Australian Prisoners of War
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<tr>
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<th>Capture</th>
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<td>It was a terrible feeling</td>
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<td>We all helped break the boredom</td>
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<th>Guards, civilians &amp; internees</th>
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<tr>
<td>We became quite matey, actually</td>
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Humour & mateship
Every one of us had someone to care for us

Food, conditions & treatment
I saw life at its best and its worst

Despair, hope, secrets & escape
We never had any other thought but to get out tonight

The end of the war, coming home & reflection
It was one of the great feelings of life
Introduction for teachers

Using Australian Prisoners of War in the classroom

The resource

*Australian Prisoners of War* has been produced by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs as an introduction for both teachers and students in Australian secondary schools to the wealth of primary source material available in the *Australians at War Film Archive*.

Educational aim

The aim of this educational resource is to provide teachers and students with self-contained classroom-ready materials and teaching strategies to explore the firsthand experiences of Australian prisoners of war (POWs). Through the use of filmed interviews from the Archive as the core of the resource, it provides a unique collection of information and evidence for developing students’ knowledge and ideas about those experiences and encourages students to share and discuss their reactions to the stories behind the statistics and the history.

Components

This resource comprises three elements:

- a DVD comprising eight chapters, each one of which is between 12 – 15 minutes duration;
- a Teachers’ Guidebook, with classroom-ready documents, worksheets and suggested teaching strategies to complement each of the DVD chapters; and
- a CD-ROM containing interview transcripts and archival film footage and photographic stills for students to further enhance their knowledge of both the veterans interviewed on the DVD and the Australian POW experience.

We recommend lesson formats where students view a chapter of the DVD and then respond using one or more of the activities suggested. Many of the ideas in this resource will no doubt also act as springboards for activities you devise for your own classes.

Eight Topics

This resource primarily investigates the experiences of Australian POWs from World War Two and the Korean War. It provides students with resources for studying the major themes of these experiences through the on-screen memories and words of former POWs, framed by accompanying narration and images which place those memories in an historical perspective. The titles of the Topics are:

1. A short history of Australian prisoners of war
2. Capture
3. Life in the camps
4. Guards, civilians and internees
5. Humour and mateship
6. Food, conditions and treatment
7. Despair, hope, secrets and escape
8. The end of the war, coming home and reflection

Each topic begins with a summary of the accompanying DVD chapter, brief background material and suggested research that can be undertaken by students before viewing the DVD. There is also a set of reproducible pages that contain further information and evidence as well as key questions and classroom activities. The worksheets can be photocopied and used ‘as is’ in the classroom or for homework assignments. We have also suggested a list of questions that can be used as a stimulus for discussion or developed into student activities that could be completed in a single teaching period or over a number of sessions.

Methodology

The resource uses an inquiry approach – students are provided with a variety of interviews, evidence and information and encouraged to analyse this material to form their own conclusions about the nature of the experiences of Australian POWs.

Curriculum outcomes

The resource and its materials have been shaped around the History/SOSE (Studies of Society and Environment) curricula in all states and territories with an emphasis on achieving essential learning outcomes. It should be noted that the interviews contained in the resource can go beyond History into the English classroom, the Personal Development areas and the exploration of the Australian character and experience in many different school curriculum domains of learning.
Curriculum Levels

The resource has been designed for use with students from all secondary levels.

Understanding this resource

The material you will see, hear and read about in this resource deals with what has been referred to as a ‘difficult and confronting experience’. When people are held in captivity during wartime many of the usual forms of acceptable behaviour drop away by both captors and the captured.

The interviews that are contained here are a vital part of our national story. The oral history collection that is the *Australians at War Film Archive* contributes greatly to our historical understanding of Australia’s wartime past, in particular the POW experience, through first hand accounts of what happened. This resource facilitates a direct link between you and the people who suffered at the hands of their captors. One implication of this is the rawness of some of the material. You will very occasionally hear language you may consider offensive. You will certainly hear difficult stories.

The POW accounts here reveal moments of cruelty and heartbreak. There are also accounts of acts of humanity, of personal sacrifice and humility, and examples that give clarity and meaning to our understanding of the concept of ‘mateship’.

Some of the exercises will encourage students to empathise with the former prisoners of war. This is not done to sensationalise or trivialise their experiences but rather to enhance the learning experience. It is not intended to upset or confront students. Rather it is hoped that by taking tentative steps to empathise with the topic students will develop an understanding of what it meant to be a POW, while studying in a safe and supportive environment.

Topics such as death, ill-treatment and disease are inevitable in this resource. By hearing about them directly from the interviewees, you cannot help but be affected by their experiences. These are not statistics or secondary accounts of what happened. These are the viewpoints of veterans who experienced a period of their life unimaginable to us today.

The interviewees are showing us the greatest respect by allowing their memories to be recorded and used for educational purposes. It is important we treat those memories with similar respect. Students should listen to the interviews but not judge. The events discussed took place in a different time and place. It would be unfair to try to judge the veterans and the other interviewees by our standards of behaviour or what we regard as acceptable. Instead, students need to listen and learn.

It is a common desire amongst former POWs that nobody else should ever have to undergo what they experienced. These POWs have allowed their memories to be recorded and brought to the surface so that others will understand the POW experience. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to study history with this collection. These are the words of the people who were actually there.

A disclaimer

The inquiry approach which is the guiding methodology of this resource requires students to be exposed to a range of views, interviews and evidence for them to develop their own conclusions. Teachers should keep in mind that some materials may contain offensive language or negative stereotypes reflecting the culture or language of a period or place. Teachers may find that, while most students will be able to manage the material comfortably, some sections of the resource could be disturbing to others. Teachers are urged to preview the material and to adapt the resource to suit their own teaching style and to meet the students’ needs.

The interviews presented in this resource are the memories and reflections of the person being interviewed. The material is presented in good faith, but does not reflect the considered views of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs or The *Australians at War Film Archive*. Nor can it be assumed that the Department of Veterans’ Affairs or the *Australians at War Film Archive* agree with or endorse any content or opinions expressed in websites or other publications quoted or referred to in this resource.
Further Resources

There is a large collection of available resources about Australian prisoners of war and the wars in which they were involved. These are some resources that teachers and students will find useful.

**Boer War 1899-1902**


**First World War 1914-1918**


**Second World War 1939-1945**


Allan, Sheila *Diary of a Girl in Changi 1941-45*, Pymble, Kangaroo Press, 2004

Australians at War Film Archive: www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au


Bevege, Margaret *Behind barbed wire: internment in Australia during World War II*, St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1993.


Brodziak, Innes *Proudly we served: stories of the 2/5 Australian General Hospital at war with Germany, behind German lines, and at war with Japan in the Pacific*, Chatswood, N.S.W.: 2/5 Australian General Hospital Association, 1980


Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Stolen Years: Australian Prisoners of War, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2002.


McKernan, Michael This war never ends – the pain of separation and return, St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2001.


Nagata, Yuriko Unwanted aliens: Japanese internment in Australia, St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1996.


Laden, Fevered, Starved – The POWs of Sandakan North Borneo, 1945, Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Veterans’ Affairs, 1999.


Winter, Barbara Stalag Australia: German prisoners of war in Australia, North Ryde, N.S.W.: Angus & Robertson, 1986.

Korea 1950-1953
Bartlett, Norman ed. With the Australians in Korea, Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1954.


Australians at War. www.australiansatwar.gov.au


Oral History


Websites
The Australians at War Film Archive www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/ Search under Categories for prisoners of war

Gallipoli and the AE2 Submarine www.anzacsites.gov.au

Australians on the Western Front - World War One www.ww1westernfront.gov.au

Australia in World War Two www.ww2australia.gov.au


Australian Red Cross www.redcross.org.au

The Australian War Memorial www.awm.gov.au/thestolenyears
What do I know about Australian POWs?

1. What do you already know about the Second World War, the Korean War and the experiences of Australian prisoners and civilian internees during these wars? Try and set out ten things you know about each of these subjects in the What do I know about? table below.

2. Share your answers with the rest of the class. Add other student’s answers to your table in the What do others in the class know? column.

3. Keep this sheet and as you watch each chapter of the DVD, add the new facts you will discover to the What have I found out? column in your table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>What do I know about?</th>
<th>What do others in the class know?</th>
<th>What have I found out?</th>
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<td><strong>Australian prisoners of the Germans</strong></td>
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## Worksheet 2

### Introduction

**Australian prisoners of the Japanese**

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<th>What do I know about?</th>
<th>What do others in the class know?</th>
<th>What have I found out?</th>
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**Australian prisoners of the Chinese**

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**Australian civilian Internees**

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The history of Australian prisoners of war

“Captivity in war is a difficult and confronting experience, regardless of the particular conflict.”

Dr. Rosalind Hearder

Wounded Australian prisoners of war at the German collecting station on morning of the 20th July during the Battle of Fleurbaix which took place on 19 July 1916 and 20 July 1916.
Background

A short history of Australians in captivity during times of war

By Dr Rosalind Hearder

When enlisting, few soldiers, sailors or aircrew would ever expect to become a prisoner and spend the war at the whim of their enemy. Yet just as death and disease are an inevitable part of warfare, so too is captivity.

Australians have experienced imprisonment from the Boer War to the Korean War, but when it comes to the place of POWs in the Australian military story, some have been relatively ‘forgotten’. There is a tendency to focus on ‘operational’ military stories – in other words, the people and events that directly affected the course and outcome of wars. Still, not all Australian POWs have been neglected. When most Australians today think of POWs, they will probably recall stories of the men and women who were prisoners of the Imperial Japanese Army during the Second World War. There are some understandable reasons for this: they represented the highest number group of Australian POWs of any conflict, then or since; and their experience was of unprecedented brutality and horror.

While this story may continue to overshadow other Australian POW experiences, it is important to remember all the others, and understand what each Australian POW experienced. Captivity in war is a difficult and confronting experience, regardless of the particular conflict.

Table 1: Conflicts and numbers of Australian POWs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Australian POWs captured</th>
<th>Mortality Rate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boer War (1899-1902)</td>
<td>~104*</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>World War One (1914-1918)</td>
<td>4,070</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>World War Two (1939-1945)</td>
<td>22,376 (Pacific) 8,591 (Europe)</td>
<td>36% 3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korean War (1950-1953)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3%</td>
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* All figures sourced from the Australian War Memorial. Estimates of Australian POWs in the Boer War vary greatly. The figure of 104 refers to Australians captured in the conventional phase of the war and does not include the many Australians who were briefy held and then released in the guerrilla phase of the war.

Captivity in war before the 20th century

As long as recorded history has existed, captives have been taken in times of war – both those who fight and civilians. Until the 20th century there were few internationally agreed-upon ‘laws’ to govern how captors must treat their prisoners of war. Prior to this many POWs were either released, or died in captivity either through execution or mistreatment. The international Hague Regulations of 1899 and 1907 contained guidelines on the treatment of POWs but the unprecedented conditions of the First World War showed that the regulations needed to be amended and strengthened.

After the First World War, a group of nations passed a resolution called the ‘Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War’ in Geneva on 27 July, 1929. This convention set out broad rules regarding the treatment of POWs and it was aimed at protecting vulnerable and defenceless individuals. After the Second World War, the Third Edition of the Geneva Convention, 1949 replaced the 1929 Convention. The new version included the following principles:

Prisoners of war must be:
- treated humanely with respect for their persons and their honour;
- enabled to inform their next of kin and the International Red Cross of their capture;
- allowed to correspond regularly with relatives and to receive relief parcels;
- allowed to keep their clothes, feeding utensils and personal effects;
- supplied with adequate food and clothing;
- provided with quarters not inferior to those of their captor’s troops;
- given the medical care their state of health demands;
- paid for any work they do;
- repatriated if certified seriously ill or wounded, (but they must not resume active military duties afterwards);
- quickly released and repatriated when hostilities cease;

Prisoners of war must not be:
- compelled to give any information other than their name, age, rank and service number;
- deprived of money or valuables without a receipt (and these must be returned at the time of release);
- given individual privileges other than for reasons of health, sex, age, military rank or professional qualifications;
- held in close confinement except for breaches of the law, although their liberty can be restricted for security reasons; and
- compelled to do military-related work, nor work which is dangerous, unhealthy or degrading.

(See the relevant documents at The International Council for the Red Cross’ Humanitarian Law - Treaties & Documents: www.icrc.org)

Whether or not these guidelines are actually followed during times of war differs between nations, commanders and particular individuals. Those countries that were not signatories to the 1929 Geneva Convention could claim they had no obligation to uphold its regulations. Japan had signed the Geneva Convention, but their Parliament had not ratified it (formally approved it), so Japanese forces claimed the right to use their POWs for whatever labour purposes they saw fit.

AUSTRALIAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN ENEMY HANDS

The Boer War 1899-1902

In 1899, descendents of Dutch settlers who had migrated to Southern Africa since the 17th century (called ‘Boers’), invaded the British-held colonies of Natal and Cape Colony. After nine months of conventional war, followed by two years of guerrilla warfare, the better-armed and equipped British Empire forces were victorious. The war ended in 1902 with the Treaty of Vereeniging establishing British administrative control.

Though we were not yet a federated nation, Australia was part of the British Empire, and so individual Australian colonies offered troops. More than 16,000 Australians served in colonial based contingents. From 1 January 1901, when Australia federated, they served in national contingents. Thousands of Australians joined South African units and some joined British units. But it was to be disease (mainly typhoid) that would kill half the almost 600 Australians who died during the war. Many thousands more British troops died of illness than on the battlefield.

Both sides took prisoners during the war. British forces captured many thousands of Boer soldiers and civilians and an estimated ten percent died from disease, lack of sanitation and poor nutrition. Some of these civilians were women and children.

On the other side, British and Australian soldiers were also taken prisoner, including a young war correspondent who would go on to become Britain’s Prime Minister during the Second World War – Winston Churchill. Australian POWs in the Boer War numbered around 104 and suffered from the same conditions as the civilian internees. Most of them were liberated by British forces by June 1900.

The First World War 1914-1918

The First World War, also known as the Great War was to be a terrible experience for the newly federated nation of Australia. A war that became a baptism of fire, killing tens of thousands of young men, also creating the foundation for new traditions of patriotism, and an increasingly distinct national identity apart from Britain.

Some 60,000 Australian military personnel were killed during the Great War, and about 160,000 were wounded. More than 4,070 Australians spent the war as prisoners. The Gallipoli campaign saw the first of 217 Australians captured by Ottoman [Turkish] forces. The AE2, Australia’s second war submarine, was sunk in the Sea of Marmara on 30 April 1915. Torpedoed by the Turkish boat Sultan Hissar, the 32-man crew was forced to abandon ship, and all were taken prisoner. The crew of the AE2 were put to work on building a railway in southern Turkey. Suffering from disease and starvation, four died in captivity.
Other Australians were captured during the Gallipoli and Middle Eastern ground campaigns, and Australian airmen were also captured in what is now Iraq. One-quarter of Australian POWs died in Turkish captivity due to poor food and disease.

The Second World War 1939 -1945

Almost a million Australian men and women served in North Africa, Europe, the Mediterranean, the South West Pacific and Southeast Asia during the Second World War. Over 30,000 did not return home.

One of the most significant differences between this war and the First World War was the number of Australian troops captured. Almost eight times the number captured in the First World War were captured in the Second World War; the majority of these as prisoners of the Japanese. In a war where atrocities were common, the Japanese treatment of its POWs was perhaps the darkest chapter for Australia’s wartime history; an experience difficult for the nation to comprehend.

Almost 9,000 Australians were held in Italian and German camps and experienced varying degrees of brutality and mistreatment. Some 250 of these men died during the war and their experiences continue to be overshadowed by that of their Pacific comrades. Stories of German imprisonment often focus on daring stories of escape rather than the realities of day-to-day life as a Kriegsgefangener (the German term for prisoner of war).

Below we will examine three aspects of Australian Second World War captivity: military personnel held in Japanese camps, civilians and nurses held in Japanese camps, and military personnel held in European camps.

I. Military personnel in Japanese captivity

On the Western Front battlefields from 1916-1918, 3,853 Australian troops were taken prisoner by German forces, most of them held in Germany. A third of these Australian prisoners were captured on 11 April 1917 at the First Battle of Bullecourt in northern France. A number of Australian airmen were also shot down and captured by the Germans.

Although these Australian prisoners survived in proportionally higher numbers than their comrades in Ottoman camps, their experience was a difficult one, and their captors were generally harsh. Conditions were crowded (the Germans held over five million Allied POWs during the war), and food supplies were often disrupted, particularly during the Allied blockade of 1917-1918. Many non-officer POWs were made to work for the Germans in war-related capacities – a direct breach of the Hague Conventions.

Almost 22,000 Australian servicemen (~21,000 Army, 354 Navy and 373 RAAF) were captured by the Japanese, most at the fall of Singapore. After landing on the Malayan north-east coast on 8 December 1941, the Japanese Army swiftly forced British, Indian and Australian infantry back down the Malayan peninsula and on to Singapore Island. The Japanese were responsible for massacres along the way, such as 150 Australians and Indians at Parit Sulong and over 200 British medical personnel and wounded at Alexandra Barracks Hospital in Singapore. After a week of heavy fighting and casualties, trapped on Singapore Island with no means of escape, British command formally surrendered to the Japanese on 15 February, 1942.

After the capitulation, 14,972 Australians (including wounded) were marched to Changi camp in Singapore, along with thousands more British, Indian and Dutch troops. Few imagined they would be prisoners for the next three and a half years, or that one-third of them would die in captivity. Over the next months, thousands of Allied POWs left Changi, sent with work parties to the far corners of Japan’s empire.

Smaller groups of Australian soldiers were captured in New Britain, Ambon, Timor and Java, along with sailors from HMAS Perth (sunk on 1 March 1942).

Life in captivity

By mid-1942, the Japanese army controlled a vast and expendable labour force. Throughout Asia, Allied prisoners worked on railways, aerodromes and other construction projects, in factories, mines, shipyards and docks.

For three and a half years Australian POWs battled disease, starvation, exhausting work and the brutality of their captors. Although thousands of Allied POWs perished at sea or in the notorious Sandakan death march, the main cause of death for Allied prisoners was a combination of disease and starvation. Despite the valiant efforts of 106 Australian medical officers, nearly 8,000 Australians died as prisoners, in desperate and degrading conditions. These 8,000 represented one quarter of all Australian deaths during the war. For a national population of then only seven million, this was a catastrophic loss. For many Australians, the POW experience was understandably an important chapter in the larger story of the war.

A typical day’s ration in most camps would be a ½ - 1 cup of white rice, and some watery vegetable soup. Meat was eaten perhaps once or twice a month.

Without basic protein and vitamins, starvation was the biggest killer of POWs, and with the resulting low immunity they could not fight any of the myriad diseases that dogged them through captivity. POW medical officers battled a range of medical conditions like malaria and dengue fever (diseases transmitted by mosquitoes), dysentery (an infection of the digestive system causing severe diarrhoea), pellagra and beriberi (vitamin deficiency diseases), tropical ulcers, and outbreaks of the most deadly and contagious disease – cholera (a bacterial disease causing severe diarrhoea and dehydration). If cholera came to a camp, up to 60-80% of the camp could be dead within days.

