



Time, Continuity and Change

DEFENDING AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA AND THE PACIFIC WAR

ONE of the most important and eventful years in Australia's history has been 1942.

It was in this year that Australian men were dying in battle against a seemingly unstoppable enemy, and when even more men and women were being brutally treated as prisoners of war. Bombs landed on Australian soil, and ships were sunk in Australian coastal waters. It seemed that Australia might be invaded by the Japanese.

In this article we look at some of the main events of the Pacific War and Australia, so that you will be better able to find out more about this time for yourselves from people who lived through it.

Interviewing is an important way of getting information. To get the most from the interviewee you need to have a good background knowledge of what they are talking about, and you need to know what questions to ask to get more from the person.

Here is a sample interview from a person who lived through this period.

My war experience started in 1941 when I enlisted in the Army.

I was sent to New Guinea to fight the Japanese on the Kokoda Track.

I was wounded and kept in hospital for a while, and I was also quite sick at one stage there.

When I recovered I went back to my unit, and kept on fighting until pretty much the end of the war.

We really enjoyed getting mail from home, that was always a great thrill, though sometimes if someone got a 'Dear John' letter that was quite hard.

Well when we got back there were a lot of changes, but most of us settled back OK into ordinary life. There were a few problems, of course, but we finally overcame those.

One of the biggest changes was to come back to my daughter who had been only very young when I went overseas. She didn't know me! That took a while to sort out.

Australia has a rich military heritage.

Their Service—Our Heritage is a program being run by the Department of Veterans' Affairs to commemorate the place of Australian servicemen and servicewomen in Australia's history.

It is part of a move to see that the contribution to our nationhood made by these men and women is acknowledged and honoured.

Every Australian has been affected by war this century. *Their Service—Our Heritage* will help students be aware of and understand what Australian servicemen and servicewomen have done, and help them to appreciate the contribution they have made to creating the society which young people enjoy today.

- 1 Look at it carefully, and decide if there are any questions you would ask to get more detail from the person.
- 2 Then read the information on the Pacific War, and look at the interview again. Can you ask anything new?
- 3 Finally, look at the questions on the final page that we suggest might be asked to improve this interview.

CURRICULUM GUIDE: Student Learning Outcomes

This article is useful in exploring aspects of Time, Continuity and Change. By the end of this article students will be better able to achieve these learning outcomes:

Time, Continuity and Change

Describe and explain lasting and changing aspects of Australian society;
analyse some effects of major ideologies on national and international events;
use knowledge about the past to explain contemporary events.



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Why would Australia have become involved in a war in Europe? Brainstorm as a class to suggest reasons. Then do some research to test your ideas.

WORLD WAR II

was a significant experience for all Australians. Australia's involvement from September 1939 to December 1941 had resulted in both triumph and tragedy. Troops of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) had won victories and wide acclaim against Italian forces at Bardia, Tobruk and Benghazi in Libya, and against Vichy French forces in Syria. They also suffered shocking defeats in Greece and Crete against stronger and better equipped German forces and were pushed back in Libya, though the famous 'Rats of Tobruk' held out against repeated attacks. As well as many killed or wounded, over 7000 Australian soldiers became prisoners of war in Greece, Crete or North Africa and were transported to Italy and Germany.

A Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) squadron was in Britain at the outbreak of war and flew anti-submarine missions. The RAAF sent other squadrons to Britain to serve in Bomber, Fighter or Coastal Commands, and other squadrons flew with the Desert Air Force in North Africa. Thousands more airmen were training in Australia, Canada and Rhodesia for service in Australian and British squadrons.

Warships of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) escorted merchant ship convoys to Egypt, Britain and other countries, and fought in the Mediterranean and North Atlantic. The famous 'Scrap Iron Flotilla' supplied the isolated troops at Tobruk. In the most

celebrated Australian naval victory of the war, HMAS *Sydney* sank the Italian cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni* but sixteen months later was itself destroyed in Australia's greatest naval disaster when she was sunk by a German raider off the coast of Western Australia. All 645 crew died.

