

# TOPIC 11 : Commemoration

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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While World War I was still being fought, communities all over Australia began to commemorate both those who had died overseas and those who had simply enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). In many public schools and other institutions such as banks, Honour Boards were unveiled with some ceremony and usually with patriotic speeches. In smaller localities, these boards were often the only public memorial erected in the district, and they are extremely important heritage items. Everywhere, people needed to express their sense of loss of family and community members, as well as a sense of pride in the achievements of the AIF.

After the war, and sometimes before its end, official town and district memorials were erected. These were usually carved in stone, and of varied design — obelisks, statues of soldiers, memorial arches. Invariably, these memorials contain lists of names of district soldiers who died in service, and often also the names of all those who had enlisted. Many communities also planted trees in the vicinity of these memorials, in memory of local men and women who had died. These war memorials have become the venue for Anzac Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies ever since. Unlike the national war memorial — the Australian War Memorial in Canberra — town and district memorials throughout Australia were built with funds raised by the local population.

Over the years, local museums have acquired military memorabilia from World War I. Collections of letters, medals, pieces of equipment, souvenirs and much else, recall those years when a district sent sometimes hundreds of men to war on the other side of the world, and much can be learnt about the nature of the experience by examining these relics and archives. They provide invaluable links between these communities and those localities along the Western Front where Australians are buried or commemorated.

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## AIMS

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Students at Level 1/2/3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know that a variety of forms of commemoration exist in Australia</li><li>• Understand the meaning and purpose of commemoration</li><li>• Investigate commemoration in a local community</li></ul>
Students at Level 2/3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the nature of commemoration</li><li>• Appreciate the complexity of attitudes and values in commemoration</li></ul>

## CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

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Level 1/2/3	<p>Ask students to imagine that they have been requested to erect a statue to someone or something important in their community. Who or what would the statue be of? What words or symbols would be included on it?</p> <p>Now ask students to imagine somebody seeing that statue for the first time 100 years later. What would the statue and the words tell that person about the society that created it?</p> <p>Students can now look at their own communities, and create a list of commemorations or memorials there — who or what is being commemorated in each case, and what are the values that led to the creation of those memorials.</p>
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A war memorial tower and clock at Kempton, TAS, which was unveiled on 9 November 1922.

To commemorate means to remember and honour people and their actions. It is the way individuals and societies tell others about what is important to them.

There are lots of ways we have commemorated Australian servicemen and women over time.

If you live in an older suburb or town you will almost certainly have a war memorial. It can tell you a lot about the people of the past for whom it was created.



Look at this example.

- ▮ Identify these parts of the memorial — the soldier, list of names of the dead, and any symbols.
- ▮ Why do you think these memorials were built?

AWM H17698

A World War I memorial, unveiled on 15 December 1917, to honour people from the western suburbs of the city of Ipswich, QLD, who had enlisted for the war in that area.



Another place you often see personal memorials or commemorations is in cemeteries. Look at this inscription on a gravestone in Queensland.

In Proud and Loving Memory  
of  
Pte. GEORGE HENRY ANDREWS,  
Killed in Action in France,  
9th June 1917, Aged 28 years.  
And Of  
Pte. BERTIE REGINALD ANDREWS  
Killed in Action in France,  
10th June 1918, Aged 20 years.  
Beloved Sons of  
DAVID and FLEURINE EKSIE ANDREWS  
"Their Name Liveth For Evermore."

- ▮ Are these men actually buried there?
- ▮ Why would the family include their names?
- ▮ What do you think that the family of these men felt about their sons having gone to war and died?

Here is another one.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
OUR DEAR MOTHER  
AMELIA STEVENS  
DIED JAN 14 1921 AGED 63 YEARS  
*THY WILL BE DONE*  
ALSO OUR DEAR BROTHER ARTHUR  
KILLED IN ACTION AT PASHENDALE (sic)  
FRANCE DEC 4 1917  
AGED 26 YEARS.  
*SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE YOU ARE  
SLEEPING ARTHUR, IN A GRAVE WE  
MAY NEVER SEE. MAY SOME TENDER  
HAND IN THAT DISTANT LAND LAY A  
FLOWER ON YOUR GRAVE FOR ME.*

- ▮ Why might this family think that they would never see Arthur's grave?
- ▮ Does this grave help you to understand why memorials were built? Explain your ideas.

Australia has another memorial — to the Unknown Australian Soldier.



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- ▮ What is an 'Unknown Soldier'?
- ▮ Why were some soldiers 'unknown' at the end of the war?
- ▮ Why might the people of a nation want to have a tomb of an Unknown Soldier?