POWs always tried to improve their conditions wherever they could. Alcohol stills were built to manufacture disinfectant, carpenters made artificial limbs from wood and scrap metal for the many amputees from tropical ulcers, and chemists experimented with the medicinal qualities of the plants around them. In many places, black markets were set up with local communities to trade for food and medical supplies. Where possible, vegetable gardens were planted and chickens and ducks bred for eggs and meat. Any animals that were unfortunate enough to stray into the path of prisoners were soon meals. Rats, monkeys, cats and snakes were a few of the animals that Australian soldiers ate for the first time.

Why did POWs of the Japanese not try to escape? The simple answer is that there was little point. They were often in remote and inhospitable areas, most were sick and exhausted, and even if they had made it to a civilian village, locals would often turn them over to the Japanese for reward. Should a prisoner try to escape (some tried and almost all failed), he would be executed in front of the camp, and usually some form of punishment would be applied to the entire camp as a lesson.

Diversities of Japanese captivity

Perhaps the most important thing to understand about Australians in Japanese captivity is that there was no one ‘POW experience’. Constant change characterised the POW experience – from locations, supplies of food and medications, to ever-changing captors. Attitudes and morale varied depending on how long men had been in captivity, and the kinds of conditions in which they were forced to live.

A prisoner could find himself captured in Singapore, go to Thailand to work on the Burma-Thai Railway, and end the war in Japan. Over three and a half years, he would experience very different camps, climates, types of work, diseases and mix with POWs of different nationalities.

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His health would deteriorate over time, affecting his energy levels and will to survive. Battalions and units were broken up between camps, and every week he would watch friends and comrades die.

The enduring public representations of Australians in captivity often focus on just two areas: Changi and the Burma-Thailand Railway. Australians were prisoners of the Japanese in several other areas - Java, Sumatra, Japan, Borneo, Manchuria, Formosa (now Taiwan), Ambon and Hainan Islands, each with their own unique experiences and challenges. Below are brief descriptions of five areas of Japanese captivity where Australian POWs were held, demonstrating the varied conditions faced by Australian POWs.

1. Changi, Singapore

More than 100,000 Allied POWs were crammed into Changi camp (originally a British army barracks) after the fall of Singapore. Within a few weeks, the various Allied Army administrations assumed some sort of order, and things began to run fairly smoothly. Many work forces were assembled in Changi before being sent to the Burma-Thai Railway and other work camps throughout Asia.

The first major problem in the first few weeks was food. The radical change in diet – from army rations to mostly rice and a few vegetables given by the Japanese – caused significant digestive problems. Crowded conditions led to outbreaks of dysentery – a common and consistent problem across all camps.

It is a popular misunderstanding that Changi represented the place that exemplified the POW experience of suffering and deprivation. In fact, many POWs thought of Changi as a safe, comfortable ‘home base’ – a place to go back to, if they survived whatever journeys and other camps they faced. The Allied troops at Changi were well-organised, with a comprehensive and efficient military administration and the closest thing to a normal military hierarchy, where a prisoner could go months without seeing his captors, and where food and medical supplies were strictly regulated and well distributed.

2. Ambon

POW camps on Ambon and Hainan were among the very worst experienced by Allied prisoners: 454 of 580 (78%) Australians died, mostly from starvation. After the war, supplies of Red Cross food and medicine parcels were found near POW camps on Ambon – had they been distributed by the Japanese, some men might have been saved.

The Ambon prisoner group taken to Hainan Island endured similarly grim conditions. By June 1945, continual protests had led to a slight improvement in the food situation, but it was largely too little too late for the POWs there. An Australian medical officer was ordered to remove ‘starvation’ as a cause of death on death certificates, and was warned that his captors ‘would show [the prisoners] what was really meant by starvation unless it was altered.’

3. Borneo

Australian POWs were held in four main camps in Borneo: Sandakan, Kuching (an officers-only camp), Labuan and Jesselton. Of these, Sandakan in North Borneo contained the majority of Australians. Conditions were bad in 1942, but things were to get worse. In January 1945, as the tide of the war was starting to turn, the Japanese, fearing an Allied invasion, began a series of forced marches from Sandakan to Ranau – a distance of 260 kilometres along jungle tracks. Weak and sick prisoners starved to death on the way as food became scarcer. They had no medical supplies and the terrain was muddy and treacherous. If a man collapsed and could not get up, he was usually shot dead by the Japanese.

More marches followed until all the POWs had left Sandakan. By the end of the war only six Australians of the 2,500 Allied POWs had survived the ordeal.

would involve a struggle between Allied officers and their captors over who would go out to work; medical officers in particular constantly arguing against the inclusion of very sick men. Often the Japanese would demand 80% of a camp to work, when all were weak and ill. If the guards disagreed with a medical officer’s diagnosis of a patient’s illness, they would beat the doctors, and force the sick men out to work anyway. This was a daily occurrence and those that died during the day were carried back by the others to be cremated.

By mid-1943 the Japanese, under increasing pressure to complete the project because of advancing Allied forces, demanded more men to work longer - often 16 hours daily, with no days off, never seeing their camps in daylight - and for less food. Men were being fed 250-300 grams of rice and a few beans per day, and rarely any meat.

The daily deprivation, misery and humiliation of this situation is impossible to comprehend. Some 12,000 Allied POWs died on the Railway, including 2,646 Australians. That the building of the Railway exacted such a brutal toll is no surprise, considering the terrible state of the workers’ health, the terrain through which they had to build, the climate of torrential monsoon rain and extreme heat and the lack of adequate engineering tools and supplies. The Railway was completed in mid-October 1943 but it was never used. Almost as soon as it was completed, it was damaged by Allied bombing. Today only sections of it survive.

### 5. Japan

Almost 3,000 Australian POWs experienced camps on the Japanese home islands. They worked mainly in mines, shipyards, factories or on docks – the last being the best job as prisoners could try to steal food and other supplies while they worked. Unlike other camps, their work party supervisors were usually Japanese civilians, not military personnel. In the majority of cases, these civilian overseers were as harsh towards the prisoners as their military counterparts.

### 6. Fall of Rabaul

Rabaul, the peacetime capital of the Australian Mandated Territory of New Guinea, fell to the Japanese on 23 January 1942. The small Australian garrison, Lark Force, was overwhelmed and most of its troops, including six army nurses, captured. Approximately 400 of the troops escaped to the mainland and another 160 were massacred at Tol Plantation. In July 1942, about 1,000 of the captured Australian men, including civilian internees, were drowned when the Japanese transport ship, Montevideo Maru, was sunk by an American submarine off the Philippines coast en-route to Japan. Only the officers and nurses, sent to Japan on a different ship, survived.
II. Civilians and Nurses

Almost 1,500 Australian civilians spent the war in captivity, out of about 130,000 civilians interned by the Japanese. Unlike Allied POWs, Australian civilians each had different backgrounds and stories that led them into simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Their imprisonment was quite different to that of military personnel. The threat of sexual assault or forced sexual slavery for female internees was constant, and one that few men in POW camps needed to fear. Civilians also lacked the cohesion of the military structure, which often made access to food and resources a matter of luck and personal negotiation.

Australian army nurses were another group held in captivity. On 14 February 1942, following the fall of Singapore, 65 nurses were attempting to return to Australia on the ship Vyner Brooke. 12 drowned when the vessel was torpedoed and 21 were massacred after reaching Banka Island. The sole survivor, Nurse Vivian Bullwinkel, managed to hide for days but eventually gave herself up as she had been shot and needed medical attention. This killing of non-combatant women particularly shocked Australians when it was discovered at the end of the war.

The other surviving nurses from the Vyner Brooke saw out the war in a civilian camp in Sumatra. Eight of 32 died in captivity. Although they were not made to work as male POWs were, they were subject to the same deprivations and humiliations at the hands of the Japanese. Six Australian military nurses captured at Rabaul in January 1942 were sent to Japan and all survived the war.

III. POWs in Europe

Some 8,591 Australian personnel spent years as prisoners in European camps. Most of these were infantry captured in 1941 during the campaigns against the Germans and Italians in North Africa, Greece, Crete and Syria. Unlike the thousands captured in Singapore, these men were usually taken in small groups, and sometimes as individuals, such as shot down RAAF aircrew.

[Some 8,591 Australian personnel spent years as prisoners in European camps.]

Those POWs captured in North Africa were sent to Italian, Greek or German camps. Conditions in these camps varied greatly and were generally poorly organised, particularly those in Bari (Italy) and Salonika (Greece). Camp conditions were filthy and crowded, food was scarce, and many Allied POWs died.

When Italy capitulated in 1943, all POWs in Italian hands were transferred to German control, except for those hundreds who escaped to Switzerland. While officers and other ranks were rarely separated into different camps in Japanese captivity, in the German case this was the rule: officers went to ‘oflags’ and all other ranks to ‘stalags’.

When Italy capitulated in 1943, all POWs in Italian hands were transferred to German control, except for those hundreds who escaped to Switzerland. While officers and other ranks were rarely separated into different camps in Japanese captivity, in the German case this was the rule: officers went to ‘oflags’ and all other ranks to ‘stalags’.
Although some Allied POWs were put on work parties, most spent their captivity enduring long periods of boredom. While this may have seemed preferable to the experience in Japanese camps, it led to many cases of depression and despair as the war dragged on and no one knew if or when it would end. POWs did whatever they could to keep their minds active, from concerts and plays to teaching courses to even mock cricket ‘test series’ between British and Australian prisoners. Courses on all kinds of subjects were taught to whoever was interested and camp ‘newspapers’ were written. Many POWs chose to be on work parties as it gave them something to do and took them out of the camp confines.

It is a common belief that the Australians held in these camps had it ‘easier’ than their Japanese counterparts, because of satisfactory food and medical supplies and mostly good relations with their captors. There was also the possibility of being repatriated well before the war was over, due to reciprocal prisoner exchanges between the Allied and Axis countries. While there are elements of truth in these generalisations, comparisons between the two groups only serve to diminish the genuine suffering of European POWs. They also returned to a public that was focussed on the stories of Australian POWs in the Pacific and, apart from the stories of the escapes from the German camps, knew little about life in captivity in Europe.

There were two main reasons why Allied prisoners in Europe died in such low numbers compared to their Japanese counterparts: they were generally better treated by the Germans and Italians, and they had access to Red Cross parcels. Usually received by POWs fortnightly, these parcels contained food and supplies which meant the prisoners’ caloric and protein intake was adequate to sustain them. Crucially, medical supplies were given to Allied doctors. POWs were also allowed to regularly send and receive mail – an important morale booster and a way of keeping in touch with loved ones at home.

As with Japanese camps, there was a great deal of variation between German-run POW camps. Some were relatively comfortable and well-provisioned, while others were isolated and surrounded by snow-covered mountains with little access to nearby supply routes.

*Allan S. Walker, Middle East and Far East, Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1953, 404-405.*

POWs held in Australia

Australia kept its own POWs during the war – both military and civilian. While the treatment of both is generally considered to have been fair, the reasons behind civilian internment in particular remain a contentious issue.

Military POWs

Australia held over 25,000 enemy military personnel during the war. These comprised 5,637 Japanese, 1,651 Germans and the largest group – 18,432 Italian prisoners. Most of these were captured in the North African campaign or were Italian merchant seamen who were in Australia and subsequently interned when war was declared. While all enemy groups were treated according to the Geneva Conventions, the Japanese POWs faced strong feelings of mistrust and resentment from their Australian captors.

Many Italian POWs were paid as farm labourers to help the shortage left by Australian men fighting overseas. For many families involved, this was a positive cross-cultural experience, and many of these ‘workers’ migrated to Australia after the war.

The Cowra Breakout

From 1941, Cowra in western New South Wales was the site of a major prisoner of war camp. The camp housed various nationalities, including German, Italian and more than 1,000 Japanese prisoners. The Japanese, unlike many of the others who seemed to accept their fate, brooded on the dishonour they had brought to themselves, their family and their country by being taken prisoners of war. In 1944, the Australian authorities were informed of an escape planned by the Japanese at Cowra POW camp. They decided to separate the prisoners. On Friday afternoon, 4 August, as required by the Geneva Convention they notified the Japanese prisoners that the officers and NCOs were to be separated from the rest of the men. The men would then be transferred from Cowra to the Hay Prisoner of War Camp on Monday 7 August. Their leaders protested at the separation of the men and they held meetings that night to plan their strategy. A number of the men decided that to be killed while escaping provided them with an opportunity to regain their honour with a glorious death.

At 1.45 am on 5 August 1944, almost 1,000 Japanese POWs, armed with home-made weapons, threw themselves at the camp fences with shrieks of ‘Banzai!’ The surprised guards, members of the 22nd Australian Garrison Battalion, rushed to their posts when the alarm sounded. The prisoners flung themselves over the barbed wire straight into the guards’ line of fire leaving the fence line of the camp littered with bodies. During the next nine days, young recruits from a nearby army training camp assisted in rounding up the escapees. Many of the prisoners committed suicide in the surrounding hills rather than submit to recapture. Others hanged themselves in the camp. More than 100 of the prisoners were wounded and approximately 230 of them died. Three Australians were killed on 5 August and a fourth Australian was killed rounding up the escapees.

Civilian Internees

During the First World War the Australian Government interned around 7,000 Australian residents; men, women and children, in the interests of ‘national security’. These residents were termed ‘enemy aliens’ - citizens of countries at war with Australia. This also included British nationals of German ancestry already residents in Australia.

By the Second World War, increasing paranoia about Japan’s geographical proximity and possible attacks on Australian soil led to the roundup and internment of Japanese nationals. Later years of the war saw Germans and Italian civilians interned on the basis of nationality, particularly in northern Australia, where significant German and Italian migrant communities existed. Approximately one-fifth of all Italians resident in Australia, one-third of Germans and almost all Japanese became internees during the war. Almost all were released towards the end of the war or at its end, except for those of Japanese origin. They were forcibly ‘repatriated’ to Japan, including some who were Australian-born.

Internees were accommodated in makeshift camps around Australia, often in remote country locations. By 1942, more than 12,000 people were interned in Australia, over half of these sent by other Allied forces to Australia. It is easy to understand how many civilian internees would have felt hard done by, some having lived in Australia all their lives and raised families here.

The Korean War 1950-1953

Japan annexed (forcibly incorporated) Korea in 1910 and after their defeat in the Second World War, lost all its foreign territories, including Korea. The two post-war world superpowers – the USA and the Soviet Union – stepped in.

In what would ultimately be a disastrous move, the United States and the Soviet Union divided the Korean peninsula into two zones of control: the South, under
western, capitalist American influence; and the North, under Soviet and Chinese communist influence. The two Koreas were divided at the 38th parallel, an arbitrary division chosen by American General Clarence Bonesteel III, without any regard for political boundaries, geographical features, waterways, or paths of commerce.

This artificial division of Korea became increasingly untenable and from 1945-1950, tension between the two governments of the North and South escalated. On June 25 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea. The UN Security Council then invited member states to send forces to try to stabilise the situation. The USA and British Commonwealth countries contributed the most significant personnel numbers, Australia being the first country following the USA to commit units to the defence of South Korea.

With the entry of millions of Chinese troops to back-up North Korean forces in November 1950, UN troops were pushed back down the peninsula and south of the 38th Parallel. Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) fought two important battles at Maryang San and Kapyong during 1951, and were joined by the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), in April 1952. The last two years of the war were characterised by trench warfare and little movement on either side. A ceasefire was agreed on 27 July 1953 in Panmunjom.

Twenty-nine Australian servicemen were captured by North Korean and Chinese forces during the Korean War. The treatment of Australian POWs in Korea was generally better than that meted out by the Japanese to POWs during the Second World War. However, many Australian POWs were kept in appalling conditions and it is incredible that almost all survived. Private H. R. Madden, 3RAR, was captured during the Battle of Kapyong. Already ill when captured in April 1951, he died of a combination of malnutrition and disease just seven months later. He was posthumously awarded the George Cross for resisting interrogation and for his generosity with fellow prisoners. A fellow POW remembered that Madden always insisted in sharing his food with others who needed it, even though all were hungry.

Five Australians endured captivity for over two years, captured in the first half of 1951. They suffered long years of brutal treatment for their ‘uncooperative’ attitude, from starvation to frequent beatings and torture. North Korean and Chinese captors, having not been signatories, largely ignored the articles of the 1949 Geneva Convention on the treatment of POWs.

Sixty three per cent of UN forces’ POWs were captured in the first six months of the war and initially were held by North Korean captors. Eventually all POWs were marched north to a series of POW camps along the Yalu River, and were turned over to Chinese captors. While conditions under the Chinese were considered better than under the North Koreans, the Chinese guards severely punished prisoners that openly practiced religion, and often refused to let medical personnel treat POWs.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of captivity in the Korean War was the Chinese captors’ attempts to indoctrinate western prisoners with ideals of communism and anti-capitalist rhetoric. This program of ‘re-education’ took three forms – forced labour, intelligence extraction (through repeated interrogation and/or torture) and indoctrination – daily, hour-long lectures and exams, followed by group discussions and essay-writing. While American POWs were the main targets, in a war fought between rival ideologies, these attempts to ‘brainwash’ were seen as an important propagandist tool for the communist cause. Ultimately the program was unsuccessful in converting the great majority of UN troops and was eventually abandoned.

In general, Australian POWs in Korea suffered many of the same trials as those of the Japanese – neglect, hunger and brutality – but in the biting cold of a Korean winter. Unlike Australian POWs of other wars, they also had to withstand sustained attacks on their minds and beliefs.
Epilogue

The experiences and stories of all Australian POWs in wars must be remembered. But it is equally important to keep the POW experience in context. Though all suffered, the vast majority survived to return home. Through all these conflicts, millions of people, both military and civilian, were killed, injured or made homeless. In the First World War, more than 20 million people died. During the Second World War while thousands of Allied prisoners worked on the Burma-Thai Railway or starved to death in other camps, eight million civilians were murdered by the German military. Millions more civilians died in Russia and China during that period. Thousands of female POWs of the Japanese became sex slaves - called ‘comfort women’. Japanese forces also conducted medical experiments on Chinese civilians. During the Korean War, while 29 Australian prisoners suffered in captivity, it is estimated that more than two million Korean civilians died.

Captivity tends to be seen in a wholly negative context. Yet many POWs talk of the positive consequences of their captivity experience: sharing humour in the darkest times, seeing bravery and ingenuity in fighting their circumstances, and experiencing unbreakable friendships during captivity and afterwards.

For every story of deprivation and suffering, there is one of generosity, sacrifice for a fellow prisoner and the indomitable will to survive. In the case of the Second World War, while so many Australian POWs died, more survived and returned to Australia to raise families and have careers. The lifetime bonds that tie these people to each other are of a strength and intensity that few people will ever experience – either in war or peace.