In Australia the main focus of the war effort had been on producing food and equipment for the war, which resulted in local shortages and rationing. The increasingly serious war situation meant that as many men as possible were needed in combat and direct support roles – so the Services decided to start replacing men in many rear area supporting roles with women.

For the first time, women were allowed to join Services other than the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) or as Voluntary Aides in hospitals. The Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF) was formed in February 1941, the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) in April 1941, and the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) in July 1941.

See the article in STUDIES 2/2001 at page 45.



There had also been an increased call up of men aged between 18 and 45 for compulsory home service in the militia, known as the Citizen Military Forces (CMF).

In Australia, the war was being described as an 'all-in effort' – yet events were about to occur which would mean that Australia itself was about to be threatened, and an even greater effort would be needed.

WAR IN THE PACIFIC DECEMBER 1941 – 1942

ON 7 DECEMBER 1941 the war situation changed dramatically when the Japanese launched invasion fleets into Asia and the Pacific.

The Japanese wanted to take control of Asia and to make themselves the dominant colonial power in the region. At the time, European and American companies controlled raw materials – such as oil, rubber and tin – which were vital to Japan's industrial expansion.

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Why would these be so important to an industrial nation?

Japan invaded Thailand, Malaya, Hong Kong, the Philippines and the Netherland East Indies (now Indonesia), and attacked Pearl Harbor, the American naval base in Hawaii. The United States was the only country with sufficient naval power to oppose Japan in the Pacific, and while destroying the American Pacific Fleet was guaranteed to bring the United States into the war, it would also mean that their ability to effectively oppose Japan in the Pacific might be delayed by several years.

In the Pearl Harbor attack, however, the Japanese missed their most vital target – the American aircraft carriers. Had these carriers been destroyed, the outcome of World War II might have

been very different. Leaving the carriers in operation meant that the Americans had a powerful force with which to oppose the Japanese.

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Why would aircraft carriers be such important weapons?

The entry of Japan into a Pacific war directly threatened Australia. Our greatest fear – an expansionary Asian power with a strong navy capable of bringing the war right into Australian territory – was suddenly being realised.

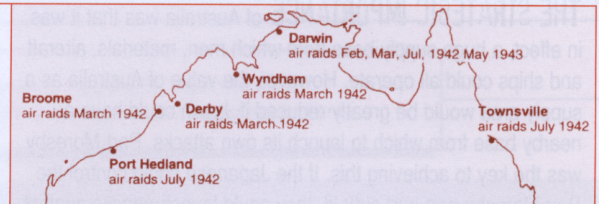


IN FEBRUARY 1941 units of the AIF's 8th Division had been sent to Malaya to reinforce British and Indian troops there. After the Japanese invaded Malaya on 8 December Australian units were heavily involved in rearguard actions down the Malayan peninsula towards Singapore.

The Japanese invaders were outnumbered by the British forces on the ground but they were battle veterans and their troops were superior in jungle combat. The Japanese also enjoyed air and sea superiority, which was vital in modern warfare. There was gallant fighting for the Australians at Gemas and Muar, but also much confusion and in some cases panic among the retreating troops. The Japanese next invaded Singapore and there was more hard fighting but, faced with threats to the civilian population and to their water supply, the British commander surrendered. The Malaya/Singapore campaign was Australia's greatest disaster of the war. Twenty-five per cent of all battle deaths in the war against the Japanese were suffered in those first eight weeks and over 17000 men were lost as prisoner of war.

Australia's Government had mobilised the Citizen Military Force but fearing that Australia would be invaded it ordered two of the three battle-hardened AIF divisions in the Middle East to return. Prime Minister John Curtin resisted British attempts to divert the men to Burma, where they probably would have been killed or captured.

