More about the Burns Family

This is a photograph of the Burns family of South Hurstville, Sydney, in 1917. Private William Burns, 18th Battalion, stands behind his wife Florence and their two children, Ronald and Catherine. William enlisted in October 1917 and left shortly after. He served in France, where he was an interpreter. In October 1918 Private Burns was killed near the front line of German trenches. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial in France.

The Great War had a big impact on the lives of the Burns family.

Australian War Memorial P07381.002

More about the Conquest Family

This is a photograph of Mrs Lily Conquest with her two sons, Frederick, born in 1915, and Horatio, born in 1912. Her husband, Henry, served in the Royal Australian Navy and was away from his family for most of the years between July 1913 and July 1919. Lily parented the children on her own and no doubt worried about her husband for those six years. He returned safely after serving on a number of different ships.

The replica Australian infantry uniform being worn by Horatio is typical of the miniature uniforms worn by Australian children during the Great War.

When they were older, both Horatio and Frederick served in the Second World War.

The Great War had a big impact on the lives of the Conquest family.

Australian War Memorial P04834.001
What did students learn about the British Empire, its allies and enemies during the Great War?

This investigation explores Australia’s attitude to the British Empire during the Great War. Through the experiences of classroom lessons a century ago, students discover which countries were Australia’s allies and enemies at the time.

Background information
In the early 1900s reading comprehension was central to children’s education. Government school students purchased a monthly magazine, the title of which varied by state, and which was expected to be used by teachers as much as students. The most widely distributed magazine was the School Paper, produced by the Education Department of Victoria but distributed to thousands of other students and teachers by the education departments of Tasmania and Western Australia. Students were also expected to read the magazine at home. Inspectors conducted ‘spot’ checks to ensure that it was the basis of the teachers’ work and the students’ views and values. In private and religious schools the magazines received less use, and some schools and systems created their own. Classrooms in all types of schools also possessed other children’s books and text books.

At the war’s beginning, pro-Imperial (British) and military content became more prominent and teachers related lessons on most subjects to the conflict. Supporting the Empire was a common theme, but as the war progressed its treatment in schools grew increasingly complex. Students actively and mostly learned about those countries who were Britain’s and Australia’s allies and less about those who were the enemies. In May each year, Empire Day was acknowledged by many schools through assemblies, poems and songs, and students usually gained a half day holiday.

Learning activities

Tuning in
1. Look at a current world map and locate on it the following countries: United Kingdom (Great Britain), England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Turkey, France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, New Zealand and Australia.
2. Identify and colour the flags for each of these countries by using the activity on page 28-31.
3. What other countries do you hear about on the news or learn about at school? Locate these countries on the current world map.

Using the sources
1. Look at the Sources 15–20. What did students learn about the British Empire? What countries were friends or allies of the British Empire? What countries were not friends or enemies at the time? For each source place the country’s flag that is referred to beside the source.
2. Place the sources with the country flags in two groups
   • those countries who were friends of the British Empire at the time and
   • those countries who were not.
Discuss the names and locations of these countries.

Going further
1. How may learning so much about the British Empire a century ago have made many Australians feel when war broke out?
2. Do you think the information learnt was deliberately aimed to make students supportive of the Great War and the British Empire? Why or why not?
3. How may Australian students who had German or Turkish family backgrounds have felt during the Great War? Explain.
INVESTIGATION 2

What did students learn about the British Empire, its allies and enemies during the Great War?

These are the names of countries and their modern day flag outlines. Colour each flag the correct colours. Cut out each flag with its country name attached. Go to www.flagid.org/ for help.

**Australia**

**Belgium**

**France**

**Great Britain (United Kingdom)**

**India**

**Italy**

**Canada**

**Japan**

Note that Ireland, Scotland and Wales were part of the United Kingdom at the time.
Friend of the British Empire

Not a friend of the British Empire
Source 15

‘Empire Day will be observed as usual ... Suitable stories and poems should be read and recited and appropriate songs sung. Wherever possible the Union Jack should be hoisted and saluted. The National Anthem (“God Save the King”) should be sung.

The thoughts of the pupils will naturally be directed to the battlefields, where free men from all parts of the British Empire are fighting to defend Belgium following Germany’s invasion ... ’

Extract modified from:
Education Department of Western Australia, Education Circular 1916, p. 276.

This was a message to teachers to remind them to observe Empire Day.

Source 16

‘People used to tell us that the Turks were cruel ... but no Australian who was at Anzac believes that now.’

Extract modified from:

This story for school students told how a Turkish soldier had, at risk to himself, rescued and helped wounded Australian soldiers in no man’s land. The Australians rewarded the ‘kind-hearted Turk’ by throwing tins of bully beef into his trench.

It is commonly known that Turkish and Australian soldiers respected each other despite being enemies and did throw gifts of food to each other.

Source 17

‘India listens to young John Bull and Miss Britannia, and Russia and Canada are taken up with the sad story of Miss Belgium. In the center, la belle France lays down the law to Heather Jock and the Little Woman from Wales ... merry Master Pat and a young lady from Montenegro are very friendly with the dark-eyed daughter of Italy; and, while the little Jap tells his troubles to the little Jap, young Australia looks on.’


Hint: Each of the bolded words above refers to a country that was a member or an ally of the British Empire.

This is a school magazine that many students in schools across Australia read during the Great War.
Students from Maryborough, Queensland, in August 1916, travel on a horse-drawn float as part of a patriotic procession through the streets. The students are dressed in the traditional costumes of some of the allied countries and the countries of the British Empire including Japan, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Belgium and Serbia. They are all standing in front of the British Union Jack flag.