But oral history is now seen as an important, additional resource to the written record, as well as a way for people to actively engage with history through talking to those who affected it. There now exist many professional, international oral history associations (such as the Oral History Association of Australia www.ohaa.net.au), with standardised guidelines about how to practise it, how to archive and preserve oral history, and how to distribute it online.

The Australians at War Film Archive is the largest oral history database of its kind in the world. It contains interviews with Australians from all our wars, conflicts and peacekeeping missions from the First World War to the present day. It encompasses the battlefield, the home front, media and entertainment, children, teachers, wives, workers, prisoners and clerics. From signaller to Spitfire pilot, from soldier to stoker, even to those who fought with us and those who fought against us; as long as they are Australian citizens, then everyone who was in any way involved is represented. Over two thousand interviews, from every state and territory, covering the First World War, the Second World War, the Occupation of Japan, the Korean War, the Malayan Emergency, Indonesian Confrontasi, the Vietnam War, Gulf War One and the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Archive also interviewed men and women who have seen service in UN and other operations in places such as the Sinai, Israel, Kashmir, Cambodia, Rwanda, Somalia, Bougainville and East Timor, along with Defence Force operations after the Rabaul tidal wave and the bombing in Bali.

The Archive is organised into over 200 categories with, wherever possible, at least ten interviews in each category. The methodology was simple - to place the war/conflict experience in the context of the individual’s entire life, and to incorporate social and cultural questioning. Each interview begins from childhood, continues to the war/conflict experience and concludes with some questioning regarding post war life. Consequently, the Australians at War Film Archive is now a remarkable resource of Australian social and cultural life from about 1914 till today.

Oral history, particularly sixty or so years after the event, is inevitably a flawed exercise. Memory is prejudiced, subjective and subject to fault. The stories that people tell will often confine time and space, limit the number of characters and the actions that took place, and promote the personal over the institutional. In the best sense, the people interviewed by the Archive are speaking for themselves, bringing to life an important experience from their past, describing how it felt to be them at an important moment in history.

The Australians at War Film Archive and Oral History

Oral history is the oldest form of human record. Before the written word and before the printing press, people told each other stories that ensured the ongoing survival of their heritage. From Homer's lyric poems and the Icelandic sagas to African folkloric music, the traditional practice of oral history passed down through generations. In our culture however, oral history has only recently experienced a revival. Oral history had long been seen as 'unreliable' compared to the written word, and of course, recorded oral history did not exist before the 20th century – there was no way to preserve it.
For teachers and students who want to engage with veteran-related oral history, there are a few challenges. The first relates to memory. In the Second World War, for example, Australian personnel could find themselves in diverse locations and climates, moving between different theatres of war. With POWs in particular, many moved frequently from camp to camp, and sometimes between different countries. Weeks stretched into months and years and recollections of captivity decades later can therefore become a blur of different places and events.

Secondly, due to the circumstances of captivity, much documentation did not survive. The Japanese forbade all prisoners from keeping written records, conducted constant searches, and severely punished the offenders. So too, in the heat of war, accurate records were not always collected. As a result, if memories are contradictory, there may be few corroborating records in existence.

Particular memories that may be traumatic can be suppressed, and there are often unspoken but unbreakable bonds of group loyalty between veteran groups. This is particularly true of former POWs. They have an extremely strong group identity and hold fast to the idea that if you weren’t there, you can’t understand. This means they are also often reluctant to criticise each other, which can mean obtaining an accurate account of an event is complicated. Oral history can become evidence of what people choose to remember of the past.

The intrinsic value of oral history cannot be discounted. One can just as easily question the validity or accuracy of any document written retrospectively. The interview process allowed the interviewers to ask general questions which often elicited surprising information. They also asked questions for which specific answers were needed. With both, there was the benefit of being able to clarify various aspects of the information given – a difficult task with written sources.

For students in particular, oral history provides a wonderful opportunity for young people to engage with living history – whether it is family members, neighbours, veterans or others in the community. The immediacy of oral history, and the interviewee’s ability to engage with the person and the material, teaches important skills in listening and drawing people out in sensitive and tactful ways. In this resource, students will encounter the memories and reflections of their countrymen and women, their lives, their thoughts, their disappointments, tragedies and occasional small triumphs.

Australian prisoners of war DVD Chapter 1 - History

Summary

This chapter details the statistics of Australia’s POWs and civilian internees over the years and examines the prisoner experience in each war in further detail, including the location of camps. It provides a useful, compressed introduction to the basic history and presents students with images of prisoners and their conditions. It also discusses commemoration and introduces students to the Australians at War Film Archive and its role in this resource.

Duration 11 minutes 19 seconds

The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM.

Information for teachers

On the following pages are some activities and worksheets for students that are designed to be either progressively completed as the chapters of the DVD are viewed (Worksheet 1-2/Worksheet 1-4), adapted for use with any chapter (Activity 1/Activity 2/Activity 3) or completed after all chapters have been viewed (Worksheet 1-3/Worksheet 1-4/Reflection).
What happened where?

**Geography**

Some of the places where Australians were imprisoned during war now have different names. Find out what these two places are now called:

- Formosa
- Malaya

Use an atlas to locate the following countries on your world outline map. After you mark each country on your map, write down the war in which Australians were imprisoned in there. Write down where you found this information. To help you get started, visit the Australian War Memorial on-line exhibition site, The Stolen Years, at www.awm.gov.au/stolenyears.

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## Worksheet 3

### Getting to know the veterans

**Gathering information**

In the DVD that accompanies this resource you will see and hear interviews with former prisoners of war from the *Australians at War Film Archive*. Forty-one veterans appear throughout the DVD, talking about their experiences. As you view the DVD chapters, use the table below to gather some preliminary information about what happened to them.

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<thead>
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<th>DVD Chapter</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Capture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Life in the camps</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Guards, civilian and internees</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Humour and mateship</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Food, conditions and treatment</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Despair, hope, secrets and escape</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>The end of the war, coming home and reflection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Building a profile

**Research**

**Creative writing**

Choose one of the people you have seen interviewed on the DVD. Go to the Archive website, www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au and search for that person. Use their transcript to build up a profile of their life and their experience as a prisoner of war. Put your findings in the table below.

*Note to teachers: the full transcripts of all the interviewees from the DVD are also available on the CD-ROM included with this resource.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When and where were they born?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did they do before the war?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank (if he/she was in the forces)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In which war did they serve?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How and when was he/she captured?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was his/her life like as a POW?

You could include:

- Food
- Physical conditions
- Work
- Relationships with guards and other POWs
- Learning and entertainment
- Were there humorous events in the camp?
- Were there sad events?
- Did he/she have a close friend?
- Did he/she ever try to escape?

What happened to them the day the war ended?

What was coming home like?

What happened in their life after the war?

Use the information you have gathered about this person to create a written profile that you can then present to the class.
Language Games

English

As you listen to the interviews on the DVD, gather a list of the words or phrases used that relate to war. Collect the words in this section and place them alphabetically so that you construct a dictionary. Then include any other words about war that you or your classmates can remember.

To discover the meaning of the words or phrases, take the following steps:

- try to understand the meanings from the context in which they are used;
- look up the word in the dictionary;
- ask your classmates or teachers for explanations;
- ask a veteran what the word means to them; and
- visit the Encyclopedia on the Australian War Memorial website www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia

Examples are provided to help get you started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word or phrase</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Where did I discover the meaning?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>infantry</td>
<td>Soldiers who are trained to fight on foot</td>
<td>dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMAS</td>
<td>Her (or His) Majesty's Australian Ship</td>
<td>Talking to a navy veteran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher guided activities
Activity 1

Scaffolding
This is a general activity that could apply to any segment of the DVD. It is simply a way of assisting students to plan and write an essay.

Using a Venn diagram (with three overlapping circles), the student selects three things, for example, three personal stories from people interviewed on the DVD or three attributes that, in the student’s view, most contributed to the survival of prisoners of war, listing important elements relating to each in the outer circles and listing any common elements in the overlap section of the Venn diagram. They should end up with a few key ideas in the central segment that are common to all three.

The students then focus on three of these to create an essay (this assists the student to scaffold the essay). They create dot points for each of the three key ideas. They develop these dot points into paragraphs, with each of the paragraphs relating to one of the original attributes, issues, personal stories etc, which provided the focus for each of the circles of the Venn diagram. The students have to refer to specific examples from the DVD or text to illustrate each of their points.

They then arrange their paragraphs in a logical order. Once they are at this point in the process, the students can work from the following instructions:

**Linking sentence 1** – write a sentence which links your first three paragraphs about (first personal story/attribute/idea) to your three paragraphs about (2nd personal story/attribute/idea).

**Then write linking sentence 2** (linking your three sentences about your second personal story/attribute/idea with your sentences about your third personal story/attribute/idea).

**Conclusion** – summarise your thoughts about why the three elements you discussed are so important to all three of the personal stories/attributes (whatever the focus of the three circles of the Venn diagram was). This should take about 100 words.

**Introduction** – read over your essay and write a paragraph which outlines the three elements you have chosen and why you think they are so important in the Australian Prisoners of War DVD segments.
Activity 2 & 3

Two-minute bursts

Note to teacher: This activity, two-minute bursts, is designed to promote intense thinking in response to a provocative assertion/statement shown to the students.

Some sample assertions and statements:

‘All prisoners of war were brave and courageous.’

‘All prisoners of war were treated badly by their captors.’

‘Prisoners of war were captives. For them, the war was over when they went behind the wire.’

‘Surrender is cowardice.’

Students record their responses in dot-point form, writing as rapidly as possible without much thinking about, or analysis of, the assertion/statement. The students’ responses do or do not support the assertion/statement. They do not have to justify their responses at this stage of the activity.

After the two minutes, the teacher removes the first assertion/statement and puts up the next one, giving the students another two-minute timeslot to write their responses as quickly as possible. Once again, the students’ responses support or refute the assertion/statement.

This process continues until all the assertions/statements have been responded to. The whole process is designed to promote quick responses.

The next stage in this activity is reflective thinking, discussion (in small groups or whole class) and justification of the responses. Students can be asked to choose one (or more) of their responses and write a justification of it. These can then be collected and displayed and become the focus of group or class discussion. Students can be asked to respond to the justification – can they find evidence to support or refute it? Thoughtful and complex discussions can be generated using this technique. It also has the advantage of requiring the students to look for objective evidence to support their viewpoints.

Oral History

This is another general activity that could apply to any of the segments of the Australian Prisoners of War DVD.

The DVD is essentially an oral history of the experiences of men and women who found themselves prisoners of war in some of the conflicts in which Australia has been involved. In a general discussion, teachers pose the question to students as to why oral history is valuable.

Some possible answers could be that oral history frames experience in its historical context. Or that it recognises and celebrates the significance of personal acts of courage, no matter how small or insignificant these appeared to be to the people involved at the time. Or that one way to understand what happened in any event is to ask those who were present.

As a follow-up activity, students could be asked to develop a set of questions to ‘ask’ the people interviewed for the DVD. They would need to think about the following:

- What would be the most interesting questions to ask?
- What questions give you the most interesting answers?
- How can I work out the best questions to elicit the fullest answers?
- What evidence from the DVD do I need to think about myself to develop the best questions?
- If I had the time and opportunity, what would be the most useful research I could do to support developing quality questions?
- What are some of the limitations of oral history? How could the material be corroborated from other sources?

A useful comparison could be drawn by having the students read a section of the transcript of any one of the veterans (which includes the questions asked) and determine for themselves whether they asked better questions. How would they have done so?
Worksheet 6

Empathy exercise

You were a Prisoner of War of either the Japanese or Germans in the Second World War. You are now in your 80s and one of your grandchildren is studying prisoners of war at school. You have a box or scrapbook that is filled with items from this time in your life.

Create your box of items or scrapbook. You will present this to your class. It must contain:

- A description of the specific prisoner of war camp in which you were held.
- At least ONE diary entry that describes a typical day in the camp.
- A newspaper clipping about your return home to Australia.
- At least five artefacts with explanations. These might include: drawings, medals, photographs, badges or anything else that you think could be included.
- Every item in your box or scrapbook should be dated and include a written explanation to your grandchild of why you saved each item, what they signify and why they are important to you.

Review

In some of the topics, students are invited to reflect on their own feelings or reactions to what they have heard from the interviewees. They may be asked to examine their attitudes or to view current events using history as the basis for their view.

These reflection questions could be answered in a number of ways, by class debate or individual essay, for example.

History a compulsory subject?
Debate the suggestion that listening to the experiences of the POWs shows why History should be a compulsory study.

Young refugees
Australia is home to refugees from a variety of countries. Like the Australian prisoners of war we have been studying, these young people have often experienced scenes of war and been subject to poor living conditions. Unlike the times when our POWs returned home, society now recognises that individuals who have suffered in this way need ongoing assistance.

Design a wallet card of support services that young people in your local area could contact for assistance in relation to their physical and mental health.

Precious memories
Many POWs kept diaries. Finding writing material and implements and hiding the diaries in safe places often presented additional burdens to prisoners already suffering so many privations and difficulties.

- Why would a diary be so precious to POWs?
- How different would their diary entries be to the accounts they are giving in these interviews?
- Is either source more reliable than the other?

Sydney. 1945 Leading Aircraftman K. Parker, RAAF, an ex-prisoner of war of the Japanese, greeting his mother and sister on his arrival at Mascot Aerodrome from Singapore.
Capture

‘It was a terrible feeling’ – Lloyd Moule

The front of an identification card (Personalkarte) belonging to Flight Sergeant John Ansell, RAAF, listing his personal, service, Prisoner of War (POW) and next of kin details.
DVD Chapter 2 - Capture

Summary

This chapter explains the shock of capture for individuals and introduces the first-hand accounts of interviewees from the Australians at War Film Archive that will form the background of the DVD. It details the differences that can occur at the point of capture depending on the physical circumstances at the time and it explores the feelings of defeat and depression that can overwhelm the person who has just become a prisoner of war.

Duration 13 minutes 37 seconds

The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM

Background

To fully appreciate this topic and the accompanying DVD, students will need an understanding of the various conflicts mentioned. The research topics that follow are suggested for either individual activities or small group work.

You could use the topics in a library research period or give them as homework assignments.

Depending on your class level and subject area, you might expect students to come up with a brief overview or you could expand the topic over a longer period with more detail and spin-off activities.
Research and creative writing

Find out the background to the Second World War using the questions below as the basis for your research.

- Why did the war come about?
- What was happening in the world in the years before 1939?
- What were the actual 'triggers' to the outbreak of fighting?
- What were the attitudes in Australia to the war at the start of the war?
- What were some of the reasons that caused Australians to enlist?

As you undertake this background research the following websites will be of assistance:
- www.australiansatwar.gov.au

When you have selected and organised your information, use it to write a one page script for a documentary about the beginning of the war in Australia. Your script will be the narration for the film. You may wish to include the images and footage you would also use in the making of the film. Your finished script might look something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narration</th>
<th>Images</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On 1 September 1939, Adolf Hitler's German forces invaded Poland. Two days later, Britain (including Australia), France and other Allied countries declared war on Germany, and a new world conflict began.</td>
<td>Film footage of the German Army invading Poland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A photograph of Prime Minister Menzies announcing Australia’s involvement in the war.

Research and writing

On the DVD, the narrator talks about two ships that depart from Singapore ahead of the invading Japanese forces, carrying Australian Army nurses. The ships are called the Empire Star and the Vyner Brooke.

Follow these links to read more about those events.

The fall of Singapore:

The Empire Star and the sinking of the Vyner Brooke:

You are a newspaper reporter assigned to go to the docks to interview the nurses on the Empire Star when they arrive in Australia. Write your story about what happened to them in Singapore and on the voyage and their fears for their fellow nurses on the Vyner Brooke.

When the articles are completed, have three students present them to the class. How different are their interpretations of the information?
Malcolm Keshan's story

So I thought, 'I've got no option'.
So I just threw the gun out and
I turned around slowly.
I was a prisoner of war.

Research and analysis

Empathising

Twenty-one-year-old year old Sergeant Malcolm Keshan was captured in 1941. Using the information provided in the interview and your research into Australian attitudes to the war, write a series of letters from Keshan to his mother.

- One letter would be about his arrival in Greece and one would be written after his capture. Remember that he would have remembered the exact details of his capture. Be sure that his letter conveys to his mother his feelings and recollections of the day.

- Another letter could be written after he has been a prisoner for some time. Again, be sure that your letters are true to what actually happened.

- To complete this task accurately, you will need some ideas of what life was like as a prisoner of war. Some further research, such as reading Malcolm Keshan’s full transcript at: http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/469.aspx may be required.

- Each letter should be about 200-300 words.

- Consider whether these letters would have been censored? If so, why?

- Make a list of details that might have been subject to censorship. Include how you think a letter might have looked if it had been censored.

- Make a photocopy of your letter and censor it. Consider the difference between your first letter and the information you conveyed to the censored copy. Do the two letters convey the same meanings and emotions?

Malcolm Keshan (front, centre) with mates in Stalag 383. Private collection.
Rex Austin’s story

At the age of twenty, Flight Sergeant Rex Austin was flying a Lancaster bomber over Germany in 1944. When his plane was hit, he parachuted onto a field, losing his boots, landing heavily and breaking his ankle.

So I sat myself back down on the ground again and pulled the parachute over the top of my head and said, ‘That’s it, that’s it.’

Explain how Austin’s story helps you understand the difficulties involved in fighting an air war during the Second World War.

You are the best mate of this airman and you are both left stranded in the field. Write out the conversation you had when you landed and again one hour later while you were waiting to be captured.

What fears might either of you have had at that moment? Script a dialogue that describes how you would respond to your mate’s feelings of fear.

Discussion

In Rex Austin’s words, I wouldn’t say I was petrified, but I was cold, wet and miserable. Why would Rex Austin not have been frightened? Would you?

Think about what you do when you are afraid. As a group, prepare a table that lists your fears and strategies to overcome them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fears</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eg Alone at night</td>
<td>Put on music; turn on the lights, read a book.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Europe, c. 1945. A direct hit by flak on a RAF Lancaster bomber aircraft
Sheila Bruhn's story

We were hungry, thirsty and dusty. Children were crying. Pregnant women were tired. It was chaos.

When she was only seventeen, Sheila Bruhn, with other captured civilian women and children, was marched for 13 kilometres in the hot sun to Changi prison. They had been told to pack enough for ten days. Sheila took her six exercise books that she used as a diary, her father’s English dictionary, a book of Shakespeare and a book of poems.

Discussion

- You are one of this group being taken to Changi. What items would you pack to take to Changi? Why would you choose these items?
- If you were a child or a pregnant woman, how might this change your choice of items?
- Why do you think Sheila Bruhn took her diary, dictionary, Shakespeare and a book of poems? Would these items have proven to be useful for her?
- Compare Sheila Bruhn’s account of being captured to the experience of Pat Darling on the Vyner Brooke. Discuss the idea that luck or fate has a lot to do with your experiences during the war.