The Japanese swept towards New Guinea. Three Australian battalions defended outposts, one at Rabaul on the island of New Britain, part of Australian-controlled New Guinea, and one each on Ambon and Timor in the Netherlands East Indies. Each force included over 1000 men, plus six nurses at Rabaul. They made gallant attempts to defend the islands but were poorly



equipped and badly trained, and were quickly defeated by the vastly superior Japanese forces. In addition, 3000 men returning from the Middle East landed at Java and, after a short battle, were instructed by the local Dutch commander to surrender. Most of the Australians on these islands were killed or captured but 400 escaped from Rabaul, while on Timor a company kept fighting as guerrillas, and in the islands of New Guinea some brave men volunteered to stay behind enemy lines as coastwatchers.

At least 21 000 Australian men and 59 servicewomen (nurses) became prisoners of the Japanese. More than one-third would die while POWs over the next three years. Some were massacred in horrific war crimes, including 21 nurses machine-gunned after struggling ashore from their torpedoed ship, the *Vyner Brooke*. Many others died from maltreatment, disease, beatings or executions in places like Changi, Sumatra, the Burma-Thailand Railway, Japan and Borneo, or died in the sinking of unmarked POW ships.

It was not only the AIF that was suffering. HMAS *Perth* was sunk on 1 March, with 457 dead in the action or afterwards as POWs. HMAS *Yarra* was also sunk in March, with only 13 of the 151 crew surviving.

The Japanese also launched air raids on Darwin, Broome, Wyndham, Derby, Katherine and other northern areas (see map above). In June three midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour, and sunk a small troop ship. Other submarines shelled Sydney and Newcastle, and Japanese aerial reconnaissance planes launched from submarines were spotted over Melbourne.

The Japanese seemed invincible, but for their successes to continue their troops had to have food, equipment, weapons and ammunition supplied to them. Their successes were extending their supply lines to breaking point.

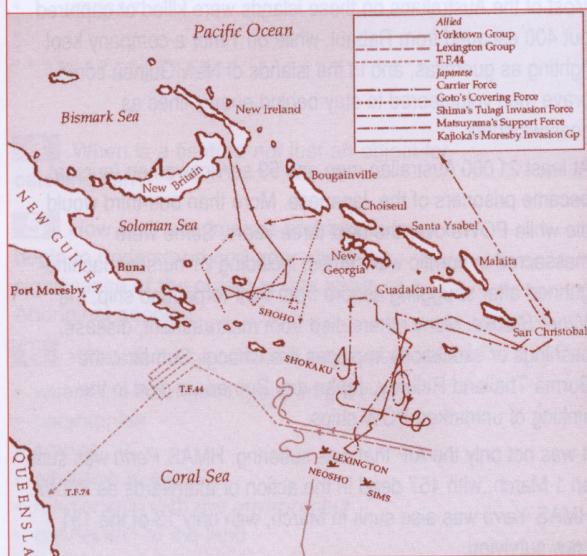
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Discuss as a class why supply lines would be so important in a war.

CORAL SEA AND MIDWAY

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE of Australia was that it was, in effect, a huge supply base from which men, materials, aircraft and ships could all operate. However, the value of Australia as a supply area would be greatly reduced if Japan could have a nearby base from which to launch its own attacks. Port Moresby was the key to achieving this. If the Japanese could control the Port Moresby port and airfield, they could launch attacks against the Australian mainland, disrupt supplies and troop movements coming from America, and bring in their own men and materials to consolidate their existing successes. Many Australians believed that the Japanese might even attempt to invade Australia.



First, they had to take Port Moresby. They attempted to do this in two ways: by an invasion fleet, and by invasion overland.

The sea-based invasion was stopped by one of the most significant events of the war for Australia: the 5 – 8 May Battle of the Coral Sea. An Allied fleet learned that the Japanese were on the move, and the two sets of carrier-based aircraft went into combat. The Allies suffered the greater losses, but the Japanese had to indefinitely delay their invasion plans.

