’s side-
Right to the end.’

The poet, M.J. O’Reilly of St. John’s College at the University of Sydney, later changed his views about the war and wrote in the Foreword to his book of poems that he and others had been ‘persuaded’ to think ‘they were fighting for the vindication [freedom] of Belgium and the freedom of small nationalities’. However, by war’s end, ‘most thoughtful Irishmen have reverted to the pre-war attitude of distrust [towards the British]’.


Department of Public Instruction, New South Wales, Education Gazette, as well as Education Department, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, School Paper, Grades VII–VIII, Feb. 1916, p. 2.

Source 2.5

‘Life every man holds dear; but the brave man
Holds honour far more precious dear than life.

—Troilus and Cressida.’

Department of Public Instruction, Queensland, School Paper, Grade V–VI, Sept. 1915, p. 143.
This postcard, ‘England Expects That Every Man Will Do His Duty’, states on its rear that it was made in Tasmania and belonged to Edith Dennis of Perth State School, Tasmania, during the Great War.

Source 2.7

‘The bravest battle that ever was fought,
Shall I tell you where and when?
...
Nay, not with cannon, or battle-shot,
With sword or nobler pen:
Nay, not with eloquent [well-expressed] word or thought
From mouths of wonderful men.
But deep in a walled-up woman's heart—
Of woman that would not yield [give in to her feelings],
But bravely, silently bore her part—
Lo! there is that battlefield!’

— Joaquin Miller.’

Source 2.8

‘I have said that no-one knows the end, but we do know what the end depends on. Under God, it depends on the patience, perseverance, courage, resolution, and self-control of the people of the allied races that are fighting for the safety and liberty of the world.’


Source 2.9

‘Old Boys and masters, have given personal service in the field – all honour to them – but most of us have a humbler, though not unimportant part to play ... There is something that we can each one of us give up ... we can walk instead of taking the tram, we can deny ourselves an evening paper, we can do without our cakes and our picture-shows. This is the kind of sacrifice we all ought to be glad to make, not going to parents or relations and asking for money to give, but denying ourselves something out of our own pockets. This is the only temper that will bring our Empire triumphantly through a crisis like the present; this must be the temper of each single one of us at the Sydney Grammar School.’


Source 2.10

Student good conduct certificate presented ‘in lieu of Prize’ to Marjorie Moore from Presbyterian Ladies’ College, Pymble, New South Wales, 1918.

Source 2.11

Let us think of a few things we can do, or that may be done by others.
We should buy no unnecessary things, no luxuries, remembering that production is limited, and that labor spent on
producing luxuries is lost for the production of necessities.
We should reduce our consumption of such articles as tea, sugar and imported apparel ...
We should waste nothing ...
We should grow fruit and vegetables in our gardens, and, thus lessen our outlay for food. Any spare time we put into
such work is a gain to us and to the community, instead of being a dead loss.
Men should lessen the amount of alcoholic beverages and tobacco they use. Those that are wise will do without them
altogether, as many are doing already to the advantage of their health as well as their pockets.’


Source 2.12

‘At the Guildford [Western Australia] speech day in 1919, General Sir Talbot Hobbs addressed the boys and their
parents, reflecting upon the experience of four years of war in which Australian soldiers had won deserved praise for
their exploits but taken fearful casualties ...

Schools had done far more than most people realised during the great fight. When the war broke out Australia
was in a better position ... to enter the struggle than any other part of the British Empire. The reason for this
was that the Government ... had arranged a system of national defence which made the boys trained men. But
above all it caused men and boys to think of their personal responsibility for the defence of their country and
the Empire ... A big factor in the success of the Australians had been the qualities of determination and reliance
which they had acquired on the playing fields.

Where the Guildford cadets were concerned, Hobbs clearly had a point, although as [Suzanne] Welborn [Lords of
Death, 1982] also suggests, many Australians, in ruing the dreadful casualties, queried the legitimacy of the militarism
and patriotism engendered in Australian schools prior to and during the war.’

Australia, 1996, p. 93.
Community members of the Queanbeyan District, New South Wales, who served in the Great War. AWM PO1061.001