Activities

A. Sheila Bruhn mentions in her interview still having nightmares, even long after the war had finished. Devise a self-talk strategy and a mind game that could be used to distract POWs from revisiting the pictures of horrors in their minds.

B. Sheila Bruhn kept diary entries of her wartime experiences. You are Sheila, write three of her diary entries focusing on the time spent in Changi. Include some images of daily life among the women and children and how you survived the physical and emotional difficulties you encountered.

Pat Darling’s story

... one just thought, you know, ‘Thank goodness they’re human.’

This is Pat Darling’s response to being captured by the Japanese. Like many servicemen and women, until her capture as a POW, she had never met the enemy face to face.

Discussion

- Use Captain Janet ‘Pat’ Darling’s account of her experiences to prepare a series of visual panels. Use charcoal, paint, crayons, pencils or other items to create images that might represent her experiences, thoughts and feelings.
- Do you think women are more vulnerable as prisoners of war? Why or why not?
- Design a flow chart that shows the events Pat Darling underwent from her departure from Singapore to the moment when she was shown a reflection of herself in the mirror after her capture.
- How does Pat Darling’s account of her capture help you understand the difficulty of stereotyping all enemies as the same type of person?
- What made the Japanese medico ‘human’? Why would Pat Darling be worried that her Japanese captor would not be ‘human’?
Worksheet 1

Sensory map

Prepare a Y chart that highlights how Sheila was feeling, what she was seeing and what she was hearing during her capture and the march into Changi.
Lieutenant Charles Yacopetti, fighting in the Korean War in 1953, describes being wounded before he ‘woke up face down with a Chinaman sitting on my back’.

**Interpretation and analysis**

- You are the army officer responsible for notifying the families of injured and captured soldiers.

  Write a dialogue between yourself and Charlie Yacopetti’s family as you tell them of the circumstances of his capture.

- What is your personal opinion of Charlie Yacopetti’s treatment after he was captured? Does he give any indication of what he thought about it?

**Discussion**

Read the following excerpt from an interview with Charlie Yacopetti and consider the following question. Answer in individual essays or in classroom discussion.

I got up and started to follow them and that’s when I got a couple of bursts of machine gun fire, one hit me on this ankle and another one hit me across here [he indicates his chest]. And I went down and my Bren gunner, Bert White, picked me up and said, ‘Cmon, I’ll carry you out Skipper.’ Things were going hazy and I could see that as far as I was concerned I’d had it, this was it, ‘Charles Yacopetti, this is your day.’ So I said to Bert, ‘Drop me, you need to fight the patrol out.’ He was the Bren gunner, he’s got the bulk of the firepower the patrol had. So he obeyed, he dropped me. And if you read the official history, I was left in a weapon pit there with my bayonet fixed on my Owen gun facing them, which is bullshit, I passed out.

- Debate the significance of this quote for historians. Is there any way you can come to a conclusion about how to reconcile the official history with the personal recollection?
Private Alexander Barnett and Private Lloyd Moule were both captured by the Germans in North Africa in 1941. The Germans were known to say, ‘For you, the war is over’ when they took prisoners, in an attempt to further humiliate the soldiers. But many men, at that moment, could not be made to feel any worse by their enemy than they already did. Capture could bring with it depression, a sense of utter failure and the prospect of a bleak future. Consider these statements from both Alexander Barnett and Lloyd Moule:

‘You think you’ve let somebody down … you feel you’ve done something wrong.’

– Alexander Barnett

‘You feel completely hopeless; it’s a terrible feeling to find that you are a prisoner of war.’

– Lloyd Moule

Discussion

- Review the interviews with Alexander Barnett and Lloyd Moule.
- List as many words as you can that would describe their feelings when they found themselves forced to surrender.
- Why do you think these men felt like this?
- Compare their feelings of being captured with two other interviewees in this DVD chapter such as Rex Austin and Malcolm Keshan.
- Were the men right to feel that way? How might they have overcome their negative feelings?

Research

- For many returned servicemen and women, the horrors and loss of war remain stamped on their minds. Investigate the mental health condition known as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The following websites provide information on the condition.


- Prepare an information brochure for family and friends of servicemen and women that details facts regarding the nature, extent and health services available today to support people diagnosed with PTSD.
Teacher Guided Activities
Activity 3

Extension Activity

Read this account by Lieutenant Gavin Campbell who also survived the sinking of HMAS Perth.

I looked down and I saw the propeller still turning and I thought, ‘This isn’t for me.’ So I went further forward and straddled the guard rail ready to jump, and a torpedo hit on the port side, forward of me… It was then that I had a falling sensation. Up in the air and floating through the air. For how long, I don’t know. I remember when I came to I was in the water and fortunately my Mae West [lifejacket] kept me afloat. There were rafts and driftwood on the water and I decided I’d swim over to one of the rafts. It was then I started to kick my leg to swim and had a stab of pain on my left side. I thought, ‘What’s happened?’ So I very gingerly reached down my leg and it wobbled. I’d broken my leg… So I thought, ‘What do I do? I’m in the water. I’ll make my way across to a raft’…

There were other people on it of course. So I thought, ‘I’ve got to get on it somehow.’ I hauled myself up on this still with my leg wobbling around and a bloke came along swimming and said, ‘Are you all right?’ And I said, ‘No I’ve broken my leg.’ He said, ‘What do you reckon we can do?’ I said, ‘The only thing we can do is cut some splints.’ I had on overalls and so I said, ‘Cut the leg off the overalls and then cut it into strips and we’ll use those as ties around the splint.’ He said, ‘OK, I’ve got my seaman’s knife, I’ll go and get some driftwood. ’ By this time there’s broken cases from the Japanese ships drifting around. So he picked up a couple of pieces and split these down for splints. Brought them over and cut the leg off my overalls and put them on. That kept the leg steady.

Consider how you would feel if you thought you had survived a plane crash or ship’s sinking, only to find that you are badly injured and vulnerable to capture or death.

Write a diary entry (some time after the event) to describe your experience and feelings.

And now for something completely different

Design a foldout brochure that details how to manage a fracture. In the brochure include the following:

- The definition of a fracture;
- The different types of fractures; and
- The process of splinting a fracture of the lower leg.

Use sketches, diagrams or photos from the internet to highlight the process.

A bit of fun

- Research Mae West.
- Explain why some life vests were given her name.

Who else in this DVD chapter shared the experience of not realising they were wounded?

Compare their stories with Gavin Campbell’s.

Find out why people who sustain serious injuries do not necessarily feel pain or realise what has happened to them straight away.

Does this phenomenon apply outside wartime situations? If so, what sorts of situations can you think of?

1944, China Sea. Oil soaked British and Australian prisoners of war who survived the sinking of the Japanese transport Rokyu Maru by the submarine USS Sealion, being picked up three days later by that submarine.
Creative writing

What the heck am I doing here? Most soldiers can’t allow themselves to imagine being taken prisoner. So if capture happens, it can be a shocking moment. Create a summary that explains the feelings of Australian veterans when captured by the enemy. Support any generalisations you make with specific examples.

Write a poem or other creative form of writing called ‘Capture’ that encompasses some of the feelings and emotions you have heard about in this section.

Write a newspaper front page with the headline: CAPTURED! You need to devise an appropriate sub-header and leading paragraph with ‘capture’ as your theme. Create a picture for your front page editorial that reflects the theme.

Interview two of the following people for a front page article:
- the German soldier who captured Malcolm Keshan;
- the Japanese medico who was a member of the group who captured Pat Darling and the Australian Army nurses; and
- one of the locals who watched Sheila Bruhn and the other civilian women and children being marched into Changi prison.

Think about the type of questions you would ask each of your chosen people that would catch potential readers’ attention. Remember - you are after sensational news on your front page to encourage people to buy your newspaper.

Select a veteran from Topic 2 of the DVD. You have the opportunity to interview them again about their experiences, especially about things that are not included in the DVD.

Write FIVE questions that you would ask them about their experience of being captured.

Using information from the DVD or your own research, write the answer that you think your interviewee would give.

Write a profile on your chosen interviewee. Each profile should include the following information:
- the place and date they were captured; and
- their thoughts and feelings at the time – how did they react to being taken prisoner?

Compare and contrast

Choose two of the experiences of being captured from the DVD chapter for compare and contrast. In the overlapping ovals, place the key facts and feelings from each of your chosen experiences. In the overlapping part of the circles, write down the similarities between these two experiences.

Note for teachers:

This can be a group task or an individual task. Allow the groups to feed back their findings – the teacher can collate the ideas. If small groups have chosen a variety of experiences, the Venn diagram can be extended to comprise several overlapping ovals. The important thing is to highlight the similarities between the experiences.

On the next page there is a worksheet you can copy and use for this exercise.
Facts and feelings about capture
Worksheet 2

Name the two POWs you have chosen from Topic 2 to make comparisons.

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

In the diagram below, write the key facts and feelings that each POW felt at being captured. Where they are the same or similar, use the intersecting portion of the ovals to note the similarities.
Hammelburg, Germany. C 1943 One of the shows produced with the help of talent found among prisoners of war in Stalag XIIc was ‘The Cabaret’ with a Mexican setting. Costumes were made up from old clothes, blankets etc.

‘We all helped break the boredom’ – Maric Gilbert
Background

Here are some ideas for students to consider while watching this DVD chapter.

- This film begins with the assertion that Australian servicemen were trained, disciplined, men. Do you think this is accurate? Why or why not?

- As you listen to the accounts in this section, what examples can you find in the DVD that support or challenge this suggestion?

- Discuss why you think keeping prisoners’ spirits high was so important. Keep a list of the techniques that prisoners used to achieve this.

DVD Chapter 3 – Life in the camps

Summary

This chapter proposes that, after capture, in some cases there was friction and resentment towards the officers from the enlisted men. It illustrates that two of the great challenges of camp life were the maintenance of discipline and keeping boredom at bay, and it shows how the prisoners used lessons, debates and sport to keep their minds and bodies as active as they could.

Some of the more remarkable events that took place in the POW camps of the Second World War were the concerts and plays performed by the prisoners. This chapter examines those events in detail, showing students how important to morale and a sense of worth those performances were.

Duration 12 minutes 50 seconds

The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM.
Fred Skeels’s story

Why us, and why did we get sent?

- Explain why the soldiers in Able Seaman Fred Skeels’s camp would feel so frustrated. Was anybody to blame for this feeling?
- Script a conversation where three of the officers in the camp discuss what to do about the men’s resentment and their own disappointment concerning the surrender. Again, be aware of historical accuracy.

A column of British and Australian prisoners of war marching through the streets. The column is headed by a member of the Japanese Security Police (the Kempeitai) followed by a Korean guard. The Allied troops had been captured at the fall of Singapore.
Interpretation and analysis

Listen to Pilot Officer Geoff Cornish’s story in this DVD chapter and then read the additional material from his Archive interview below.

We had eight in a room and we finished up with eighteen, three-tier bunks in exactly the same space. And the feeling of being hemmed in by people was huge. You wanted to bust a chap’s nose in just because he was there and he was too close to you. As they say, ‘invading your space’ is the term now. You knew it was no good losing your temper or picking a fight or something like that because you had to live with him twenty-four hours a day. Okay, there were some minor scuffles in the first week or so. But people soon learnt to control their temper and to control their attitude and to be more thoughtful of others. In that way it was wonderful discipline, you had to pull together as a unit and you did. – Geoff Cornish

Consider the following reminiscences.

It was treated as an RAF station. There was a Senior British Officer – the most senior ranking, was in charge, from our side of the camp. Although we didn’t have to obey him… we would do what he suggested.

– Geoff Cornish

There probably wasn’t any problem across the board really as far as ranks were concerned except that you treated officers as officers. If it was a squadron leader you were talking to you called him, ‘Sir’, unless he said otherwise, if he turned round and said, ‘Call me Bill’. You called him Bill. – Rex Austin

… they were so filled up with their own importance, as being in charge of all these prisoners, you know, and they never did much, very much, for our prisoners, the officers, they weren’t a very trust – well not trustworthy, shouldn’t say they were distrustful, but you had no faith in them, you know? No respect nor faith, it wasn’t always their fault, because they weren’t allowed to work, the Japs wouldn’t let them work, but the old British officers’ principles are a cane under the arm and swagger sticks and polish your boots and all these sort of things, you know? It was a good thing for discipline, but if you had no boots to polish, and no polish to put on your boots, you couldn’t very well look very presentable, and we never ever looked presentable whilst I was a prisoner.

– Fred Skeels

Teacher Guided Activities

Activity 1

Officers and men - Interpretation and analysis

Listen to Pilot Officer Geoff Cornish’s story in this DVD chapter and then read the additional material from his Archive interview below.

We had eight in a room and we finished up with eighteen, three-tier bunks in exactly the same space. And the feeling of being hemmed in by people was huge. You wanted to bust a chap’s nose in just because he was there and he was too close to you. As they say, ‘invading your space’ is the term now. You knew it was no good losing your temper or picking a fight or something like that because you had to live with him twenty-four hours a day. Okay, there were some minor scuffles in the first week or so. But people soon learnt to control their temper and to control their attitude and to be more thoughtful of others. In that way it was wonderful discipline, you had to pull together as a unit and you did. – Geoff Cornish

List ways in which the men might have ‘pulled together as a unit’. Would the officers have had to initiate this?

What were the historical forces behind reasons why the Australian prisoners obeyed the orders of the Senior British Officer (SBO) in European camps?

The SBO had the power to discipline the men but he was also expected to fight for their interests with their captors. That meant that in addition to standing up to the Germans he also had to keep a tight rein on punishment and control of the prisoners. What sort of difficulties would this have presented him with?

What do you think Austin thinks of his SBO? What is the material that supports your view?

How do you understand the relationship between officers and ordinary servicemen in captivity?

Discussion

Why do you think these prisoners have different accounts of their officers?

How do these accounts help you understand the relationship between officers and ordinary servicemen in captivity?

Why is the chain of command so important in the military? What stresses does imprisonment place on both ends of that chain – the men and the officers?
Activity 2

Classes in camp

Research and discussion

It didn’t matter what you wanted to do, there was somebody in that camp

– Geoff Cornish

Many former POWs have given the Archive accounts of formal education conducted in camps. Sergeant Keith Hooper was captured on the last day of the Battle of Crete on 31 May 1941 and ended up in a camp at Hohenfels, in Germany. This is what he said in his interview about classes in the camp:

University was set up in conjunction with the London University. London University was the mentor. We’d contacted them and they said yes, if you want to set up some faculties of various things we’ll supply the type of stuff you need to study and the examination papers when it comes around to examinations.

And it worked very well. I’m amazed… at how many courses we had. There were about fifty courses and oh, an incredible number of things, jewellery making, and you can imagine, any courses you get at the university now, we had them.

And they’d set the exam paper and then the exam papers would be sent back to London and they would mark them there, you see. And then eventually in a couple of months time you’d hear how you went. Did I get my degree or did I get a pass or whatever? But to me, the university was the really the outstanding thing of Hohenfels, the most outstanding thing… out of four thousand five hundred and twenty-nine men you’d probably get maybe eight hundred would want to do a university course which made it really worthwhile for the London University. - Keith Hooper

Suggest ways that the prisoners may have created the equipment needed for studying jewellery making or chemistry or music, or any other university course that interested them.

In the civilian camps, children were often incarcerated along with their parents, so schools were begun, using adults that were imprisoned as the teachers. Fifteen-year-old Howard Walker attended such a school in Pu Dong Camp, in China:

We had to study, we were still under extreme difficulties because there was no paper supplied, or pencils or pens, and we had to sort of gather these from everyone who could let us have them. We used to use toilet paper if there was any to spare and jam tin labels from people who got parcels and every bit of paper they could possibly use was given to the school. And the whole thing was taken very seriously and I received a few years of very good schooling there. – Howard Walker

Write a list of things you think would be in a curriculum that you would study if you suddenly found yourself in the same situation as Howard Walker. Interview your teacher and ask them what they think is important. Ask your parents the same question at home.

As a class, combine all your information and design a curriculum you think would be suitable for your own education for a year.

You are trying to study without textbooks or even writing paper and pens, let alone access to a library or the internet. Write an account of how you think the classes would be run. How would you go about studying and doing homework?

Divide the class into two groups. One half represents the adults in the POW camp, the other half the children. You are to have a camp meeting where the adults must convince the children that a camp school is necessary.

Probably Sulmona, Italy. Flight Lieutenant A.H. (Henry) Comber RAAF (an Australian attached to 39 Squadron, RAF) at work on his painting ‘Italian Spring’. An artist before the war, he painted this work when a prisoner of war 1942-1945, but had to abandon his bundle of paintings on the roadside during a forced winter march in January 1945 from Stalag Luft III at Sagan, Poland.
Activity 3

Sport in camp

Analysing the Photographs

Wherever they were imprisoned, and while they had the physical strength, Australian servicemen found a way to play sport. And it was taken seriously.

They invited me to be goalkeeper and I let too many balls in and they sacked me pretty quick and lively.

– Rex Austin

The following photographs were taken by two Australian POWs held in camps in Europe during the Second World War. What can we learn from these photographs about conditions in those camps? Look at each one and answer the questions, then check the actual captions to the photographs at the end of this worksheet.
Activity 3

Photograph 2

Photograph 3
Activity 3

Analysing the Photographs

What is happening in the pictures?

1

2

3

4

What do you think happened before each photograph was taken?

1

2

3

4
Activity 3

What do you think happened after each photograph was taken?

1. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

2. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

3. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

4. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

What might be happening outside each photograph?

1. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

2. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

3. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

4. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

What can you learn by looking at the faces of the prisoners in all the photographs, the condition of their clothing and their surroundings?

Examine each photograph carefully. What small details can you see that were not obvious at first glance?

1. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

2. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

3. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

4. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

If you had to write a caption for each photograph, what would it be?

1. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

2. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

3. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

4. ..............................................................
   ..............................................................................

The actual captions provided by the veterans are:

1. Raphael (‘Ray’) Corbett competing in the high jump at E3 Camp Blechhammer, Poland, 1943.

2. The Rugby Sevens Team, Blechhammer 1942. ‘Ray’ Corbett, Captain (centre).

3. Boxing Carnival, Blechhammer, 1944 with invited German guards.

4. Playing volleyball with mates, Ken Drew at Stalag 7A Camp, Moosburg Germany, 1943.
Activity 4

Entertainment in camp
In many camps throughout South East Asia and Europe, the POWs showed remarkable ingenuity and skill, performing everything from Shakespeare to variety concerts.

Improvisation and creativity
Once, the prisoners managed to smuggle a full drum kit into Changi prison, piece by piece under their sarongs. They were amazingly inventive in finding ways to make musical instruments, toys, sports equipment, theatrical sets and so on.

Here are four articles prisoners constructed by improvising with whatever materials they could scrounge from the jail or nearby houses. How would you duplicate their improvisation?

1. Guitar

2. A ventriloquist's doll

3. A stage set for a play that takes place in an English house

4. Women’s gowns for a play

What have you learnt about conditions in the camps?
Why would music be so important to POWs?
Compile a list of ten songs you would like to have with you if you were ever imprisoned.