The Battle of Coral Sea was also notable in history as the first naval battle in which the ships fought without being able to see each other, and out of range of each other's guns. All attacking was done by planes from each fleet's aircraft carriers.

On 4 – 6 June an American force destroyed the main Japanese aircraft carrier fleet in the Battle of Midway, another major victory in the sea war.

While these two naval battles destroyed the Japanese sea-borne invasion plans, the land-based invasion was a different matter. Between July 1942 and January 1943, fighting focused on Papua, especially along the Kokoda Track and at Milne Bay.

KOKODA TRACK AND MILNE BAY

A LARGE FORCE OF JAPANESE troops were sent from Rabaul in New Britain and landed at Buna in July to push overland across the Kokoda Track and attack Port Moresby. A small number of poorly trained, badly equipped Australian militia troops faced them. Other Japanese landed at Milne Bay in August, but these were opposed by Australian and American troops and for the first time in the war Japanese infantry were beaten, providing a huge morale boost for the Allied troops.



Discuss the likely advantages and disadvantages of this strategy.

Meanwhile, more Australian militia troops slogged over the razorback Owen Stanley Range to try and stop the Japanese troops moving from Buna. The two forces met, and for weeks there was sharp and bloody fighting as the Japanese pushed forward. The Australian militiamen were joined by a brigade of AIF veterans.

The Australians resisted, hitting and running, and managed to hold up and delay the enemy for several weeks. This exhausted the Japanese force's supplies – and just as the Japanese

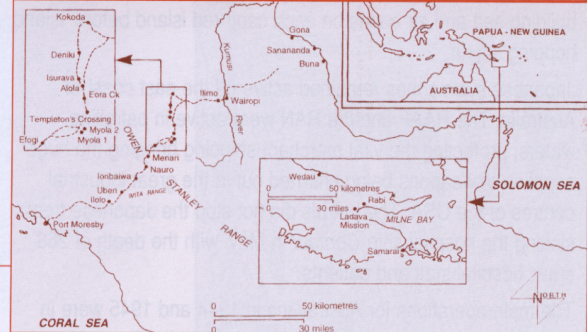
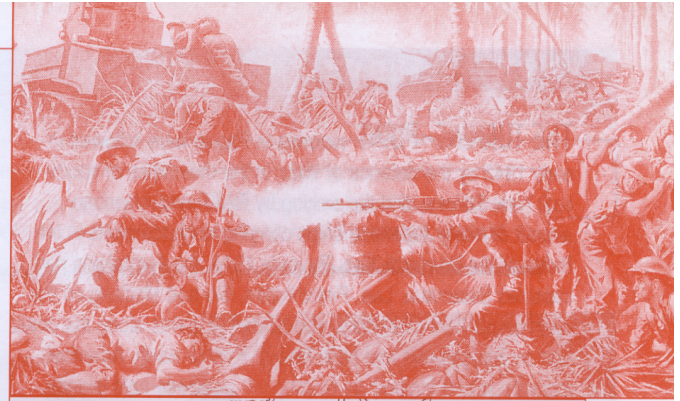


reached a point where they could actually see the lights of their objective, Port Moresby, they were ordered to retreat. All their efforts had been for nothing! Exhausted and dispirited, they started their return journey.

The Australians now attacked with reinforcements and new supplies, and attempted to eliminate the enemy. Jungle warfare was a horrific experience. Men had to cope with the heat, tropical rain, stinging and biting insects, and the terror of not knowing where the enemy was – perhaps only metres away in the thick jungle. The ground was steep and often muddy – and men's legs felt as though they were being torn from their bodies as they climbed and crawled up almost sheer mountain sides, always mentally alert for the hidden enemy. The sounds of the enemy were everywhere – but they were often not seen until the woodpecker noise of a Japanese machine gun suddenly ripped

into the foliage. Fighting was often hand to hand. Prisoners were not taken or, if taken, did not survive long. Diseases racked bodies. Hunger and thirst had to be endured, with the difficulty of getting supplies to men. The wounded had to be brought out on stretchers carried by local bearers – the ‘fuzzy wuzzy angels’ as they were nicknamed.