Look at this document on the death of an Australian soldier:

Date: 2 May 1917

Evidence: 2nd Lieut L L Coulsen, 46th Battalion AIF states:

On the night of 10th August 1916, I was Sergeant in charge of a covering party in the front line of trench at Pozzières. At 10.30 pm the order to withdraw was given. During the withdrawal a shell exploded amongst three men. After withdrawal a roll call was made and Pte Drosen who had been a member of the party was missing. I immediately made a search in the company with two other men in the vicinity of the explosion and found a trunk of a body which was still warm and quivering. There was nothing on the trunk which could establish identity, but one of the three men mentioned above, Pte Clark, H., at present away from the Unit, told me at the time that he was speaking to Pte Drosen when the shell exploded. I had the trunk buried 48 hours later. The trunk was that of a man of the build of Pte Drosen.

(AWM, Red Cross Wounded and Missing Files)

- ▮ How does it help you understand why there were so many bodies of unknown soldiers?

In 1993 the remains of an unknown Australian soldier were brought to Canberra. Here are the words that were spoken at the internment ceremony at the Australian War Memorial on 11 November 1993. Read this eulogy and answer the questions that follow.

We do not know this Australian's name and we never will.

We do not know his rank or his battalion. We do not know where he was born, nor precisely how and when he died. We do not know where in Australia he had made his home or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe. We do not know his age or his circumstances — whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to become a soldier; what religion, if he had a religion; if he was married or single. We do not know who loved him or whom he loved. If he had children we do not know who they are. His family is lost to us as he was lost to them. We will never know who this Australian was.

Yet he has always been among those whom we have honoured. We know that he was one of the 45,000 Australians who died on the Western Front. One of the 416,000 Australians who volunteered for service in the First World War. One of the 324,000 Australians who served overseas in that war and one of the 60,000 Australians who died on foreign soil. One of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century.

He is all of them. And he is one of us.

This Australia and the Australia he knew are like foreign countries. The tide of events since he died has been so dramatic, so vast and all-consuming, a world has been created beyond the reach of his imagination.

He may have been one of those who believed that the Great War would be an adventure too grand to miss. He may have felt that he would never live down the shame of not going. But the chances are he went for no other reason than that he believed it was the duty he owed his country and his King.

Because the Great War was a mad, brutal, awful struggle, distinguished more often than not by military and political incompetence; because the waste of human life was so terrible that some said victory was scarcely discernible from defeat; and because the war which was supposed to end all wars in fact sowed the seeds of a second even more terrible war — we might think this Unknown Soldier died in vain.

But, in honouring our war dead, as we always have and as we do today, we declare that this is not true. For out of the war came a lesson which transcended the horror and tragedy and the inexcusable folly. It was a lesson about ordinary people — and the

lesson was that they were not ordinary. On all sides they were the heroes of that war; not the generals and the politicians but the soldiers and sailors and nurses — those who taught us to endure hardship, to show courage, to be bold as well as resilient, to believe in ourselves, to stick together.

The Unknown Australian Soldier whom we are interring today was one of those who, by his deeds, proved that real nobility and grandeur belongs, not to empires and nations, but to the people on whom they, in the last resort, always depend.

That is surely at the heart of the ANZAC story, the Australian legend which emerged from the war. It is a legend not of sweeping military victories so much as triumphs against the odds, of courage and ingenuity in adversity. It is a legend of free and independent spirits whose discipline derived less from military formalities and customs than from the bonds of mateship and the demands of necessity. It is a democratic tradition, the tradition in which Australians have gone to war ever since.

This Unknown Australian is not interred here to glorify war over peace; or to assert a soldier's character above a civilian's; or one race or one nation or one religion above another; or men above women; or the war in which he fought and died above any other war; or one generation above any that has been or will come later.

The Unknown Soldier honours the memory of all those men and women who laid down their lives for Australia. His tomb is a reminder of what we have lost in war and what we have gained.

We have lost more than 100,000 lives, and with them all their love of this country and all their hope and energy.

We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and, with it, a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian.

It is not too much to hope, therefore, that this Unknown Australian Soldier might continue to serve his country — he might enshrine a nation's love of peace and remind us that, in the sacrifice of the men and women whose names are recorded here, there is faith enough for all of us.

The Hon P J Keating MP  
Prime Minister of Australia

- ▮ How does former Prime Minister Keating make this speech inclusive of all Australians?
- ▮ What does he say is the great lesson or message that Australia has from its First World War soldiers?
- ▮ How does he make the Unknown Soldier representative of all servicemen and women?
- ▮ How does he take the man beyond that war?
- ▮ Is this speech a good summary of the Australians' experience? Look at each paragraph and decide if you think, on the basis of your study of this resource, that the description is accurate.