Source 18

John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, image 19469

‘The landing at Gallipoli was mainly the achievement of men from sheep-stations in the Australian bush, or from the fields or townships of New Zealand, who, a few short months ago, had no dream of warfare.’


Source 19

John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, image 19469

‘Some of the Little Orphans of the War and their Nurses’.

Source 20

This school paper was read by Australian school children and shows the many French children who lost their parents in the war. Children in many schools raised money for these orphans. France was an ally of the British Empire during the Great War.

Education Department, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, School Paper, Grades III-IV, Sept. 1917, p. 127.
This investigation explores values expected of students in schools during the Great War and how these values were taught to students.

**Background information**

During the Great War, the term ‘self-denial’ was often used in education policy, publications and schools. School communities were encouraged to support the war effort, beginning with assistance to Europe’s displaced people and later to Australian soldiers. ‘Self denial’, often understood as ‘duty’, was widely championed, even by groups such as Irish Australians, who may have disagreed with the war but believed in supporting Australians serving overseas. Rather than allowing teachers and students to imagine how they might support the war effort, some educational officials were more proscriptive with messages directed at ‘you’ or ‘we’, that invoked shared responsibility and promised shared success if everyone played their part ‘to the end’. Gender roles were explicitly set out. Boys were ‘to fight and the girls to nurse’. Messages about the ‘waste’ and ‘ills’ of tobacco and alcohol consumption were aimed at boys and their families, teachers and the communities. Girls were expected to discourage males from partaking of these evils, and to be brave and strong, whatever trials they suffered. But, no matter how great their contribution or admirable their stoicism, girls’ contribution to the war effort was never seen to match or exceed that of males.

**Learning activities**

**Tuning in**

1. A value is a belief that something is good or bad. Discuss this idea.
2. Does your school have some key words that are part of its school badge or motto? What are the words?
3. What values or beliefs does your school encourage you to practise?
4. How does your school teach you those values?
5. Who else teaches you values?
6. What sorts of values do you personally practise today, even when away from school? Why?

**Using the sources**

1. Look at the Sources 21–29. Discuss each source and think about the value that it is, or may be, associated with. Use scissors to cut out the twelve values on page 40. Match the value to each source. Some values will match more than one source.
2. Given it was wartime in 1914–1918, which values do you think were the most important and why?
3. Are there any values on the list that are the same as the ones you practise today? Name them.

**Going further**

1. Do you sell or buy items or badges for any ‘causes’ today? If so, which ones and why? What is a modern day equivalent of the fundraising button or badge?
2. Design your own colourful badge for a cause important to you. Think carefully about the pictures, symbols and words you include on it.
3. Why do you think schools encouraged students to be happy despite a war being in progress? Would it be easy for children to be happy if someone special to them, such as a brother or father, had been killed? Why or why not?
INVESTIGATION 3

What were some of the values taught by schools during the Great War?

These are some of the values that were taught in schools during the Great War.

Cut them out and match them to the sources on the following pages.

Be cheerful and never show sadness

Recycle and waste nothing

Never give up

Support the British Empire

Everyone can help

Go without

Girls can help

Work hard

Boys can help

Be unselfish by thinking of others

Be thrifty

Don’t drink too much alcohol or smoke cigarettes

Source 21

“The skies may meet in sadness,
The blustering winds may blow;
But if our hearts are cheery,
There’s sunshine where we go.”


Source 22

A South Australian fund raising badge, probably made in 1917, typical of the many sold and bought by Australian school children.

Australian War Memorial REL39131

Source 23

This postcard belonged to Edith Dennis of Perth State School, Tasmania, during the Great War. Edith volunteered for the Red Cross for all of her life. The flags on the postcard spell out the sentence that Admiral Nelson gave as a signal to start the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Private Collection.
In 1915 Eunice Bryant and Bertie Betts were winners of a Red Cross Ball Fancy Dress competition in Perth, Western Australia, raising money for such groups as the Red Cross and the Sick and Wounded Soldiers’ Fund. This postcard was produced, and successfully raised more funds for the war effort.

Source 24
Australian War Memorial P08189.001

‘What are we fighting for? 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.’

Source 25
Education Department, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, ‘What are we Fighting for?’, School Paper, Grades VII–VIII, Sept. 1914, p. 150.

This is a recruitment poster from early in the war which students may have seen. Everyone was expected to help in some way. Making people believe an idea or value is known as propaganda.

Source 26
Australian War Memorial ARTV00075
Source 27

Two Ways

1. When you go home from school, ask mother for one of her teaspoons. Rub it and polish it well, until it is bright and clean. Then hold it up by the handle close to your face and tell me what you see.

2. There is a face in your spoon. Oh, what a long face it is! Such a face as that could never smile. It is a ‘cry-baby’s face, is it not?’ Now turn your spoon sideways and look again. What do you see this time? A face, of course; but what kind of a face is it?

3. Oh, the jolliest face you ever saw ...

4. There are always two ways of looking at things. If you look at the dark side, you cannot see the bright side, but you can always look at the bright side if you like, and looking at the bright side is the best way to be happy.


Source 28

‘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 ... tea, sugar ...

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 ...

Men should lessen the amount of alcoholic beverages and tobacco they use.’


Source 29

This certificate was given to a student instead of a book prize. Students and families went without the usual things during the war knowing that their small sacrifice would go to help someone else in need.