Which would be the song that would:
- make you feel happy;
- make you feel safe;
- make you feel strong enough to survive;
- lift your spirits when you were down; and
- help you to inspire others?

I really did my stage debut in that prison camp.
– Maric ‘Eddie’ Gilbert

Interpretation and analysis
Find out the meaning of the words:
- debut
- camaraderie
- banter

Create an advertising banner and flyer for the Australiana show in Changi prison.

For higher grades
Maric Gilbert played the part of ‘Mabel’ in the production Dad and Dave. Research the ‘Dad and Dave’ films and write a brief outline of the main characters (Dad Rudd, Dave, Mother Rudd, Myrtle (Mabel)).

Write the dialogue around the scene of Private Maric Gilbert’s debut as ‘Mabel’. Refer to his story on the DVD.

Fun for any class
List the types of concerts the prisoners managed to organise. Select one of these, and as a class try and replicate it. Prepare things like costumes, props and programs using the materials the prisoners would have had available to them.
Activity 5

Other activities

One activity that helped women prisoners deal with boredom and boost their morale also served another useful purpose.

A Red Cross representative in Changi prison, Mrs Ethel Mulvaney, organised the making of quilts and managed to obtain permission from the Japanese to have the quilts sent to the men in Changi hospital.

Each woman or girl embroidered a square, which would become part of the larger quilt, and was advised to ‘put something of herself’ into the square. These embroideries became coded messages, some more obvious than others, to let the men know that their wives and children were still alive – something they would otherwise have no way of knowing.

Sheila Bruhn was one of those quilters and this is what she said about the experience in her interview.

“We were given an eight inch square, all of us, especially cut out from the sacking that had the rice flour and sugar, so that was unpicked and washed and carefully cut out and given to each of us that were interested in having one. I did a map of Australia with a kangaroo in the centre, an aeroplane at the top and a sailing boat on the bottom to signify that I was going to get to Australia by hook or by crook, somehow or other. But unfortunately I forgot the island of Tasmania which I didn’t know existed, my father never told me anything about Tasmania, he only told me about Australia. So that is something that I still have to apologise for.

…Another one of them was a cheerful Tommy [British] soldier with the thumbs up sign. And another famous one, of course, was three dwarves with two menus saying, ‘There will always be tomorrow’. Of course some of the more national ones would be, ‘There will always be an England as long as Scotland stands’…there was one there with two bunny rabbits, the mother rabbit, and the baby rabbit had a blue ribbon around its neck to indicate that they had a son. There was another with two sheep, and the baby lamb had a pink ribbon around its neck to indicate that they had a baby girl…Freddy Bloom did a clock with wings on it to indicate that she wished time would fly. Elizabeth Ennis did a ship called Homeward Bound with the hope that one day she would be sailing home with her husband. And of course the very famous one I would think, was by Iris Parfitt, our cartoonist, a square of a lonely figure in a cell saying, ‘How long, oh Lord? How long?’

There were other bits and pieces, funny bits. Dr Margaret Smallwood had her cell decorated with underwear and called it ‘the room with a view’. And one who had a humorous one, had a sketch of just a plain brick wall and called ‘Changi Holiday Home’.

Anything that would bring the men perhaps a bit of laughter, or a smile to their faces. To know that in a way, the women are keeping their end up. -Sheila Bruhn

This is a picture of one of the quilts-

A section of the Changi Quilt. Courtesy of the AWM

If you visit the Australian War Memorial website at www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/quilt/detail_view.asp, you will be able to view specific squares in one of the quilts and learn more about their making.

- Design a brief caption outlining the history of the Australian quilt that is on display in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.
- As a class, each design and contribute a square to a quilt that would reflect either what you have learnt about the POW experience or the hopes and aspirations of your own group.
- Suggest ways you would encode a personal message to a loved one.
- Students could look at the AIDS Quilt as a current quilt project designed to ease grief and suffering. See www.aidsquilt.org.au.
Review

Interpretation and analysis

Hope was in short supply, boredom plentiful.

It’s very, very monotonous. There’s nothing that really excites you.

– Rex Austin

Discuss whether you think these quotes are an adequate summary of the experience of most POWs whose stories you hear.

In this DVD chapter POWs describe all of the activities that took place in the camps.

Keep a list of the techniques prisoners used to keep their spirits up.

Explain why you think these activities were so important for the survival of prisoners.

What do you think was the most successful technique used to maintain a positive spirit while in captivity? Justify your selection and compare your choice with the rest of the class.

List the ways Australian prisoners improvised to create what they needed from what they had. Select one of these articles and see if you can duplicate their improvisation. What does your experience tell you about conditions in the camps?

Discussion

Here are some statements and questions for a group of two or three students to discuss and write notes on, prior to a whole class discussion. Review the DVD chapter first.

- The POWs were clearly suffering from the hardships of prison life and became frustrated. Talk about a time when you were suffering hardships and your behaviour and mood changed. Perhaps you were badly injured in a sporting activity; maybe your family moved house and you left your friends. Discuss how you managed and overcame these feelings.

- The prisoners had to contemplate what really mattered in their lives as POWs. Have you ever had reason to reflect on important aspects of your life? Perhaps your parents forced you to take a part-time job or stay on at school. Talk about this time in your group. How did it make you feel? Did you get angry with the authority figures in your life? Where could you go for support?

- Was discipline important for the prisoners? Is discipline important in our lives? Why or why not? Do you consider yourself to be a disciplined person? When does your self-discipline suffer most? When you’re under pressure or stress? Would things have been very different if the POWs’ self-discipline waned? What gives us a sense of self-discipline? Discuss these issues within your group.

- Define boredom. When do you get bored? How do you relieve the boredom? Do you think it’s easier to deal with boredom in 2008 than it might have been in, say, 1944? Why?

- You are alone with nothing to do, day after day. List all the things you would like to think about. Invent a ‘mind game’ that you could play simply by thinking. Come up with the rules and how it works and then teach another student your game.

- After the whole class discussion, use any of the ideas above as the basis for an original narrative. Any of the ideas above may be the springboard for your story. It does not have to be set in a POW camp (but it could be).
Guards, civilians & internees

‘We became quite matey, actually’ – Arthur Leggett

Liverpool prisoner of war and internment camp, NSW 1945. A group of Italian prisoners of war behind the wire perimeter fence of the main compound.
Background

The stories in this DVD chapter can be used to promote classroom discussion, formal debates, further research or individual assignments.

Here are some ideas for students to consider while watching this DVD chapter.

- POW camps were isolated worlds where civilised rules and accepted behaviour were often abandoned. Although Australian prisoners of war had many reasons to dislike, perhaps even to hate, their captors, some did experience guards who treated them with compassion and humanity.

- What examples can you find in the DVD that support or challenge this suggestion?

- Discuss the different relationships that can exist between guards and prisoners. Write a list of these relationships as you view the chapter.

DVD Chapter 4 – Guards, civilians and internees

Summary

This chapter explores the relationships that existed between guards and Australian POWs. Far from being straightforward, these relationships were often complex. The chapter examines the occasional compassion felt by both sides for the other, as well as the more brutal behaviour exhibited by some guards and its legacy in the memories of POWs. The chapter also explores the stories of POWs and civilian internees imprisoned in Australia during the Second World War and focuses on the Japanese breakout at the Cowra POW camp in 1944.

Duration 14 minutes 23 seconds

The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM
Background - research

The Geneva Convention

All forms of punishment, confinement in premises not lit by daylight and in general, all forms of cruelty whatsoever are prohibited. Collective penalties for individual acts are also prohibited.

– From Article 46, Geneva Convention, 1929

The first convention between nations that agreed on the treatment of POWs was the Hague Convention of 1907. After the First World War, the Geneva Convention, created in 1929, revised and bound the values of accepted, civilised behaviour to the treatment of those captured in wartime. The conventions have been amended over time as warfare has changed. The Convention was revised again in 1949, after the experiences of the Second World War.

- Research the history of the Geneva Conventions using the website of the International Committee of the Red Cross at: www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/genevaconventions. You can search this site for the 1929 and 1949 versions of the convention.

- As you work through the material on this site, keep a list of examples of where you believe sections of the Geneva Convention were breached. Keep in mind that the conventions were amended from the First to the Second World War.

- As a class, debate the value of the Geneva Convention. How would you update it for the 21st century?

- Debate the statement that ‘international treaties are a waste of time’.

- It has been suggested that German captors honoured the Geneva Convention for keeping prisoners and while the Japanese signed the Convention they refused to ratify it, and as a result, were much crueler captors. Can you find any evidence in the DVD chapters to support this claim?

Guards

This chapter illustrates that some captors were sympathetic towards their prisoners, even under difficult conditions.

- Review the relevant section of the DVD. Break into two groups; one analyses and lists the feelings and personal challenges faced by the guards and the other the feelings and personal challenges faced by the prisoners. Each group prepares a statement and explains their conclusions to the other. What are the points of difference? What are the similarities?

- Look at the photograph below.

The caption to this photograph reads: Probably Singapore, 1942. Probably an Allied working party taken soon after the fall of Singapore, 1942.

Write the story of how this photograph came to be taken. Discuss the various stories in the class.
Fred Skeels's story

In this chapter of the DVD, Able Seaman Fred Skeels describes Horeushi, a Japanese guard, who treated his prisoners with as much compassion and humanity as he could without being found out by his fellow guards.

He was the only one that I came across that would show you any sort of decency or respect, you know, this bloke Horeushi.

He was only a Jap soldier but he reckoned he was a Christian and he did act as such, he tried to help you when he could without being found out by his fellow guards, who would have probably given him a bashing or something else, you know.

Write a film plot

Using this information, write a plot for a film about Horeushi’s relationship with the prisoners of war. A plot is not a script but a detailed description of the story of a film. Try to include scenes which reveal how Horeushi thought and felt about being a Japanese guard in a POW camp.

Lloyd Cahill’s story

Captain Richard ‘Lloyd’ Cahill reminisces about conversations he used to have with a Japanese lieutenant who expressed the unusual belief that Japan would lose the war.

Class discussion

- Why do you think Lloyd Cahill was comfortable having in-depth conversations with a Japanese guard?
- Where was Lloyd Cahill and why? How may the situation have encouraged the conversations he was having?
- How did Lloyd Cahill and the Japanese lieutenant differ in their views of returning home after being imprisoned?
Sister Berenice Twohill's story

Sister Berenice Twohill was captured along with missionaries, brothers and nuns in Rabaul, New Britain in 1941. For a time she lived in a hut surrounded by Japanese soldiers.

In front of us they put their wounded soldiers, their hospital. Those poor creatures, we used to feel so sorry for them.

Sister Twohill sympathetically describes the Japanese wounded soldiers as 'those poor creatures'.

Sister Twohill also tells a story about the nuns repairing torn clothing for the wounded Japanese soldiers. They traded this service in return for drugs such as Quinine and Atebrin. This arrangement was a closely guarded secret during her captivity.

Focus questions

- Explain why Sister Twohill felt sorry for the wounded soldiers.
- What values did Sister Twohill hold to enable her to think and feel this way about the people who were imprisoning her?
- Why do you think Sister Twohill kept her dealings with the Japanese secret at the time?

Private Thomas 'Fred' Smith describes while working hard building bridges, the Australian prisoners of the Japanese found a way to 'vent their spleen'.

We used to sing a tune to it. What we started with was, itchy knees and savv, [ichi, ni, san, shi] that was 'one, two, three, four' [in Japanese]. So after we got sick of that we'd sing, 'You little yellow bastards! You little yellow bastards!' Until someone put them wise to what we were saying. Then we'd all get done over. But it was worth it. We'd vent our spleen out with words like that.

- Discuss what kept Fred Smith going during the darkest moments of his capture. How would you describe the way he coped?
- The veterans interviewed on the DVD often use language that is no longer current. What does Fred Smith mean by 'vent our spleen' or 'get done over'? Make a list of the other phrases in this chapter that are no longer current and research their meaning.
- Why was it worth the risk of getting into trouble for insulting the Japanese?
Colin Hamley’s story

And they continually walked around the camp harassing people, standing them up, making them bow to them which was a bloody awful experience, having to bow to a bloody Jap. And even these days when I see somebody bowing to a Jap, by jeez, it makes my blood boil… To them, of course, it was the normal thing to do, to bow to each other. But they made us bow to them instead of saluting and that was very hard to take.

Group discussion

Private Colin Hamley refers to his captors as ‘bloody Japs’. Understandably, he felt anger towards them.

- Do you think some of the Second World War generation and veterans still harbour negative attitudes towards the Japanese?
- Can you understand these lingering attitudes or should the passage of time bring forgiveness and acceptance? Share your ideas with your group.
- How does Colin Hamley’s account help you understand the cultural differences between the Australians and the Japanese?
- Australians purposely humiliated the Japanese at the time of their surrender by making them lay down their ceremonial swords and then taking them. How would you explain this action?

Geoff Cornish’s story

The difference between the prisoners and the guards was that the quality of the guards, on a scale of A to Z, they were Z. Because anybody with any intelligence or ability was at the fighting front. And the guards that were too old or too stupid but were in the services were sent to be guards to us. That suited us fine because to be in aircrew your educational level had to be very, very high indeed. And we had twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week doing nothing but plot how we would get out of it. And how we would outwit the Germans – psychologically, physically, in every possible way, bluff, whatever … Yes, outsmarting was the best thing.

Class discussion

- Consider the coping mechanisms described by Fred Smith, Colin Hamley and Geoff Cornish.
- How do these three stories compare? How did each of the POWs mentioned cope with his situation?
- Which method do you think would work for you?
- Can you think of situations where you would need to use similar coping mechanisms in a school or a home setting?

Extension assignment

Arms suddenly found themselves in control of vast numbers of prisoners in both Europe and Asia during the Second World War.

- One major quandary facing German and Japanese administration was who to place in charge of prisoners. Capable officers were required at the front, so it was logical to place the least capable officers in charge of prisoners. What would be recognised as a ‘successful’ command of POWs by German or Japanese high command?
- How would you administer a POW camp? Consider the physical and daily requirements along with the administrative and managerial aspects.
Athol Moffitt's story

Captain Athol Moffitt was a prosecutor at the war crimes trials. His extensive collection of nicknames for the Japanese prison guards still brings a gleam to his eye. Think about how giving people nicknames can make you feel towards them.

- Why do we give people nicknames? Are they always a form of endearment? What are some nicknames that you and your friends have?

- List some of the nicknames that were given to the Japanese guards. Write down what characteristics may have earned the guards these nicknames.

- Discuss as a group, nicknames you are familiar with and use regularly. Are there any common elements among them?

- What do you think nicknames reveal about the Australian character?

**Teachers note:**
The recollections of Captain Athol Moffitt offer a counterpoint to some of the other stories in this archive. Teachers could use these to trigger serious debate among senior students.

At the end of the Second World War, close contact with the Japanese allowed some Australians to form complex, subtle opinions of their enemy. Captain Athol Moffitt had been sent to Borneo when his superiors, aware that he had been admitted to the Bar just before the war began, seconded him to the army's legal department, where he would take up a role as Australia's prosecutor in the war crimes trials.

Consider the following accounts by Athol Moffitt after the war.

> So far as the prisoners were concerned, Japanese culture was such that they felt they had no duty to people who were foreigners, and strangers who were in occupied country. This was revealed by some writings of a Japanese professor after the war. The Japanese culture is based on a sense of duty – it's a very fine thing – their duty to different groups. And if you have a duty to a group it's very wonderful, and we do too. But if you had a higher duty to another group, the duty to the other one didn't exist. So if you had a person who was just a friend in your house you had some kind of duty to him. But if you had some higher duty such as to the Emperor, that duty to the stranger in your house ceased to exist.

And for those who are complete strangers, like in occupied territory, there was no duty, and in the Japanese culture, the Japanese writer, Professor Doi, explained that the Christian-Judaic culture of right and wrong hadn't ever got through to the Japanese. They had no sense of something being right and wrong, and to kill a person to whom you had no duty was no different to killing an animal. That's how it was.

> He said, 'Officers, when they had the sick parade in the morning,' (this was on this march after they had surrendered), would give their own men who could not stand up, a mighty kick. Or who could not hold up their head, a hit across the face. No man would help another who fell down or was too sick to walk.'

I can understand now all that is said about the brutality of the Japs to our people when this is what they did to their own people.

> – Athol Moffitt

**Focus questions for senior students**

- Compare and contrast Athol Moffitt’s description of the Japanese behaviour when captured with that of the Australians you have heard.

- How do Athol Moffitt’s recollections help you to understand the cultural differences that underpinned relations between Australian prisoners and their Japanese captors?

- Research some of Athol Moffitt’s other recollections using his full interview on the Archive website or the accompanying CD-ROM. Do you think his education and understanding of Japanese culture has helped him cope with his experiences?

- How important is his cultural understanding to his role as a prosecutor? Should former POWs be in charge of prosecuting their captors? What ethical issues are involved in this decision?
Take up the stories
Stories 8 & 9

Bill Coventry’s story
_They are not logical._

Arthur Leggett's story

_The people of Munich are remarkable people._

Arthur Leggett, imprisoned by the Germans, describes the Munich citizens he comes across as the finest people he has met in his life.

■ What examples can you find to explain how he came to this conclusion?
■ What does it say about the German people and what does it say about Arthur Leggett?
■ What insight does Arthur Leggett’s story offer into the attitudes of ordinary civilians towards their country’s enemies in war?

Bill Coventry’s story

■ What does Bill Coventry’s story reveal about the Japanese as captors?
■ What does it reveal about Bill’s own attitude to his captors?
■ Explain how Bill Coventry’s account helps you understand the difficulties faced by Australian captives of the Japanese.
■ What role do you feel cultural differences played in the negative interactions between the Australians and Japanese?
■ Explain how this interview helps you understand the impact of captivity upon Australian soldiers.

Informal group portrait of Private Alan Chambers ‘Snowy’ Alderson, 2/1 Field Ambulance (far right, holding rake), with the German farming family with whom he worked whilst a prisoner of war.

Murray Griffin
_The Japanese guard takes a ride 1945_
Brush and brown ink and washover pencil
25.8 x 17.7 cm
Australian War Memorial (ART25059)
Prisoners in Australia

Read the following texts and recall what you have seen and heard from the DVD.

Civilian Italian internees were joined in Australia by Italian soldiers, captured in the Middle East. Many of these soldiers worked on farms and lived reasonably comfortable lives during their captivity. And the farmers were delighted to have the extra labour.

Dorothy Singe's story

I think the general public around Orange just felt that they weren't at war with those boys whereas the Japanese – they had a different feeling all together. But I'm talking about a farmer's outlook. The city people may have felt differently again. But they didn't see that these fellows were working and providing the fruit for them to eat anyhow. And the lady that owned the property next to us was on her own, and she lived in this big house. She was an elderly lady I suppose. I suppose she would be seventy and on her own, and she had at least six of these POWs living in her old cottage and her packing shed. So she wasn't worried about them was she?