Australia employed indigenous people in a variety of military roles. Papuans and New Guineans worked (as civilians) carrying supplies, sailing small ships, cultivating gardens, and evacuating the wounded in forward areas. Others served in the three Papuan and New Guinean Infantry Battalions, patrolling the jungle skilfully. Some helped Allied patrols and coastwatchers, or rescued airmen behind enemy lines. A Torres Strait Islander battalion was also formed to defend Australia's northern islands, and some of its men served in Dutch New Guinea. Hundreds of Aboriginal men and women also enlisted, mostly in the army, and some were killed on active service. One man became a fighter pilot in the RAAF. Racist recruitment policies prevented even more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women from enlisting.



BUNA, GONA AND SANANANDA

AS THE AUSTRALIANS and their American allies gained control of the skies, re-supply became easier, and the chances of success increased. At last, after six months of such gruelling conditions, the Allied forces were able to attack the Japanese at Buna, Gona and Sanananda in November 1942 and defeated them within two months.

Why would control of the air be so valuable in a war?

The Japanese had at last been defeated in battle. Australia was secure, and the war would be won, though there would still be much hard fighting needed to achieve this. The 9th Division AIF also finally returned from North Africa to fight against the Japanese, having helped turn the tide against the Germans at the Battle of El Alamein in November 1942.

IN AUSTRALIA

Many Australians remember life on the Home Front during the war. Construct a questionnaire that will help you find out about people's experiences then. You will find lots of practical suggestions in the article 'Valuing our Veterans' in STUDIES 2/98 at page 32.

Most Australians did not ‘fight’ in the war. These are often the forgotten people: the men and, in lesser though growing numbers, the women who worked in the factories; those who stayed on the

farms, forsaking the ‘glory’ and the ‘glamour’, but also the danger in most cases; the ‘Dad’s Army’ of the Volunteer Defence Corps, ready to resist an invasion; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guides, coastwatchers and trackers who helped to observe the northern coastline, rescue downed Allied airmen, and capture Japanese airmen shot down; those manning searchlights night after night in city areas, or standing guard over vital ports in case of attack; the Civil Constructional Corps (CCC) – over 100 000 of them, engineers and labourers – who built roads and aerodromes in the harshest of conditions in outback areas to try and create a supply line to the northern front at Darwin and to other areas; the sailors of the Merchant Marine, carrying essential supplies and equipment to and from Australia, all the time on the alert for submarines and mines – Japanese submarines sank 29 merchant ships in Australian waters, killing 577 people.

For every man fighting the enemy, there were dozens of men and women working to support him.

Large numbers of American troops passed through Australia, creating in some cases enduring friendships and romances, and in others tension and conflicts with Australian men. Sport was cut back. Petrol, clothing and some food items were rationed. As more men were sent overseas to fight, more women joined the WRAAF, AWAS and WRANS.

On the home front women were taken into previously male jobs – such as on the trams, and in new areas in factories – though most did not receive equal pay for the equal work they were doing. About 100 000 men left the farms, and many women joined the Australian Women’s Land Army to take over vital food production – though it seems that in most cases it was the farmers’ wives and mothers who took up that burden most. The main role for most women continued to be that of home maker, a job made much harder and more demanding by the blackouts, rationing, shortages and difficulties of wartime life.



1943 — 1945

THE TURNING-POINT victories in Papua were followed in early 1943 by the defence of Wau, in the mountains of south-east New Guinea, and the sinking by RAAF and American aircraft of many Japanese ships carrying reinforcements in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. By early 1944, the Australians had captured Salamaua, Lae, Finschhafen, Sio and Madang on the north coast. The Americans also landed at points along the coast and on Bougainville and New Britain. Further north, American marines 'island hopped' by landing on Japanese-held islands, building sea and air bases on each captured island before 'island hopping' again.

