Great Debates:
The Anzac Legend

That the Anzac legend is an idealised version of the truth
Great Debates: The Anzac legend

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INTRODUCTION

*Great Debates: The Anzac Legend* is designed for teachers and students of the Year 9 Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences. It enables them to investigate differing attitudes Australians have toward the Anzac legend, and how these have changed over a century.

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, Australia’s social, political and wartime history.

LEARNING APPROACH

*Great Debates: The Anzac Legend* adopts a debate format using role-play of key characters to explore the statement ‘That the Anzac legend is an idealised version of the truth’.

The activity employs an inquiry-based learning approach. Students are not given synthesised information but rather they are provided with primary and secondary sources to investigate from the perspective of an individual. The individuals selected for this debate come from different time periods, highlighting how the Anzac legend has changed since 1915. Students must examine the evidence provided to ascertain the views likely to have been held by the individual at the time that person contributed to our understanding of the Anzac legend.

The resource also makes use of formative assessment by way of peer-marking.

USING THIS RESOURCE

Although this education resource has been developed as a debate activity, it provides a range of historical sources and teachers can be flexible in the way they use the resource.

The amount of time that this activity takes will vary, but it is suitable for use over 4–7 lessons of 45-minutes duration. It can involve the entire class working in small groups, or just eight students, who present the debate for the rest of the class. You may like to use the activity in conjunction with *Great Debates: Conscription*, which can also be accessed from the Anzac Portal.

Further suggestions for using this resource in the classroom can be found below in the ‘Advice for teachers’ section.

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:

- 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)
- The commemoration of World War I, including debates about the nature and significance of the Anzac legend (ACDSEH097)
STRUCTURE AND COMPONENTS OF THIS RESOURCE

This resource is available as both a PDF and Word document on the Anzac Portal at anzacportal.dva.gov.au.

Advice to teachers
While recognising that teachers may use the resource in a variety of ways, this section provides suggestions for conducting the investigation and debate.

Background information
This section provides teachers with historical context regarding the development and evolution of the Anzac legend. Teachers should share this information with students before commencing the activity.

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.

Debrief
This section provides some questions for discussion or further exploration at the conclusion of the debate.

Character folders
There are eight roles to be played in the debate: four provide arguments in support of the statement, and four develop arguments to rebut the statement.

Character backgrounds
This section provides a historical context for the character to further students’ understanding of the person and the opinions they are likely to hold or have held.

Sources
Each character has six sources for students to investigate. These include speeches, newspaper articles, letters, diaries, political cartoons, images, artefacts and artworks.

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

‘That the Anzac legend is an idealised version of the truth’
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 25 April 1915, soldiers of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) landed under fire on the shores of Gallipoli. It was the first time the young Australian nation had sent a force into battle and those on the home front were soon reading about the ‘worthy sons of the Empire’ who had displayed bravery, courage, skill and camaraderie. The Anzac legend was born.

The Anzacs stayed on the Gallipoli peninsula for eight months of desperate fighting with few strategic gains. Yet, by the time they withdrew, their reputation had been cemented. Australia saw Anzacs as innovative, laconic, fearless, loyal and not afraid to question authority.

These notions regarding the Gallipoli campaign have been reinforced each Anzac Day since 1915 and are now deeply embedded in the Australian psyche. The Anzacs at Gallipoli helped to shape the Australian story, and their characteristics are often used to define what it means to be Australian. Thousands of Australians now undertake pilgrimages to Gallipoli each year.

In the years since 1915, however, some Australians have also challenged aspects of the Anzac legend. Some common arguments question the strategic relevance of the entire campaign, the competence of the British command, the lack of appropriate resources and the needless loss of life. Others have asked why Australians are so proud of a campaign which was in fact a military failure and why the Gallipoli campaign receives so much more recognition than the Anzacs on the Western Front, where many more were killed. The reliability of aspects of the legend, including the role of Simpson and his donkeys, have also been challenged.

As time has passed, so too has the meaning of ‘Anzac’. It is now used to refer not only to those who served during the First World War, but to all the men and women who have served Australia since that time. While the relevance of the Anzac legend in today’s multicultural society is at times debated, there is little doubt that it will continue to have significance for generations to come.

ADVICE TO TEACHERS

1. Teachers may wish to familiarise themselves with the background information provided in the teacher’s guide.
2. In introducing this activity, explain to your students that the characters they will be role-playing are drawn from different time periods. The arguments presented by each character should reflect the era in which the person helped shape our understanding of Anzac.
3. Decide whether students will work individually, or in large or small groups.
4. Organise groups/students participating in the debate into two teams: one team will support the statement (affirmative) and the second team will rebut the statement (negative).
5. Distribute a character folder to each group/student. Provide students with time to analyse their sources and ask them to fill out the ‘Source Analysis Worksheet’ to assist in their investigation. The worksheet is located at the front of each character folder.
6. Discuss with students what they have learned from the sources in relation to perspectives on the Anzac legend and allow them to conduct further research.
7. Teachers may choose to discuss 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. See Helpsheet: Effective debating (used with permission of the Teaching and Learning Unit, University of Melbourne) for more information on running debates.
8. Give groups/students time to work in their team and formulate a general idea of the arguments each character will deliver.

9. Give groups/students time to write the arguments for their character. Students should have an opportunity to discuss their completed arguments with their fellow team members and to make adjustments.

10. Conduct the debate. Students who are watching may use the rubrics to help assess their peers.

11. Discuss the questions in the ‘Debrief’ section.

DEBRIEF

Following the debate, discuss the following questions:

• Do you think the Anzac legend accurately reflects the Australian involvement in the Gallipoli campaign?

• What is the role of legends in defining a nation’s identity?

• Do you believe the values and characteristics depicted in the Anzac legend are inclusive of all members of Australia’s community today?

• Is the Anzac legend relevant to your generation of Australians?