

# Using *Australians on the Western Front*

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**The resource and its educational aim** *Australians on the Western Front* has been produced by the Department of Veterans' Affairs as part of the Australian Government's Commemorations program, *Saluting Their Service*. The aim of this education resource is to provide teachers with self-contained classroom-ready materials and teaching strategies to enable exploration of the Australian experience on the Western Front.

**Commemoration** The Western Front 1916-1918 was Australia's bloodiest war experience. In 2006 we commemorate the 90th anniversary of the first battles on the Western Front in which Australians fought. It is important that young people are aware of the nature and significance of that part of our history and heritage. This education resource has been created to achieve that in Australian schools during 2006 and beyond.

**Components** The resource comprises two elements:

- A Teachers' Guidebook, with classroom-ready documents and questions, and suggested teaching strategies, for 12 key aspects of the Australian Western Front experience;
- A CD-ROM containing photographs, artworks and film to complement the print resources for each of the topics, and providing interactive strategies for students to create their own letters, diary, newspaper or film about the Western Front.

**Topics** The 12 topics provide students with resources for studying major aspects of the Australian experience on the Western Front — enlisting, training, travelling to the front, being engaged in trench warfare, being wounded, discovering the allies and the enemy, and finally returning home to a post-war future.

Each topic has a brief historical overview. There is also a set of suggested teaching strategies for using the materials in each unit at different year levels, and the reproducible evidence pages include key questions and classroom activities.

The materials in the resource provide a rich array of primary evidence, both written and illustrated, to encourage a study of the Australian experience on the Western Front. Teachers can use the print materials and show photos or film from the Image and Film Libraries on the CD-ROM to start class discussions about war, who serves in war and what their job might be, where they might sleep and what they might eat, commemorative symbols, war memorials and family history.

**Inquiry methodology** The resource uses an inquiry approach — students are provided with a variety of evidence and information, and they analyse this material to form their own conclusions about the nature of the Australians' experiences.

**A scaffolding approach** The resources, classroom activities and suggested strategies are organised into three distinct levels, representing different year levels: Level 1 (Years 4-7), Level 2 (Years 8-10), and Level 3 (Years 11-12). Teachers can choose which level or levels of resources and activities suit their classes, though they will find that even those at the highest level will still benefit from the scaffolding approach provided by Levels 1 and 2.

**Curriculum outcomes** The materials have been shaped around the History/SOSE (Studies of Society and Environment) curricula in all states and territories, with an emphasis on achieving key learning outcomes. A summary of curriculum links to the key learning outcomes can be seen on pages 6-7.

**Creating a Product** The resource has been developed to allow students to create a product that reflects the knowledge and understanding they gain through their studies. The product that students create, through completion of assignment work, may be a simple Big Book (for Kindergarten – Year 3), or letters, a diary, photograph album, a biography, newspaper report or even a film. As students work through the different topics they are urged to gather information, and use it to develop their final product.

**The relevance of history to today** While this resource is about the Australian experience on the Western Front, teachers may want to use the insights and understanding that are developed through the historical material to have students think about similar concepts today. Why do we go to war? If war exists, who should be sent to fight it? How do governments influence our attitudes? How would we like to behave in combat? What responsibility does society owe to those who go to war? What is the place of our military history and heritage in our sense of national identity? These are all important civic and citizenship concepts that students can explore through an historical frame of reference such as is provided in this resource.

**A warning** This resource is about war and contains many powerful images and written documents. Teachers may find that, while most students will be able to manage the material comfortably, some of the documents could be disturbing for some students. Teachers are urged to carefully preview the material and to adapt the resource to suit their own and their students' needs.