Japanese submarines remained active off the east coast of Australia. The RAAF and the RAN were active in patrolling waters, protecting the vital merchant shipping bringing the huge supplies of weapons being churned out in the great industrial centres of the USA. The patrols did not stop the Japanese from sinking the hospital ship *Centaur* in May, with the death of 268 crew, hospital staff and patients.

The main operations for Australians in 1944 and 1945 were in New Guinea at Aitape, New Britain and Bougainville, and later also in Borneo at Tarakan, Labuan and Balikpapan. Other

Australians continued fighting the Germans and Italians (Italy surrendered and switched sides in early 1944). Airmen and sailors served in the Mediterranean, the North Atlantic and northern Europe.

On D-Day, 6 June 1944, when the Allies landed at Normandy to liberate France, the huge force included several thousand Australians serving in British squadrons or warships. In addition, hundreds of airmen flew in British squadrons fighting the Japanese in Burma.

The final Pacific campaigns are very controversial: were they unnecessary battles, with Australian lives lost needlessly, when they could have just cut off the Japanese and starved them out? In New Guinea it could be argued that they were necessary, because New Guinea was then Australian territory and the operations helped the locals re-establish their lives more quickly. Politically, they also maintained Australia's standing as a country actively engaged in defeating the enemy, thus boosting Australia's demand for a say in the peace terms. It has been argued that the campaigns were 'gaining added value from the blood shed by the troops in New Guinea earlier'.

There seems to be less strategic justification for the Borneo battles, though at least it was an advance towards Singapore where the 8th Division had been captured. Unfortunately, almost 2 000 Australian and 500 British prisoners were killed or marched to death by the Japanese on the Sandakan death march; only six Australians survived this death march.



THE END OF THE WAR

WHEN GERMANY SURRENDERED on 8 May 1945, the focus switched to finishing off the Japanese. 'Island hopping' enabled the Americans to set up airfields in islands near the Japanese home islands, and to start a campaign of bombing Japan's major cities. The final act was to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima on 6 August, and Nagasaki on 9 August. On 15 August 1945 the Japanese surrendered.

IMPACT OF THE WAR

The war had cost nearly 30 000 Australian lives. Many more had been damaged physically or mentally – particularly the thousands of troops who had been prisoners of the Japanese. Many of these men and women, and their dependants, would need support from the Australian government for a long time to come.

The war had cost Australians the equivalent of about \$74 billion. Many industries had, however, prospered and developed far



more quickly than would otherwise have been the case. There were great shortages of civilian materials – especially building materials to meet the demand of returning servicemen and servicewomen eager to set up their new lives. Jobs were needed for these people. Educational opportunities had been cut off for many, and they would now look to complete courses and training. Australia itself had changed – people had been exposed to new ideas, experiences and influences. Millions of people throughout the war-torn countries were destitute or refugees, and looked to make a new life in a better place – could Australia help them? Could Australians revert to their pre-war lives and standards, or would they have to create a new society in Australia which reflected post-war values and needs?

FINDING OUT FROM VETERANS

You will now have an understanding of what happened, when, and where for Australia's Pacific War experience.

This will help you in your interviews with people who lived through the period. You will be able to make better sense of what their stories mean.

People give us individual experiences – what they did, how they felt, what they thought, what their experience meant to them. It is individual experiences that enable us to decide what was happening with the 'big picture'.

You need to be able to ask questions to bring out these aspects of their experience.

This means that you need to listen carefully to what they are saying, and identify bits that need to be explored further. This means asking questions such as:

What happened when... ?

Why did you respond when... ?

How did you feel about... ?

When did you realise... ?

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Invite a veteran in your local community from this conflict to talk to the class or school about their experiences. Send them your questions prior to the talk. Remember also to write a letter of thanks to the veteran outlining what you have learned from their talk.