By August 1944, 10,200 Italian prisoners were working, without guards, on farms or in hostels; but the 1,585 Germans and 2,223 Japanese in Australia remained in prison camps.

Trevor Parker's story

Sergeant Trevor Parker was stationed in a training camp near Cowra when early on the morning of 5 August 1944, the Japanese POWs staged a breakout.

Research the ‘Cowra Breakout’ of 1944, using the internet and your school library. Here are some websites to help you get started:

You are stationed at Cowra. Report to Army headquarters about the breakout of the Japanese prisoners from Camp B of the Cowra POW compound.

Draw the area of the camp where the breakout occurred, including the fences and the positions of the defending Australian soldiers. How did the Japanese prisoners escape?

Interview Private Trevor Parker about that day and how he might have felt when the reality of the escape fully hit him. Describe how you would feel in the same situation.

Describe ways the community of Cowra commemorate and remember both the Australians and the Japanese from that night.

Follow up research – the Japanese Memorial Gardens at Cowra

Go to the website:
www.cowraregion.com.au/japanesegarden/ and research the memorial garden that has been established in Cowra.

Design your own Memorial Garden.

Think about how you would reflect the cultural background of the different nationalities in your garden and incorporate your ideas into your design.

Extension task

Work with a group and storyboard a documentary film on the breakout. Storyboard your script and then film it.
Review

Review task

- Watch the DVD again and keep a list of the positive and negative things the former prisoners have to say about their captors.
- When you have completed your list, analyse it and use it as the basis for a discussion on differences between nations, beliefs and ideologies.
- List the differences between the experience of prisoners of the German and the Japanese.
  - What explanation can you develop for these differences?
  - Is there any evidence that Australians got on better with European rather than Asian captors?

Class debates
Assign various teams within the class to argue the affirmative or the negative position.

- Nothing good comes from being involved in war.
- ‘If we had taken them prisoners, we might have been the same to them.’ (Colin Hamley’s suggestion about the Japanese.)

Writing
A TV panel chat show features Fred Skeels, Lloyd Cahill, Sister Berenice Twohill and Colin Hamley. They are discussing their wartime experiences.

- Take the role of the mediator and ask questions based on the interviews in the DVD or from the full transcripts available on the Australians at War Film Archive website or the accompanying CD-ROM.
- Write the transcript of the chat show.

Reflection

National stereotype – focus questions

- Describe the national stereotypes that are presented in the DVD.
- What evidence supports the generalisations?
- How do you think Australians should be portrayed?
- Can these sorts of stereotypical generalisations have a positive role?
- Is there any evidence that the Australian POWs regarded themselves as superior to both their allies and their captors?

Discussion topics

- Explain the complexities of relations between prisoners, captors and civilians that this section reveals.
- Explain how friendships could develop between prisoners and civilians in the countries in which they were held prisoner.
- What do the accounts given here tell you about the civilian support for war in all the countries involved?
Humour & mateship

‘Every one of us had someone to care for us’

– Ian Wall

Jack Chalker

Two working men, Konyu River Camp

Burma Thailand Railway: Konyu 1942

Pen and black ink, brush and wash on paper

13.9 x 8.1 cm

Australian War Memorial (ART91811)
Background

This chapter of the DVD examines two concepts that were vital for the survival of prisoners of war: humour and mateship.

Before watching the DVD, classes can discuss their definitions of these terms and articulate what they mean to them personally.

Senior students could be encouraged to:

- research the meanings of these concepts in a more general context;
- suggest other situations where humour and mateship could make vital differences to outcomes; and
- discuss different types of humour and which of those would be the most likely to be used by POWs.

The focus questions below will assist students to prepare for the DVD chapter.

Humour

It often startles people to see a group of former POWs roaring with laughter. It feels inconsistent with what we know of their lives. Humour can create a sense of detachment; a necessary survival strategy in the face of memories and experiences that are simply too difficult to continue to confront. In the camps, laughter was seized upon eagerly, whenever and wherever it could be found.

*There was always somebody telling lies or they'd be telling dirty stories or some damn thing. But wherever you go there's always one bloke who makes you laugh.*

Focus questions

- Why was humour important for POWs?
- Think about what you find funny. Team up with a partner and compare what make you laugh. List instances of humour that you share.
- As you watch the DVD, compare the list of what you and your partner find funny with what the POWs found funny. Can you explain the similarities and differences?

Mateship

Coming home gave POWs mixed feelings, because it meant separation from each other. Families and friends found it difficult to understand the POWs' experiences in the camps and many former POWs felt lost and lonely without their mates.

*In human nature you saw the very best and you saw the very worst of the behaviour of men. I'm thankful to say the fellows who surrounded me, my mates; they stood tall amongst the tallest, good men.*

Focus questions

Explore how the environment and conditions of a POW camp affected prisoners' concepts of mateship.

Do you think the experience of being a prisoner under such great duress always creates 'good mates'?

How is mateship in these circumstances different from the relationships that people in less extreme situations experience?

DVD Chapter 5 – Humour & mateship

Summary

This chapter explores two of the critical survival strategies employed by the POWs – humour and mateship. It examines the different kinds of humour utilised by them - from intellectual games to practical jokes and making the best out of a very bad situation. The POWs' dependence on each other is looked at in detail and the complexities of mateship are illustrated by touching stories from the veterans. The chapter also examines the other side of mateship, when the circumstances of prison camps caused men to place self interest ahead of their friends.

Duration 13 minutes 29 seconds

*The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM.*
In POW camps, the biggest dangers to morale were often boredom and despair. Many prisoners invented their own unique ways of coping with the isolation and the numbing repetition of each day. Sergeant Malcolm Keshan was imprisoned in Stalag 383, in Hohenfels, Germany:

In 383 you were looking for something to do all the time. Something to occupy you. You had to be occupied. I used to play every sort of sport…

Malcolm Keshan talks about two of his fellow prisoners. One used to walk around reciting Shakespeare. Sadly he ‘went nutty’ in the end. The other used to ‘fish’ in the murky fire pool with a stick and a piece of cotton.

Interview

- Develop your own interviews with:
  - the bloke who used to walk around camp reciting Shakespeare; and
  - McGinty, the man who went fishing.
- Write six questions to ask each of these prisoners.
- Write out the transcript, using your knowledge of the POW experience to create their answers.

Design

It is 1944 and you are an Australian prisoner of war in Stalag 383 in Germany. You have been appointed by the Senior British Officer to create a poster that is designed to encourage the men to keep a positive attitude by helping each other. Use the information in this chapter of the DVD to help you to design the poster. You must include specific advice and suggestions.

Charles Yacopetti's story

In camps, laughter was seized upon eagerly, whenever and wherever it could be found. Best of all, from the prisoners’ point of view anyway, was to be able to laugh at their captors. In Korea, the Communists gave Charlie Yacopetti and his mates a decent laugh and a momentary respite from prison life.

So I requested a meeting with the camp commandant and I pointed out there were lice in the camp and this could get quite serious and I would like some assistance in the way of whatever medication they had, to treat the lice. Anyway, he said he would give it his greatest consideration.

The following day I was summoned, on my crutches again, up to the commandant’s office where a staff member, one of his staff, someone in the office, met me and told me, I think it was one of the interpreters, told me that he'd given it his serious consideration and he agreed, ‘We should not have lice in the camp.’ And therefore I was to put a sign outside of each hut: ‘Out of Bounds to Lice.’- Charles Yacopetti

Design

Design two ‘Out of Bounds to Lice’ posters for the camp, which include 5 rules for keeping lice out of the huts. One should be designed by the POWs, and the other by their Chinese captors. Examine Charles Yacopetti’s story again to determine the differences in their point of view. Who will take the poster seriously and who will use it as an opportunity for humour?
Frank Roy’s story

They reckon it was the only thing that kept him alive.

We had a fellow in our truck, on the cattle truck, name of Dick Beale. Now Dicky Beale, his parents used to own a piano place in Bourke Street in Melbourne, Beale Pianos, and Dick had lived pretty comfortably all his young life. He was a thin, weedy, little bloke but he, as I said, lived very comfortably. And he was lying in this truck, this carriage, and he’s moaning and groaning and he said, ‘Oh God, if I don’t get something to eat I’ll think I’ll die!’ Anyway, there was a big raw-boned Western Australian bloke down the other end of the carriage and he jumped up and he said, ‘You little bugger, you die, I’ll eat you!’ And he waved this knife under his Dick’s nose and they reckon it was the only thing that kept him alive. Every time he got a hunger pain he used to look at this engineer bloke.

- What is it about the story of a prisoner threatening to eat Dick Beale that makes Frank Roy laugh?
- What do you think was the real motive of the big Western Australian bloke?
- Do you think the fear of being eaten really kept Dick Beale alive? If so, why?
Tom Pledger’s story

But he still had his chops.

Corporal Athol 'Tom' Pledger relates the story about a fellow prisoner on Ambon who obtained two pork chops and was attacked severely by bull ants as he smuggled them back to camp in his clothing.

- Locate Ambon on the map at www.awm.gov.au/stolenyears/ww2/japan/index.asp. What does its location tell you about the climate there?

- Why is this important for you to know the context of Tom Pledger’s story?

- This is what the Australian War Memorial website says about the Ambon POW camp:

  Unknown to the Allies, prisoners were held at isolated camps on Ambon, in Indonesia, and Hainan, an island off the south coast of China. Just over a thousand Australians, members of Gull Force, had been forced to surrender on Ambon in February 1942. By war’s end more than two-thirds of them were dead. At first, conditions were reasonable; later, treatment in Tantui camp (on Ambon) deteriorated. Starvation and brutality prevailed. Some prisoners died in Allied raids on a Japanese bomb dump located next to the camp and others in medical ‘experiments’. A survivor described their hopelessness toward the end: ‘The men knew they were dying’.

Does Tom Pledger’s interview support this view?

Find evidence in the ‘chop story’ that verifies the suggestion that prisoners on Ambon were starved.
Take up the stories
Story 5

Ian Wall’s story

Any POW who didn’t have a mate had nothing.

Sergeant Ian Wall worked as a prisoner on the Thai–Burma Railway. Over two thousand Australians died on the railway, often called the ‘Railway of Death’.

Below are two photographs from the Thai-Burma Railway.

What do the photographs suggest about the challenges of climate and conditions that would have been presented to the POWs who were forced to build the railway? How important would taking care of each other have been for the men?

Write a diary entry for a POW travelling on the train in the first photograph.

Describe the actions taking place in the second photograph.

The curved trestle bridge approximately 154 kilometres north of Nong Pladuk. This bridge, approximately one kilometre south of Hintok Station, was one of six trestle bridges between Konyu (Hellfire Pass) 152 kilometres north of Nong Pladuk, and Hintok 155 kilometres north of Nong Pladuk.

Burma-Thailand Railway. c. 1943. Prisoners of war (POWs) laying railway track.
Take up the stories
Stories 6, 7 & 8

Maric 'Eddie' Gilbert and Ian Wall

Mateship is a special circumstance.

Listen to the way these men express their idea of mateship.

It was so important to me... that moral support. – Eddie Gilbert

You lived for one another. – Ian Wall

Compare the experiences of these two POWs.
What do they have in common?

Sheila Bruhn's story

Having somebody you can always depend on, no matter what sort of person you are, they still accept you – it does mean a lot in life. To be able to rely on somebody like that, particularly when it is a matter of life and death. And you know that it didn’t matter what you did, you have got somebody there who will help you and try and understand. – Sheila Bruhn

Discussion

Remember that Sheila Bruhn was a young girl when she was imprisoned in Changi. Think about her recollections and discuss the following questions.

- Explain how her experience of being a prisoner of war was similar to that experienced by males.
- How did it differ?
- Explain what Sheila means when she says, ‘Having somebody you can always depend on, no matter what sort of person you are, they still accept you – it does mean a lot in life.’

Walter Hick’s story

I reproached him, but without any bitterness.

It is important to record that not all Australians met the challenge of sticking with their mates. Private Walter Hicks, also imprisoned on Ambon, describes the continual theft of food from his garden and the pumpkin he was able to grow.

- What does Walter Hicks say isn’t mateship? Do you think it is reasonable given the circumstances the men found themselves in?
- Design a cage that could protect Walter’s pumpkin. Remember you can only work with things that would have been easily available to him.
- Walter Hicks felt that he couldn’t blame his friend who stole his pumpkin because he was dying. Create a diary entry for Walter where he writes what he thinks about the situation and whether or not he still regards the man as a mate.
- Debate the proposition that ‘mateship means understanding that mates might let you down’.
- Debate the proposition that in the POW camps, mateship = survival.
Take up the stories
Story 9

The Claw
Arthur Leggett was working as a slave labourer in a coalmine in Poland when a simple joke by an Australian POW resulted in a hilarious moment for the entire camp.

There was one fellow who brought up a kilo of sugar into the camp, smuggled it into the camp. You did that by simply having it in your dixie and when they give you a body search, you held your arms out. They never thought to look in the dixie. And he puts a note on this, ‘One spoonful per cup, or else you will become a victim of The Claw.’ And he drew a horrible bloody claw.

Well, then, someone else wrote a note to his mate, ‘Don’t do this, or that, or you become a victim of The Claw.’ Well, it got down underground and on one of the cement walls one of the blokes with his lamp wrote, ‘Twenty wagons per man today or you will become a victim of The Claw.’

Well, the Poles got onto this, ‘There is a secret society springing up amongst the prisoners. Oh, it’s terrible!’ reported it to the Germans. And we were all lined up on our day off, and in came a German colonel with an interpreter, and he made a brilliant speech, ‘We’re all soldiers. We mustn’t lose our sense of pride in what we are doing… And we’ve found out there is a secret society sprung up amongst you. Now step forward all those who are victims of The Claw.’

We had been locked up for four years, and the whole parade dissolves in laughter, and he could never work out what the joke was. – Arthur Leggett

□ How does Arthur Leggett’s story of ‘The Claw’ help you to understand what it was like to be a POW under the Germans?
□ Why did the Australians find the German concern so funny? Can it be argued that guards and prisoners see humour differently?
□ Draw a picture of what you think ‘The Claw’ would look like.
You are a long-term POW in a German camp. Design a sign to be placed in the POW barracks that instructs newly arrived captives on life in the camp. State the skills they require to survive, and the do’s and don’ts of daily life.

Explain the role humour played in helping these soldiers survive their experience as POWs.

Discuss the idea that 'mateship' was crucial in this environment.

Discuss the suggestion that mateship can survive everything but the theft of food.

Read the following anecdote:

... You've got no idea what a letter meant. Just to make the contact. It was really, really something. You used to get real uptight if you didn't get a letter. The letters came around and there's another funny incident.

Each block had a postman. That's how big the blocks were. They used to come round and just read out the names and dish out the letters. This day, the post came round and he went into a hut, he read out the names, and he read out the name 'Bluey Einshaw.' There was an Englishman in the hut, he called him over. He says, 'Do you think you'd mind reading this letter out to him? He's not very well educated and he can't read. He'd really appreciate it if someone read it for him.' 'Yeah, sure. No trouble. I'll read it.' So he gives him the letter. Out he goes.

The Englishman opens up the letter and he starts reading it. His wife's left him, his girlfriend's pregnant and he's reading all this out. He said, 'I can't go any further!' Everyone burst out laughing. It was a letter that had been written out especially for him to read. That's the sort of jokes they used to play on each other.

- Malcolm Kershaw

Explain why letters were so important to POWs.

Discuss as a group the idea that prisoner of war camps are where you can best see the 'typical Aussie'.

What does this anecdote tell us about the idea of a unique Australian sense of humour?

You are at a school camp. Write a letter home to your parents that starts out convincingly about your activities and gradually becomes more and more outrageous. Remember that by the end of the letter, you want the joke to be discovered.

1943 Sagan, Poland. RAAF airmen make the best of conditions in a German prison camp, Stalag Luft III.
I’m thankful to say the fellows who surrounded me, my mates; they stood tall amongst the tallest, good men – Lloyd Moule

- What evidence does this chapter present that mateship was the most important factor in surviving as a POW?

- We are used to regarding mateship as a positive quality, and most of the stories here speak of providing great support under intense pressure. Where are there examples of mateship meaning tolerating behaviour you don’t like in other people?

- Create two lists on the aspects of mateship amongst POWs; one positive list and one negative list. Find examples from the stories here to place under each column. Which one is the largest?

- Try to explain why, in a prisoner of war camp, playing practical jokes on one another or laughing at the agony of another prisoner is considered appropriate and even healthy.

Osaka, Japan, 1945. These prisoners of war who had been released from Kyusai on the southern island of Japan hitch hiked 200 miles to reach the occupational troops. They are having their first ride in a motor car for three years.
Food, conditions & treatment

'I saw life at its best and it’s worst' – Sister Berenice Twohill

Changi, Singapore. September 1945. Liberated 8th Division men at the Changi prisoner of war (POW) camp in Singapore carrying rice from the mess. This gives some indication of the limited rations supplied to 250 men.
DVD Chapter 6 – Food, conditions and treatment

Summary

This DVD chapter deals with some of the more difficult information about the POW experience, including mistreatment and brutality. It begins by examining how critical the supply of food was for prisoners and how they had to learn to share their food and to eat certain kinds of food they would otherwise have rejected. From there, the chapter extends into a wider overview of conditions in some camps, revealing stories of physical mistreatment and cruelty. Veterans also speak of the selfless behaviour of the POW doctors and how, even in the midst of inhumanity, nobility could be found.

Duration 14 minutes 37 seconds

The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM.
Background

From the moment of surrender a POW is at the mercy of the military force which has captured him. He, or she, must abide by its rules, its discipline, its principles, its culture, and particularly the demands and orders of the guards. The prisoner is vulnerable, unarmed and probably unknown and unseen by the rest of the world. For the captors, ill treatment can become a new standard of behaviour.

Interpretation and analysis

As you have seen, both the German and Japanese armies were overwhelmed by the number of prisoners they initially captured in the Second World War. Draw up a list of orders for both German and Japanese camp commanders explaining how they are to administer the large numbers of prisoners they have now acquired. Consider issues such as housing, health, food, work, discipline and general treatment. Use the Geneva Convention of 1929 as the basis for your orders. You will find it at www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/FULL/305?OpenDocument.

As you work through this Topic, consider how many of your orders were actually implemented in the camps you will learn about. What forces were working for or against their implementation?

Synthesis and evaluation

Create two mind maps, one centred on ‘hate’ and one centred on ‘respect’. Are there any words that can overlap? Explain how these representations can help you understand the conditions in POW camps.

Knowledge and comprehension

Draw up a table with columns for each of the nationalities who held Australian POWs. As you work through this material, list the ways the prisoners were treated by each of those nationalities and indicate whether the treatment was good or bad.

At the end of the section decide whether you think any group treated prisoners worse than the others. What do you think were the reasons for this?
Reg Worthington's story

He tasted pretty good in the stew. Ah, poor little dog.

Discussion questions

- Can you imagine a situation now when you would be so hungry that you would resort to eating stewed dog?
- Could such an event happen?
- How would you feel about it?
- Have you ever been so hungry that you thought you’d pass out or worse?
- Discuss this with your group and be prepared to report back to the class.
- Apart from dog, what did other prisoners in this DVD chapter report eating out of desperation?
- What do you think would be the most disgusting or distasteful?

Ken Drew’s story

There were new manners to learn, a kind of prisoner’s etiquette.

Individual assignment or group work

- Using the information from this chapter, come up with six or seven ‘rules for sharing’ that would be applicable to these prisoners. Keep them simple and fair to all.

Bill Coventry’s story

Slowly as time went by we learnt how to cook rice, didn’t we?

Individual assignments

- Write three diary entries for Sergeant Bill Coventry making sure that you include his comments about the prisoners’ hunger and their meagre rations.
- Try to cover four or five days of his imprisonment, but start after he has had time to become really hungry. How does he feel about it? What does he do to cope with hunger pain?
Howard Walker’s story

We got bad rice, sad rice, that fills you with its sorrow,
We got potty rice, stodgy rice, that meant tummy pains tomorrow.

Howard Walker, the son of missionary parents, was imprisoned in China at the age of fourteen. Listen to his reading of a poem about rice written by another prisoner.

In contrast to this poem, create your own ‘Delicious Rice’ poem. Try and include every good thing you can about the nutritional value of rice as well as all the delicious ways you can think of for serving and eating rice.

Thomas Smith's story

You’d see little brown heads looking at you.

Thomas Smith tells us the doctors in camp wouldn’t allow the washing of rice because the grubs and grub nests in it had vitamins which would be lost in the washing process.

- Why are vitamins important?
- Some of the diseases the prisoners contracted were cholera, malaria, dysentery, typhus and beri beri. Find out whether any of these are caused by a lack of particular vitamins.
- The prisoners had to obtain protein wherever they could find it, often resorting to food sources they had previously never considered. What were some of those sources?
- Why was it so important for the prisoners to eat protein?
- What are the best sources of protein? From what foods do you get your protein?
Take up the stories
Stories 6, 7 & 8

Sheila Bruhn's story

*A little bit of salt on it and it was quite tasty.*

**Focus questions**
- How does Sheila Bruhn's story help you understand how bad conditions must have been in Changi?
- How would you describe Sheila Bruhn's attitude when she relates her story of survival? Use as many adjectives as you can.

George 'Bert' Beecham's story

*The treatment of POWs working on the railway line was absolutely horrendous.*

**Research**
- Diseases were plentiful amongst the POWs working on the railway line... cholera, malaria, dysentery, typhus, beri beri. Do these diseases still exist today? Find out and report back.
- What were the symptoms of these diseases and how serious were they?
- If they no longer exist, what has happened to eradicate them?
- What distresses Bert Beecham most about the attitude of the Japanese?
- Can you understand why he still has such strong feelings? Explain why.

Terry Fairbairn’s story

*I was belted and belted…*

This is the beginning of Lieutenant Terry Fairbairn’s account of the torture and humiliation he had to endure for the ‘crime’ of criticising Hitler during an interrogation.

After that episode, he was often singled out for more cruel treatment:

*And they belted me several times in other places after that. I was in handcuffs for nine months at another camp and I was only selected for that because of what I was and because of what I’d done. It wasn’t the best experience of my lifetime, but certainly it proved to me what the average German was like then, and can become like now, in my view.* – Terry Fairbairn

**Research and composition**

Find out more about Lieutenant Terry Fairbairn’s story by reading his complete interview at [www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/1674.aspx](http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/1674.aspx) or on the accompanying CD-ROM.

Write a profile of Lieutenant Fairbairn for the weekend magazine of a newspaper.

Comment on the way Terry Fairbairn’s account helps you to understand:
- the effect of war on individuals;
- the need for counselling and debriefing when soldiers return from war;
- the way prisoners were treated;
- the Geneva Conventions; and
- the spirit of soldiers in captivity.
Bill Coventry’s Story

There is no logic in the Jap, you can’t work out what he is doing and what he is thinking. They would give you a hiding for something you wouldn’t know what you have done. They would just pick on… pick on me just because I was taller than he was or something and find an excuse to give you a hiding.—Bill Coventry

Assignments

Taking into account this excerpt, other interviews and your extended research, write your response to one of the following:

- Explain how these accounts help you understand the difficulties faced by Australian captives of the Japanese.
- What role do you feel cultural differences played in the interactions between the Australians and the Japanese?
- How do the accounts on the DVD help you understand the difficulties the Second World War survivors might have had dealing with ideas of Japan after the war, such as meeting Japanese people or seeing them in the media, or seeing Japanese products in stores?
- Explain how these interviews help you understand the impact of captivity upon Australian soldiers.

Phillip Greville's story

Cruel treatment of POWs was not only experienced in Japanese camps. During the Korean War, Captain Phillip Greville tells us where his Chinese interrogators placed him.

I was incarcerated in this box which had been a crate surrounding something like a domestic refrigerator. —Phillip Greville

- Do you think the treatment Phillip Greville received in Korea is any different from the treatment that the prisoners in the Second World War received?
- Is there any indication in this account that the Geneva Conventions had been amended in 1949?
- Draw to scale the dimensions of the solitary cage that imprisoned Phillip Greville. Examine ways that one, two and three men could fit into the cage.

Murray Griffin
An incident on the Burma railway
Melbourne VIC 1946
Brush and brown ink and wash over coloured pencil on paper
35 x 50.8 cm
Australian War Memorial (ART26525)
**Tom Uren's story**

Bombardier Tom Uren on Lieutenant Colonel Edward 'Weary' Dunlop:

He was a very kind, quietly spoken human being.

**Synthesis, evaluation and analysis**

- Watch the interview in Chapter 6 of the DVD, and answer the following questions.

- What is Tom Uren's opinion of 'Weary' Dunlop? Can this opinion be confirmed by further research?
  
  Here are some websites to get you started:
  
  www.abc.net.au/schools/tv/australians/dunlop.htm
  home.vicnet.net.au/~a23mgb/f_hist/wdun_his.htm

- What example does Tom Uren give to demonstrate how effective Weary Dunlop was as a leader?

- Weary Dunlop and Tom Uren, both famous Australians, feature in this episode. Write a feature article for a newspaper that focuses on their wartime achievements. Use the information from the DVD plus anything else you can find out. Include a headline that will capture the attention of your reader.

  Look at the art work below. It is by a prisoner named Jack Chalker and shows Colonel Edward 'Weary' Dunlop and Captain Jacob Markowitz working on a thigh amputation in Chungkai POW hospital.

- What does the painting show of conditions in the camp hospital?

- How different are the conditions from those you would see in a hospital today?

- What difficulties do you think Weary Dunlop faced when conducting medical procedures in this camp hospital?

- What do you think happened to the prisoner patient before the operation?

- What happened to him afterwards?

Jack Chalker

Colonel Edward "Weary" Dunlop and Captain Jacob Markowitz working on a thigh amputation, Chungkai.

Oil on cardboard

21 x 29.7 cm

Australian War Memorial ART91848
Sister Twohill's story

Sister Berenice Twohill was imprisoned for three and a half years on New Britain. Her accommodation slowly degenerated from the Vunapope mission buildings, to native huts surrounded by barbed wire, and finally, to muddy trenches at the bottom of a ravine in the jungle.

For those of us who have never been imprisoned, there is no way to fully understand what it was actually like for the POWs. Only those who were there can properly speak of it. In Sister Twohill's words:

Being a prisoner of war changed me definitely, because I was just a young sister. I saw life at its best and its worst. I saw what human beings could do to each other, what hatred could do and yet what faith could do and what kindness could do. That's what we are here for, to help one another. I saw how useless all this is, when people go on hating one another and killing one another. How someone lives with that I don't know, lives with themselves I mean.

When you have just massacred a whole lot of people, how would you feel? I don't know. We are all born with animal instincts in all of us. War brings it out in so many. In war it makes some men, men; but others... it just makes them animals.

Describe how her experiences in the Second World War changed Sister Twohill.

'I saw life at its best and its worst.' To what extent does Sister Twohill's comment summarise the experiences of POWs? What else would be needed to make it a more complete summary?

'War; it makes some men, men; but others... it just makes them animals.' How does this chapter of the DVD help you understand Sister Twohill's comment? Can you find evidence in the DVD to support her conclusion?

Using the excerpt above as stimulus, create a values table, listing the emotions and behaviours evident from the DVD and the outcomes that came from them.

VALUES TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotions and behaviours</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eg courage</td>
<td>Helping and protecting each other in the face of guns and fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eg hatred</td>
<td>Cruelty to prisoners of war</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Private Kenneth Reid, 2/29 Battalion, while a prisoner of war, showing the effects of malnutrition typical of the condition of many of the Allied prisoners of the Japanese at the end of the war.

Burma or Thailand. 1945. An emaciated Australian prisoner of war (POW) showing the effects of malnutrition.
Concept mapping

**Note for teacher:**
In a concept map some key concepts or terms are arranged on a piece of paper and each is connected by lines to as many others as is sensibly possible. The nature of the connection is written on every line. This text written on the linking lines requires an analytical approach by the student, and asks them to articulate the link.

Concept maps are an excellent stimulus for small group or whole class discussion and require higher order thinking. Maps can encourage students to link ideas in new ways.

One suggestion for a concept map applicable to this segment of the DVD is a focus on food. Here are some ideas to include in a list for students (or to use as an initial stimulus for students to create their own maps) are:

- survival
- nutrition (protein, fruit and vegetables, carbohydrates etc)
- food allocation and sharing
- cooking
- scavenging
- Red Cross supplies withheld

**Interpretation and analysis**

- Use the information from Chapter 6 of the DVD to create a table which will help another student learn and understand the most important information about living conditions, food and treatment in POW camps.

- Hint: think carefully about the different headings or categories of information first – this will ensure that your table is clear and easy to understand.

**Creative writing**

You are a war correspondent on assignment – the POWs have just been liberated and you are investigating the conditions of the camps and speaking with freed prisoners. Use the information in Chapter 6 of the DVD to complete the following activities:

- Write an article about conditions in a Japanese or German camp. Your purpose in writing this article is to show your readers the horror of war and the difficulties faced by POWs. Include a graphic (map, drawing or photograph) to illustrate your argument.

- Write a different article describing the conditions in a Japanese or German POW camp. Your purpose in writing this article is to show your readers the glory of war and the positive outcomes of the war, despite the difficulties faced by prisoners. Include a graphic (map, drawing or photograph) to support your argument.

- Which article do you think would have been published? Write a paragraph explaining your answer.

**Synthesis, evaluation and analysis**

Because they had to find sources of food not available in the camps, the Australian POWs found ways to trade with communities outside the camps. In the European camps, this was a little easier as they were permitted some contact with the locals.

In these DVD chapters we have heard accounts of prisoners trading items for food, such as the Dutchman on Ambon acquiring two pork chops in Chapter 5.

Here is another account:

> We were taken out on wood parties which was marvellous. I was a non smoker. We got ten cigarettes. It was frowned on very much if you exchanged those with a smoker for his food, but outside they were wonderful. You could get a loaf of bread for two cigarettes. You could get a dozen eggs for four cigarettes, so it was trading with the Germans that you would meet outside, basically farming communities nearby. And while there you were collecting your wood to bring back, a marvellous source of extra food for people. The guards allowed it because they were hard put to feed us. - John Mathews

- Draw up two columns headed ‘Germany’ and ‘Japan’. In each column keep a list of the food that was available to the prisoners. How would you describe the major differences between the two situations? Are there any things that form part of your own diet?

- What impact did these different diets have on prisoners’ health?

- Experiment with recipes based on the ingredients you have listed above. How difficult is it to find variety and healthy combinations?
Review

Take home assignment: food diary

- Keep a food diary for a week, writing down everything you eat and drink in that time.
- Using the *Dietary Guidelines for Australians* and the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia* research the nutritional needs of an adult male and the nutritional needs of someone your own age. Compare the two.
- How did the diets of the prisoners of war in the Japanese camps compare with the nutritional information you gathered for an adult male and for yourself?

Group project: What makes a good leader?

Here are some ideas:
- Courage
- Self control
- Justice and fairness towards others
- Self-assuredness
- Setting clear goals
- Formulating an action plan
- Self-belief
- Going above and beyond the call of duty
- Likeability
- Empathy, sympathy and understanding
- Attention to detail
- Willing to assume responsibility
- Team player
- Passion
- Integrity
- Knowledge/experience

- Do you agree with this list?
- Change the list if you don’t.
- Discuss and decide on the four most important attributes you believe that people need to be a strong leader.
- Write down your characteristics and explain your reasons for choosing them.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation or a series of posters about the four characteristics that you have decided on.
- Give examples of strong leaders identified by your research and the specific characteristics which made them strong leaders.
- How do you think good leadership would assist survival in a POW camp?

Individual research: ‘Weary’ Dunlop

- Visit the following weblinks on ‘Weary’ Dunlop:
  - www.abc.net.au/schoolstv/australians/dunlop.htm
  - home.vicnet.net.au/~a23mgb/f_hist/ww2un_his.htm

- Create a timeline of Weary’s life and a list of his achievements.
- Decide on four characteristics that he possessed that helped him be a good leader.
- Present your findings to the other members of your group or class.
Reflection

This section contains some graphic material dealing with the real horrors of war. It is natural to be affected by what you hear.

- Do you think it would be difficult for veterans to speak candidly about their POW experiences? Why or why not?
- Why do you think it is important for future generations to hear and understand what happened to POWs?
- Would former POWs be more likely to speak to their children, their grandchildren or a professional interviewer about their experiences? Why?
- Create a warning that prepares students for what they hear during this section of interviews.

Singapore, c. 1945. Five Australian former prisoners of war of the Japanese relax with cups of tea and a newspaper after the Japanese surrender. Their thin bodies show the physical effects of captivity.
Despair, hope, secrets & escape

“We never had any other thought but to get out tonight” — Geoff Cornish

A H Comber
Rolling down to the working face, the tunnel Stalag Luft III
Shropshire and London 1945
Pen and ink, brush and ink wash pencil on paper
19 x 30.48 cm
Australian War Memorial (ART34781.015)
**Teachers’ Information**

**Background**

Well you knew bloody well you weren't going to be home by Christmas, yet you'd say, 'I'll be home by next Christmas.' When you realised, when you knew in your own heart there was no way in the world that that was going to happen. But you'd still live in the hope and the belief that maybe you would be. So it's just a self-conning act. – Rowley Richards

Hope is vital element in the survival of people in extreme situations. In this DVD chapter there are stories of hope and of POWs giving up hope.

As background preparation students should start a mind map with the word 'hope'. As they view the DVD they can progressively add to the mind map.

When it is complete, the mind map can be used as the starting point for a piece of creative writing. The topic should be ‘Hope when all seems lost’. Students can be encouraged to use whichever format they choose, but they should use as many of the words from the mind map as they can.

**DVD Chapter 7 – Despair, hope, secrets and escape**

**Summary**

Death could occur from a number of causes in prison camps, including from despair. In the DVD you will hear POW survivors speak of the power of hope; of faith in one’s future. They reveal the things that gave them hope – from hidden, makeshift radios to escape plans. We learn a little of the Great Escape from Stalag III and discover how impossible it was to escape from the Japanese POW camps in Southeast Asia.

Duration: 11 minutes 49 seconds

*The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM*
Take up the stories
Stories 1 & 2

Rowley Richards’ story
I had always believed that there was a will to live, and if that will to live disappeared, well, you died.

Interpretation and analysis
- Explain what you think Captain Rowley Richards means by ‘the will to live’?
- Does he have particular experience or qualifications to back his assertion?

James Ling’s story
I wouldn’t have the guts to do it.

Discussion for senior students
- Listen to James Ling’s story about his mate who refused to eat his rice.
- Why does James Ling originally say that prisoners threatening to give up were called cowards and later say that doing so ‘took guts’?
- As a class, debate the nature of courage. In those circumstances, was it braver to decide to die or to continue facing the horrors of imprisonment? Justify your arguments.

Discussion and analysis
These two interviews deal with the topic of prisoners just giving up and dying.

James Ling uses the term ‘point the bone at yourself’.

- Do you think it’s possible that people can just decide to die?
- What evidence do these men give?
- What circumstances would make people act like this?

- Discuss the issue in small groups. Can you come to an agreement?

- This is a very sensitive subject. As a topic it is difficult for both interviewers and interviewees. Is it important for historians to deal with these sensitive topics or should they be left unrecorded?

- Would our historical understanding be different if these topics weren’t covered?

- What ethical issues do these reports raise?

Postcard sent home by Rowley Richards while he was a POW of the Japanese. Private collection.
A lot of people that were prisoners of war were happy to be prisoners of war. They weren't going to jeopardise their lives…. When you’re with people for a long time you can practically tell whether a person is going to sit or whether a person is going to try to escape. It’s the way they go about things. And also, there’s only certain people that you could guarantee may have a chance of getting back. A lot of people can’t stand hardship when it really gets hard.

Ron Wall’s story

When you're with people for a long time you can practically tell whether a person is going to sit or whether a person is going to try to escape. It’s the way they go about things. And also, there’s only certain people that you could guarantee may have a chance of getting back. A lot of people can’t stand hardship when it really gets hard.

Robert Parker’s story

If there was any dead… they didn’t give you so much food.

- Why do you suppose Private Robert Parker tells his gruesome story with humour?
- What does this story tell us about conditions in the POW camps in Korea?
- Compare the way Robert Parker conveys the horror of his situation with some of the other interviewees. Does his jocular manner trivialise the point or make it more powerful? Is his manner possibly a reflection of his personal way of coping?

Compare Ron Wall’s story with the others in this topic. Discuss the following questions.

- What evidence is there that Australian prisoners fell into two broad groups, those that accepted their capture and those who did not?
- As you listen to the POW accounts in this chapter of the DVD, try and find evidence to support the above generalisation.
- Do you think your findings will be affected by the fact that you are only hearing the viewpoint of survivors?
- Present your conclusions to the class.
- Devise a questionnaire that would help predict who might be an ‘escaper’ or a ‘stayer’?
- Ask your family or friends to complete the questionnaire. What do your results tell you?
Take up the stories
Stories 5, 6 & 7

Geoff Cornish's story
We never had any other thought but to get out tonight... and that was the overriding consideration and motivating force all of the time.

- Compare Geoff Cornish’s motivating force as he describes it here with Rowley Richards’s conviction that he would be home by Christmas.
- What difference, if any, did it make that Geoff Cornish was a prisoner of the Germans while Rowley Richards was a prisoner of the Japanese?
- Do you think rank or education contributed to the optimistic attitude of these two men, or do you think that their personalities played a more important part? Make a judgement after you have watched their interviews on the DVD.

Bert Beecham’s story
Well what was the point? You were in the jungle, you had nowhere to go, you had no food to take with you; you had nothin’ to ward off malaria, you can get dysentery and die, get diarrhoea and die.

- Make a judgement after you have watched their interviews on the DVD.

Bill Fordyce's story
Listen to Flight Lieutenant Horace ‘Bill’ Fordyce’s account of escaping from Stalag Luft III. This escape has been immortalised in the film The Great Escape.

Discussion
Debate the idea that escapes like this were really a waste of time, strength and resources.

Was the ‘great escape’ a success or failure?

Partner or small group task
- What are the varying perspectives on Beecham’s assertion that it was safer to stay where you were than to escape from Japanese POW camps?
- How different was the experience of escaping in Asia compared to Europe?

A H Comber
At the foot of the shaft of tunnel `Dick’ the carpenters shop
Shropshire and London 1945
Pen and ink, brush and ink wash, pencil on paper
20.3 cm x 26.6 cm
Australian War Memorial (ART34781.018)
‘To escape or not to escape, that is the question...’

Create a grid table, listing all the reasons for and against making an escape attempt from a POW camp. Use examples from the DVD to justify your answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for</th>
<th>Escape attempt</th>
<th>No escape attempt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons against</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you have completed your grid, recommend either an escape attempt or not and write a conclusion using your findings.
Worksheet 2

The making of an escape map

- Go to the Australian War Memorial website: blog.awm.gov.au/awm/2008/07/09/how-to-make-a-pow-escape-map/.
- This site shows how the POWs in Germany were able to print copies of the same escape map using very simple materials.
- Using the instructions provided on the site, create your own escape map, tracing your escape route from school to your home.
- Design your route to be both fast and safe ensuring that you identify any points of potential danger such as main roads, the areas where teachers patrol etc.
- Compare your maps. Whose map was the most detailed? Whose map was the easiest to follow?
Worksheet 3

Europe or South-East Asia?
Using either a table format or a Venn diagram format, compare and contrast conditions in Europe and South-East Asia for prisoners of war trying to escape.

Choose one of the POW camps in Europe or South-East Asia. List all the steps that you would need to take to get from your camp to safety. Identify landscapes and areas that are hostile or potentially dangerous.

What would you need to take with you?

Extension task: Radios

- Develop a list of reasons why radios were so important and so carefully protected by POWs.
- Draw up a list of available items that could be found in POW camps to help build radios. Get together as many of these items, or similar, that you can find, and try and create some sort of primitive radio.
- What skills do you need to build it?
- Does the class have all these skills?
- How can you get around any skills you lack?
- Analyse the problem solving you had to undertake to create the radio.
- How does this help you understand the ingenuity of the POWs?
Red Cross Parcels
Letters from Home

One of the things that gave POWs in the Second World War hope was when they were permitted to send an occasional message home to their families, through the Red Cross. The messages were contained on a form, like the one below, leaving only a few lines for a personal note.

Worksheet 4

Courtesy AWM
Messages to and from Home

Family members who replied to POW correspondence also had to be careful in their letters that they did not write about anything that could cause the POWs trouble with their captors or write anything that may upset the POWs.

What kinds of things could you tell a POW family member?

Is there a way in which either side could secretly pass information or news to each other?

- What would be the most important things a POW could say in these messages to their family, or the family to their POW?
- Devise your own form for POWs to send messages home.
- Divide the class into two equal groups. The members of one group are prisoners. Each one writes their message to their family on the form and gives it to the other group.
- The other group are family members. Each one replies to a POW.
- Share the notes with the class.

Melbourne, Vic. 1945. The first batch of prisoners of war released from Japanese prison camps were brought to 115th Military Hospital (Heidelberg) for medical examination before proceeding on leave. Shown, general scene in the hospital ward as the 8th Division ex-prisoners of war and their families meet again.
Red Cross Parcels

One thing that gave the prisoners hope and a sense of contact with loved ones at home was the Red Cross parcels that were shipped to Europe and Asia and then dropped near the POW camps. Many lives were saved thanks to the timely arrival of the parcels, though in Southeast Asia, the Japanese captors were known to keep the parcels for their own officers or not distribute them to the POWs.

Some of the items included in Red Cross parcels were:
- Food such as chocolate, oatmeal, biscuits, sardines and dried fruit;
- Drugs and medical supplies;
- Clothing, including overcoats for those in German POW camps;
- Army boots;
- Boot repair kits;
- Toiletries;
- Cigarettes;
- Books and recreational supplies; and
- Religious books and materials.

Why were these parcels so important to the prisoners?

If you were a prisoner of war, what items would you most need to keep your spirits up and help you to survive in captivity?

Make a list of items that you would place in a Red Cross parcel in the 21st Century.
Review

- Write a short story using the incidents described in Chapter 7 of the DVD. Select one of the characters referred to in this topic and assume the identity of that person.
- Write your story in the first person, making sure that you stick to the facts as referred to in this chapter of the DVD.
- Make sure that you appropriately articulate the considered feelings, emotions and thoughts of your chosen character.
- Write about 800 words.

Reflection

That mateship is what got us home
– Francis ‘Banjo’ Binstead

- Critically evaluate the historical accuracy of this statement after reading the accounts presented in this topic.

Sydney, NSW. 1945. Members of 8th Division, ex-POWs of the Japanese, arrived at Rose Bay from Singapore by Catalina flying boats. Shown, Driver R. P. Coleman and Private A. Fleckone having their first hot bath in four years.
The end of the war, coming home & reflection

‘It was one of the great feelings of life’ – Bill Young

Sydney, NSW 1945. Sergeant Joe Elliott, 6 Division Cavalry Regiment, greets his brother Sergeant Frank Elliott, 8th Division Army Service Corps on the gangway of the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Striker. The latter had just arrived with other Allied ex prisoners of war from Japanese prisoner of war camps.
Partner task

The end of the Second World War is a hugely significant event in the 20th century. Discuss with your partner any significant events that occurred in the 20th century.

- Make a list, then discuss your findings as a class.

Research and discussion

- Research the events that led to the end of the Second World War in Europe and the end of the Second World War in the Pacific.
- Make a chart showing the chronology of events.
- Find out what you can about any significant changes that occurred in Australia while servicemen and women were away.

Comprehension and analysis

- As you listen to the accounts in this chapter of the DVD, develop a list of reasons and experiences that help you understand how war and imprisonment can lead to diverse views among returning POWs.

Background

**Partner task**

- The end of the Second World War is a hugely significant event in the 20th century. Discuss with your partner any significant events that occurred in the 20th century.

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**Research and discussion**

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**Comprehension and analysis**

- As you listen to the accounts in this chapter of the DVD, develop a list of reasons and experiences that help you understand how war and imprisonment can lead to diverse views among returning POWs.

**DVD Chapter 8 – The end of the war, coming home and reflection**

**Summary**

This chapter explores the various ways in which the war ended for POWs – from the terrible forced march through a German winter to the crossing of the Freedom Bridge from North Korea to South Korea. It investigates the feeling freedom produced in these men and women as they faced a bewildering and changed world. Coming home would never be easy and the interviewees speak frankly of the difficulties they faced in returning to ‘normal’ life. Finally, a select few of our interviewees reflect on their entire POW experience, perhaps surprisingly, finding much to be grateful for.

**Duration 14 minutes 46 seconds**

*The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM.*
Take up the stories
Stories 1, 2 & 3

Alex Kerr's story

There were many instances of kindnesses by Germans to prisoners ... but then there were also many instances of absolute cruelty and murderous intent.

Class discussion

Warrant Officer Alexander Kerr describes his experience of being marched out of his POW camp in Germany after surviving four years of imprisonment.

- Discuss how the German officers could differ so greatly in their treatment of the POWs.

Ray Corbett's story

And then suddenly, like taking a wet swimming suit off, everything just goes.

- What does Raphael Corbett mean when describing the end of the war?
- What does the metaphor 'wet swimsuit' stand for?
- Do you think it is a good image?
- What sensory feelings does the image invoke?
- Can you think of another metaphor to use in this situation?
- As you hear other accounts of the impact of the war ending on prisoners, consider how valid Corbett's comment is.

Pat Darling's story

He said, 'Where are the Australian nurses?' and we laughed and said 'We're here! Cause we were dressed as best as we could be.'

- Locate Palembang on a map. What does this tell you about the climate the Australian nurses were held in?
- Research the conditions endured by the Australian nurses. You can get started by looking at the following surviving four years of imprisonment. website: www.ww2australia.gov.au/behindwire/found.html.

Read this extract from Pat Darling's interview about returning to Singapore after being freed.

Of the 65 who were on the ship, on the Vyner Brooke, 24 of us came home, and of course, when we arrived at Singapore and we were greeted by the Red Cross people with cups of tea and by a lot of the war correspondents and... we were taken to St Patrick's...

We arrived there and you know, it was all so unbelievable. I shall never forget having a wonderful hot shower. I think it's the best shower I've ever had in my life and toothbrushes and toothpaste, much better than a bit of coconut husk and a bit of charcoal, and the nurses who hadn't known us beforehand found us a little bit surprising I think, because we were in such high spirits because they had been given lectures on the way over, which was fair enough, and they were told that there was a possibility that we would be resentful and uncooperative and sullen and all the rest of it, but instead of which we were flying high, higher than kites could fly, and in terribly high spirits.

- How does Captain Janet 'Pat' Darling's account of her return compare with that of the men when they returned? How would you explain the differences?
- Dr Harry Windsor, who first saw the surviving nurses, commented that the captors of the women 'should be forthwith slowly and painfully butchered'. Why do you think he said something like that? Do you agree with this statement?
- What impact do you think gender played in the treatment of Pat Darling and the other Australian women? Were cultural stereotypes of the role of women in society important in this?

Reporting

You are a radio reporter covering the end of the Second World War for ABC radio.

- As Alex Kerr and Ray Corbett emerge from their imprisonment, you have the opportunity to briefly interview them.
- Prepare two or three questions for them and write down the responses you think they would give.
- Record the interview with some classmates.
Worksheet 1

Analysing the Photographs

Look at the two photographs below and read the captions.

September, 1941. Group portrait of the nursing staff of 2/13th Australian General Hospital.

September 1945, Singapore. Nurses from 2/10th and 2/13th Australian General Hospital. They wear their original uniforms, incomplete and oil-stained.
Worksheet 1

Analysing the Photographs

What can we learn from these photographs about the experiences of these women? Look at them again and then answer the following questions.

1. What differences can you identify between the photographs?

2. What do you think happened before each photograph was taken?

3. What do you think happened after each photograph was taken?

4. What might be happening outside each photograph?

5. What can you learn by looking at the faces of the nurses in both photographs, the condition of their clothing and their surroundings?

   Photo 1
   
   Photo 2

6. Examine each photograph carefully. What small details can you see that were not obvious at first glance?

7. Photo 1 was taken before their imprisonment and Photo 2 after, yet in both photographs, many of the nurses are smiling. Why do you think this might be?
Take up the stories
Story 4

Maric ‘Eddie’ Gilbert’s story

Terrible nightmares where I was back in the camp again and I experienced all sorts of things and you know, I’d wake up screaming or amongst sweat or something, but they were difficult. But as I might have indicated earlier I was strongly resolved to get back into civilian life and to find a wife and to start a family... I marched [on Anzac Day] the first year I came home, 1946, it was the natural thing to do and have the cheering thousands, you know, first Anzac Day after the war then. But at the end of it I thought, ‘This is not for me. I don’t really enjoy this adulation, I don’t really like it.’ I never marched again, never marched again. I’ve tended to look on Anzac Day; it may be wrongly, as a glorification of war.

Classroom discussion
- In Maric Gilbert’s view, Anzac Day is just a ‘glorification of war’. Explain why you think he feels this way.

Research project
- Go to the two websites listed below and research the history of Anzac Day:
  www.dva.gov.au/commemorations/commemorative_events/anzac_day/
- Do you think the websites accurately portray Anzac Day in light of the stories of Australian POWs you have heard on this chapter of the DVD?
- How do you think attitudes to Anzac Day have changed over time?

Debate
‘Anzac Day is a glorification of war.’ As a class, have an informal debate, putting forward arguments for and against this statement.

Members of the party of Australian prisoners of war (POWs) on Ambon, were on the wharf to welcome the Allied relief ships. Some 540 POWs died during their three and a half years in captivity through the systematic starvation and brutality of the Japanese jailers. Nearly all of the 123 releases were suffering from beri-beri, dysentery and ulcers. Many were too weak to stand up.
Take up the stories
Stories 4, 5 & 6

Ray Parkin's story

That’s the one thing we wouldn’t believe.

- List the three technological advances Petty Officer Ray Parkin heard about after the war ended. Which one did he have the most trouble believing?
- Try to speak to your grandparents (or great-grandparents) about life before the biro was invented.
- Ask them about having to constantly refill the fountain pen.
- What do these senior citizens now make of the ipod, computer technology, or the iphone?
- Ask them and report back.

Bill Young's story

That was the most perfect night.

Individual assignment

- Review William Young’s recollection of his ‘perfect night’.
- What does ‘peace’ mean? When war ends does peace begin? How is peacetime for ex POWs?
- Describe your idea of a perfect, peaceful moment.
- Bill Young, after more than three years as a prisoner of war, has been asked to write the story of his incarceration.
- Write the introduction to his book My War Years.
- Write about 600 words.

James Ling’s story

We didn’t know how we were going to be greeted.

We were naturally wildly excited, but a little apprehensive, and that was very definite because we didn’t know how we were going to be greeted. Our first thoughts were, we surrendered, and nobody would want to talk to us. These other people had been in a war for three and a half years, all the people that we knew, and we really were apprehensive. It wasn’t talked about publicly, but amongst ourselves we were all feeling much the same way. We just wondered whether we would be welcomed back to the country that was our home.

Focus questions

- Why was James Ling apprehensive about coming home?
- List his fears and explain what these fears reflect about a society’s views on how men at war should behave.
- Why do you think that many prisoners of war were unsure of their welcome home?
- Give examples of attitudes expressed by some of the POWs interviewed and justify your answers.
- You are a reporter for a newspaper and you are asked to interview James Ling after his homecoming. Write an article.
Ron Wall’s story

When we came out of the prisoner camp into England we were mental. There was no way in the world that we could sit down and talk to a civilian. We didn’t know – they started talking about what they went through – we just got bored and we’d turn and walk away.

Writing exercise

- Think of a time when you might have had trouble relating to someone.
- Take this memory and Ron Wall’s words and create a short play where characters speak to each other but cannot hear the other’s words.

Class activity

- Two students role play a situation between a returned POW and a civilian.
- The class listens and then discusses communication and how difficult it might be to relate to someone whose experiences are unimaginable to you.

Tom Pledger's story

Counselling...?
We never had a counsellor. Straight off the boat, discharged and that was it. Nobody worried about it. Go to a doctor, they have got no idea what was wrong. They had no idea what we went through.

Discussion topics

We now understand a lot more about post traumatic stress and how to deal with it.

When Athol ‘Tom’ Pledger returned home the expectation was that soldiers would just put the war behind them and get on with their lives.

- What does this story reveal about the difficulties some POWs must have faced when they returned home?
- What would be an appropriate way to support soldiers like Pledger when they returned home?
- Think about Tom Pledger’s complaint about not getting any counselling as a returned POW. Do you agree with his view that a doctor could not empathise because they could not imagine what the prisoners went through?
- Explain why Pledger was angry with doctors. Do you think he was justified in his anger?
- Do you think ‘not talking about it’ was the best advice for returned POWs?
- Some well-meaning people welcomed the POWs back in unsuitable ways. Explain, for example, why getting former POWs off a boat in Darwin and putting on a dance for them might not have been the best approach for integrating them back into civilian life.
- Research the way POWs would be assimilated back into society today. What processes have changed?
Lessons learned:

I wouldn’t have missed a minute of it

If I had known what I was going into I wouldn’t have had the guts to face up to it but having done it, I wouldn’t have missed a minute of it. What I learnt and, you know, the friendships and all those things are absolutely invaluable. – Rowley Richards

…I have got it, some fellows haven’t, and I think that is the only reason why I am telling you stories today because you were determined that they weren’t going to beat you. And you have got some funny determination thing, now that I am an older man and I think back a little bit, I probably had that determination all the way through. But as long as you rule your determination with gentleness you can fit in society, and that is what I have tried to do.
– Bill Coventry

I think it was a learning period of my life, you learned a lot about life, you learned a lot about the human side of it, you learned a lot that people can put up with a hell of a lot and still stay alive, people can put up with a hell of a lot and still be human to one another. – Fred Skeels

What are the main messages that Rowley Richards, Bill Coventry and Fred Skeels are trying to convey?
**Review**

- List the personal attributes that the prisoners of war showed during their time in captivity and in their lives following their release.

- How does this chapter of the DVD help you understand the difficulty many POWs had settling back into civilian life after the end of the war?

- Design the front page of a national newspaper for the day the Second World War ended in the Pacific, 15 August 1945. Locate some appropriate photos for the front page. Make sure you write an original news story reporting the end of the war and include a separate interview with the Prime Minister of the day. Use A3 paper and display the stories in the classroom.

- Find out as much as you can about the role of nurses during the Second World War. Write a report about their experiences as POWs and illustrate their stories with images you find in your research.

- This is Bill Coventry talking about his release from Changi:

  And the first music that was played over the loud speakers was Don't Fence Me In. Bing Crosby singing Don't Fence Me In. I have always thought that bloke that did that had the most wonderful sense of humour.

  Think about the songs you know that might be appropriate. What would be the first song you'd play to newly released POWs? Justify your choice.

1945 Sister Jess Doyle, of 2/10th Australian General Hospital sitting up in a hospital bed after her release from Belalau, a Japanese prisoner of war camp outside Loebok Linggau, Sumatra. She had been aboard the Vyner Brooke when it was sunk by the Japanese on 14-02-1942 two days out of Singapore.
Worksheet 3

The families at home
What qualities do you think the wives of returning POWs needed?

Explain the role wives might play in helping former POWs to settle back into civilian life.

How might the wives and families of POWs cope with the changes in behaviour displayed by their men?

Create a diary entry for what a wife might write after receiving her first phone call from her husband after his release as a POW and return to Australia.

Imagine that your father has just returned from a prisoner of war camp. After listening to the stories of the men in this chapter of the DVD compose a talk you could give your class about your father's return.

What did you choose to talk about and what elements did you keep private?
Discuss the suggestion that all POWs share a common bond that remains after their release.

Consider the impact freedom and repatriation (coming home) had on POWs. Use the experiences of the men and women interviewed on the DVD and write a list of recommendations on how to deal with repatriating former POWs.

Did soldiers returning from later wars, such as Vietnam, receive better counselling services than those from the Second World War? Research this question and present your findings.

If you were to design a repatriation program for former POWs for a future conflict, what issues would you need to consider?

Yokohama, Japan. 1945. Some Australian ex-prisoners of war (POWs) having their first shower in years as they go through “processing” at the Yokohama shipping docks. Most of these men of the 8th Division were made prisoners after the surrender of Singapore.