Families of servicemen and women who died or were killed during the war received memorial scrolls, issued by the King. Look at the words of this scroll.



AWM REL30213

- ▮ How do you think the families of the dead man or woman would respond to these words? Explain your reasons.

The next of kin of the dead were asked to provide inscriptions for the headstones of their soldiers buried in war cemeteries on the Western Front. These inscriptions can tell us a lot about the feelings, attitudes and values of the relatives at that time.

Look at these inscriptions, and decide what they tell you about the soldier, and his family's response to his death in war. See if you can find these ideas, values or attitudes in the inscriptions.

- BITTERNESS
- BRAVERY
- CIVIL DUTY
- DIVISION
- FAITH
- FAMILY
- LONELINESS
- LOSS
- LOVE
- MATESHIP
- MEMORY
- NATIONAL IDENTITY
- PATRIOTISM
- PEER PRESSURE
- PRIDE
- RELIGION
- SACRIFICE
- SELF-SACRIFICE
- SHAME

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HE DIED FOR AUSTRALIA  
HIS NATIVE LAND  
GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN  
Private E. A. Newton, 26th Battalion, 22.4.1917  
(Aged 24) (France)

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BELOVED ONLY SON  
OF P. & S. O'SHANNASSY  
OF HASTINGS  
AN ANZAC  
Private Alan O'Shannassy, 58th Battalion, 15.7.1916  
(Aged 21) (France)

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ALSO IN MEMORY OF HIS BROTHER  
6679 PRIVATE G. W. JACOB  
50TH BATTALION 25.9.1917  
(DIED AT SEA FROM GALLIPOLI)  
Private J.G. Jacob, 50th Battalion, 7.7.1918  
(Aged 22) (France)

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I GAVE MY SON  
HE GAVE ALL HIS LIFE  
FOR AUSTRALIA AND EMPIRE  
Private I.D. Hart, 60th Battalion, 27.11.1916  
(Aged 30) (France)

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GAVE HIS LIFE  
TO BRING IN  
WOUNDED COMRADE  
DEEPLY MOURNED  
Private L.C. McMurdo, 31st Battalion, 26.9.1917  
(Aged 17) (France)

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FOR GOD, FOR KING, FOR COUNTRY  
Corporal H.G. Rourke,  
56th Battalion, 20.7.1916  
(Aged 33) (France)

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HE FOUGHT AND DIED  
FOR HIS WIFE AND LITTLE SON  
AND TO SAVE HIS COUNTRY  
Private C.H. Dunstan, 12th Battalion, 17.4.1918  
(Age unknown) (France)

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A GOOD SON, A GOOD BROTHER  
AND GOOD SOLDIER  
Private J. Tarrant, 30th Battalion, 29.9.1918  
(Aged 28) (France)

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DEEPLY LOVED DEEPLY MOURNED  
YOUNGEST OF  
FOUR SOLDIER BROTHERS  
Private W. H. Moore, 39th Battalion, 10.9.1918  
(Aged 25) (France)

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WITH CHRIST  
WHICH IS FAR BETTER  
Lieutenant H. Q. Ridley, 48th Battalion, 12.10.1917  
(Aged 34) (Belgium)

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HE HEARD THE DISTANT COOEE  
OF HIS MATES ACROSS THE SEA  
Private W.C. Durrant, 25th Battalion, 17.7.1918  
(Aged 40) (France)

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MY ONLY CHILD DIES  
THE EMPIRE LIVES  
A LONELY MOTHER MOURNS  
Private W. H. Hicks, 53rd Battalion, 8.12.1916  
(Age unknown) (France)

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ONLY THOSE  
WHO HAVE LOVED AND LOST  
CAN UNDERSTAND  
WAR'S BITTER COST  
Gunner T. Pentney, Field Artillery, 12.9.1918  
(Aged 39) (France)

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REST HERE IN PEACE  
YOUR PARENTS' HEARTS  
ARE BROKEN  
MUM AND DAD  
Private H. R. Barron, 3rd Battalion, 9.4.1917  
(Aged 19) (France)

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LOVING DADDY OF KENNETH,  
MARJORIE AND JOYCE  
Lieutenant M.A. McGuire, 11th Battalion, 19.7.1918  
(Aged 32) (France)

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DURING THE GREAT WAR  
SHE GAVE HER LIFE  
FOR SICK AND WOUNDED  
AT ROUEN  
Louisa Riggall, Australian Red Cross, 31.8.1918  
(Age unknown) (France)

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GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN  
Sister H. M. Knox, Australian Army Nursing Service,  
17.2.1917  
(Aged 33) (France)

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I MUST GO  
I AM ASHAMED TO BE SEEN  
WITHOUT A SOLDIER'S UNIFORM  
Private A. K. Mallyon, 48th Battalion, 3.5.1918,  
(Age unknown) (France)

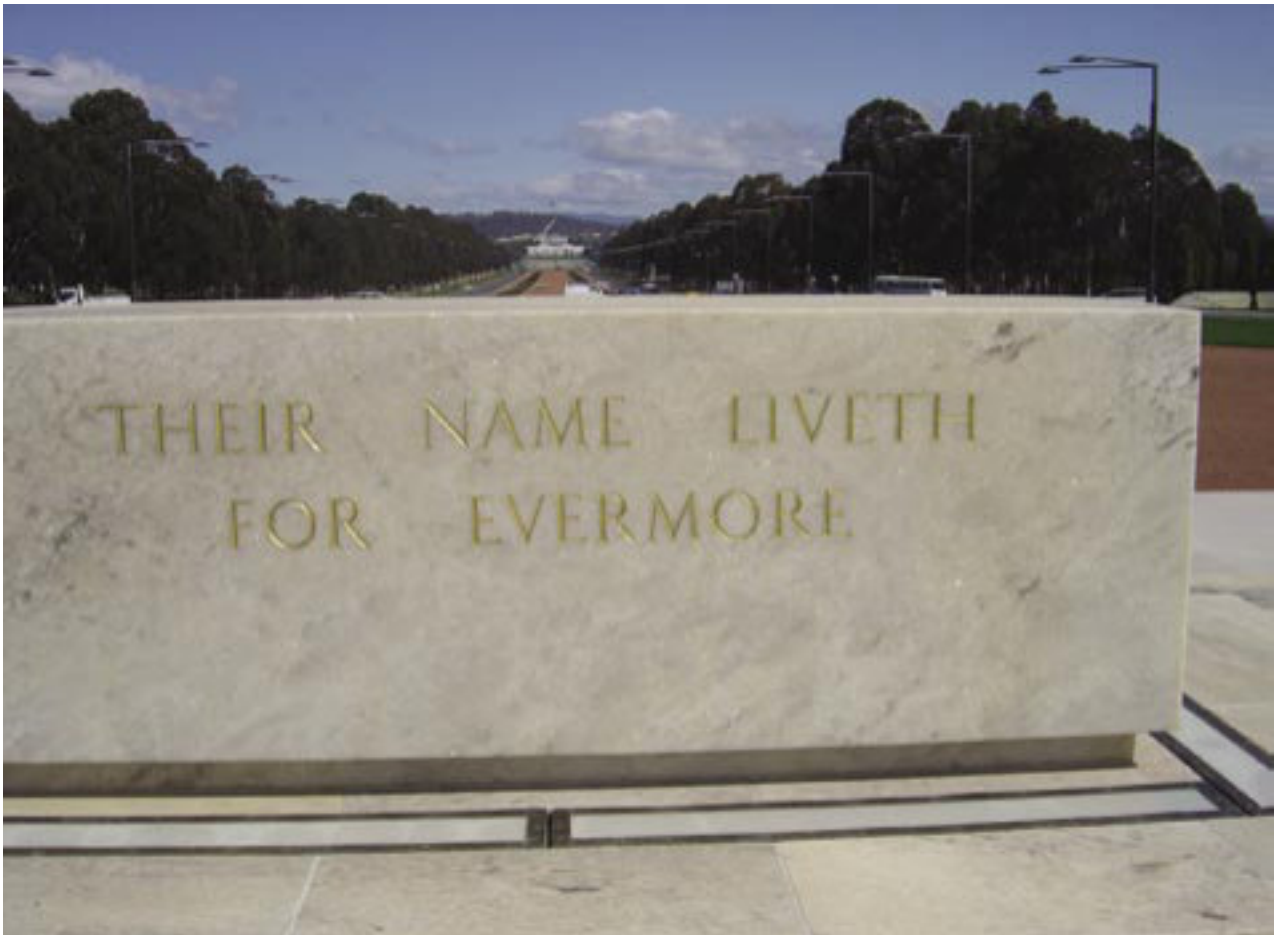
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IT IS MEN  
OF MY AGE AND SINGLE  
WHO ARE EXPECTED  
TO DO THEIR DUTY  
Private W. H. Rickard, 28th Battalion, 4.10.1917  
(Aged 25) (Belgium)

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- 10 On 11 November each year, Remembrance Day, many people observe one minute's silence. If you observe that silence this year, what will your thoughts be about Australians on the Western Front?

A great national commemorative place is the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Outside the Memorial is this engraved stone block:



Courtesy of Robert Lewis

1. 'Their Name Liveth For Evermore'. Does it? Should it? Explain your views.