Look at this interview again. Here are some ways that more information might have been drawn out of that person.

Why did you enlist?

My war experience started in 1941 when I enlisted in the Army.

What were the conditions like?

I was sent to New Guinea to fight the Japanese on the Kokoda Track.

What was your sickness?

I was wounded and kept in hospital for a while, and I was also quite sick at one stage there.

Where else did you serve?

When I recovered I went back to my unit, and kept on fighting until pretty much the end of the war.

How did soldiers react to bad news?

We really enjoyed getting mail from home, that was always a great thrill, though sometimes if someone got a 'Dear John' letter that was quite hard.

What sort of problems did you have settling back into civilian life?

Well when we got back there were a lot of changes, but most of us settled back OK into ordinary life. There were a few problems, of course, but we finally overcame those.

What other changes did you notice?

One of the biggest changes was to come back to my daughter who had been only very young when I went overseas. She didn't know me! That took a while to sort out.

12



At the end of the discussion or your own research you might like to present your findings in one of these ways:

- imagine that you are a journalist and have to write an account of the war from these people's experience;
- create a PowerPoint presentation or a class video summarising the soldiers' experiences of war;
- prepare a short talk for a school assembly on Anzac Day or Remembrance Day;
- create an account of the war for inclusion in a history text for younger students;
- create a painting, drawing or collage for a poster for Anzac Day or Remembrance Day;
- set up an exhibition in the school foyer, hall or classroom on local wartime experiences. Write captions for the objects included on display.

13

Anzac Day is a significant national day for Australia. Originally Anzac Day commemorations focused on the World War I Diggers. As Australians served in a number of wars and conflicts since then, the focus of the day has become broader. What has your investigation of the Pacific War and the experiences of World War II servicemen and servicewomen helped you to learn about their contribution to the Anzac tradition in Australia?

Did you have much direct contact with the enemy?

How did you come to be wounded?

Was this very different from Kokoda?

Were they worried about what was happening at home?

Did you get any help from anybody?

A TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS IN AUSTRALIA'S WAR

1939

- Sept 1 Germany invades Poland
3 Britain and France declare war on Germany
3 Prime Minister Menzies announces that 'Australia is also at war'



1940

- Jan 10 6th Division AIF sails for the Middle East
Feb 28 Start of internment of some Italians in Australia
April 9 Germany invades Denmark and Norway
May 10 Germany invades Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg
June 15 Communist Party banned in Australia
June 22 France surrenders to Germany
July 10 Battle Of Britain starts
11 Petrol rationing announced
19 HMAS Sydney sinks Italian cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni*
Sep 5 First RAAF trainees to Canada
9 Japanese start occupying bases in Indo-China



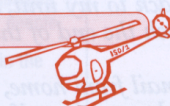
1941

- Jan 3-5 Battle of Bardia
21-22 Tobruk captured
Feb 5 WAAAF formed
6 Australian troops enter Benghazi
18 8th Division AIF begins arriving in Singapore
Apr 6 Germany invades Greece and Yugoslavia
11 Siege of Tobruk begins
24 Evacuation of Greece begins, but many Australians taken prisoner
May 20 Germans invade Crete – many Australians taken prisoner
Jun 22 Germany invades the Soviet Union
Aug 18 AWAS formed
Oct 7 John Curtin becomes Prime Minister
Nov 19 HMAS Sydney sunk
Dec 7-8 Japanese land in Thailand and Malaya
Japanese attack Pearl Harbor
USA declares war on Japan
Australia declares war on Japan
Citizen Military Forces (Militia) mobilised
11 Germany and Italy declare war on USA
22 First American troops in Australia



1942

- Jan 1 Daylight saving begins – to assist with war production
14 Australian troops fight the Japanese at Gemas, Malaya
Jan – Feb Japanese capture Australian troops at Rabaul, