



Australian War Memorial Remembrance Day Souvenir

teacher, Geoff Lyon, asked the question 'Is it time to forget Remembrance'? As Lyon noted, the question was a provocative and controversial one, likely to cause some outrage – imagine the Australian equivalent which would, of course, be Anzac Day. Lyon argues that the best, that is, most motivating inquiry questions, are the tough ones, and I find it hard to disagree. His approach to Remembrance Day is to find out what existing knowledge students have via a preliminary questionnaire with a stimulating mix of serious and humorous questions such as this distinctly 'tongue-in-cheek' one: 'If we had lost to Hitler, we would now be speaking German'. Should we therefore 'remember' those who defeated Napoleon, without whom we would be speaking French? Which could be put more bluntly: just when do we stop (gratefully) 'remembering'? Students then apply de Bono's Six Thinking Hats to the enquiry question, for example, the White Hat when searching for relevant information.

There are a range of excellent resources available for teachers interested in teaching about Remembrance Day and/or the broader theme of 'remembrance'. Two websites are particularly valuable:

The Australian War Memorial

www.awm.gov.au > Remembrance > Remembrance Day

The eulogy delivered by Paul Keating, which starts with the words 'We do not know this Australian's name and we never will', can be downloaded. The poems particularly associated with Remembrance Day, *In Flanders Field*, and *For the Fallen*, can be found here as well as many photographs and an explanation of the key rituals of the Remembrance Day ceremony.

The Shrine

www.shrine.org

A free, downloadable teacher manual, *Why remember? Understanding Remembrance Day*, contains background information and a range of activities for all year levels.

For a broader approach to Remembrance/remembrance, it is hard to think of a better way to start than the small French town of Villers-Bretonneux, where 1200 Australian soldiers died in

April 1918 defending the then village. The locals have famously never forgotten the sacrifice and images of Australia decorate the town. In every classroom in L'Ecole Victoria are the words 'Do not forget Australia'.

The town often features in news stories on Anzac Day and at the webpage below, there is a map of the area with links to stories, audio and video.

http://www.abc.net.au/news/events/anzacday2008/vb_map.htm is a good place to consider some questions such as Why do we remember?, What do we remember? and How do we remember?

Or we could, perhaps, start with some immortal words from *1066 and All That*: 'History is not what you thought. It is what you can remember.'

Art and War Influence Each Other

Jacqueline Dinan, co-Author of *A Woman's War*, Australian historical fiction that features discussion on the conscription debate and propaganda materials.

The conscription debate of World War I generated the communication of many messages, known as 'propaganda', to the people of Australia so as to shape their opinions and subsequent actions. Visual messages with impactful phrases were very effective and they inspired the work of artists, writers and the skills of printers.

Propaganda materials such as posters, postcards, newspapers, banners, leaflets and films conveyed messages that were intended to influence men's ideas and stir emotions such as guilt and shame or to pressure their sense of responsibility and 'mate ship'. The materials were mainly targeted at men of fighting age, pushing them to enlist. Some materials appealed to mothers to encourage their sons and husbands to go to war to make the future safe. Some posters were successful in swaying actions in the areas of anti-war/peace, discouraged compulsory enlistment, buying bonds, making

people conserve resources and voting 'yes' or 'no' in a referendum.

Posters, an art form that was hand painted or sketched, then printed, were very popular because they could be seen on poles and walls by crowds of passing people. Highly visual, they still had emotional impact on those who may not have been able to read a newspaper. Posters were also a quick way to advertise an up and coming event, such as a mass rally. Public speakers at rallies often stood in front of banners that carried images and insightful wording. Leaflets were also handed out at these events.

Postcards provided an effective way to gain the attention and communicate an opinion directly to a family member or friend.

Newspapers were a way of conveying a 'mass' propaganda message via an article or poem. As an example, the poem, *The Blood Vote* became famous as anti-conscription propaganda. Print media was a useful way to present one side of an issue. Propaganda films at cinemas were a relatively modern artistic form and often carried a political overtone, particularly in the height of the conscription debate.

The highly debatable and controversial topic of conscription 'blew up' in Australia, after Britain suffered huge losses on The Somme and called throughout its Commonwealth for more men. The Prime Minister of Australia at the time, William (Billy) Hughes, known as 'The Little Digger', in wanting to support the call of the 'Motherland', created a split in the Labour Party. He was able, under the Defence Act, to conscript men, but only for service in Australia, not overseas. The current constitution already gave the government the power to introduce conscription, but Hughes wanted a national opinion poll on the issue.

In the lead up to the 1st referendum, he introduced under the War Precautions Act a ruling against anti conscription material. Lobbying strongly for a 'No' vote were the Trade Unions and the Catholic Archbishop, Dr Daniel Mannix.

Hughes held the first referendum, trusting the result would sway members of the Senate, however on October 28, 1916 Australian's voted 51% against the introduction of compulsory service. At a second referendum, on December 11, 1917, Hughes expecting the nation would take a difference stance received a result of 54% of Australians at home and those fighting in the trenches against conscription. The propaganda material lobbying either side of the debate was obviously very effective. The event of war brought about inspiration for art and the art influenced the recruitment of Australia's forces.



LEFT: Image of an Australian World War One recruiting poster, by B E Pike, courtesy of the Australian War Memorial. (Copyright the A.W.M.)

BELOW: The Australian Labour party generated this poster as part of its push to discourage people to support Australia' supply of more 'cannon fodder' to the war in Europe.



LEFT: This poster by Harry J Weston appeals to a man's sense of Australian spirit and 'mate ship'. Australians are reputed for helping each other out in times of need.



RIGHT: Anti-conscription material such as this poster, was banned under the War Precautions Act. Created by the Trades Union Anti-conscription Committee, Victoria, creator, 1916 Fraser and Jenkinson, Print, printer, 1916. John Curtin, author, 1916.



More posters can viewed at:

<http://www.anzacday.org.au/history/ww1/homefront/homefront.html>

<http://www.awm.gov.au/search/collections/?q=propaganda+posters>

<http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-posters/o-cat-index-posters.htm>

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/australia.htm>

The Power of Story

Jacqueline Dunstan
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'Pens down everyone. I would like to tell you a story. It begins on a muddy field in France in 1918. An English private, Private Henry Tandey, finds himself miraculously alive after single handedly taking out a German machine gun post. As the battle winds down, a wounded German soldier limps across his line of sight. Realising the reality of the situation he doesn't even attempt to raise his rifle. Tandey raises his rifle but finds that he cannot shoot his wounded enemy. In an act of compassion he lowers his rifle and lets the man go. The German soldier nods his thanks.

Tandey receives the Victoria Cross for his other actions on this day. He receives his award from the King. On the same day a photo of him carrying a wounded soldier to safety appears in the British media. The photo is used as inspiration and is immortalised on canvas, in turn receiving widespread publicity.

Jump ahead to 1938. Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister is in Germany, visiting Adolf Hitler in a vain attempt to avoid war. While visiting Hitler's mountain retreat, he is puzzled by the choice of artwork-a reproduction of the painting depicting Tandey. Chamberlain was forced to inquire as to the reason for his choice. He is stunned by his reply:

'That man came so close to killing me that I thought I would never see Germany again.'

Thus the identity of that wounded German soldier is revealed.

It doesn't matter how many times I tell this story to my Australians @ War students, the reaction is always the same. There is a moment of stunned silence before the animated discussion begins. They are hooked.

One of the joys of teaching History is the role storytelling plays. As human beings we get satisfaction out of hearing (or telling) a good story, as more often than not it takes us on an adventure we hadn't previously imagined.

I make no apology to my students for being passionate about History. They hear that on an all too regular basis. Yet this passion has a key role to play in encouraging students to see that they too can play a role in History. A class rarely goes by when our discussion turns from the specific context under examination to comparison with contemporary events. It is rewarding to see the pieces of the jigsaw being put together. They are able to place themselves in the shoes of key individuals from the past, to understand that what motivated them at the time is similar to the motives of individuals - including themselves - today. By being able to differentiate those figures of the past, it helps our students to see how they can play a role in creating both a personal history for themselves and a collective history for the wider community. After all, History is not just the record of those who stand out from the crowd.

This has been particularly evident in a task I set my students when we are studying World War I. It is easy to show them photos of the cemeteries of the Western Front. They quickly realise the scale of the personal destruction and the futility of the battles the diggers found themselves in. But the danger of such an approach is that it is also easy to forget that each headstone marks the resting place of an individual soldier; a soldier with his own personal story to tell. Using photographs of individual named headstones, students get the chance to investigate the man behind the headstone. Even the most reluctant student becomes immersed in the task, wanting to know more, often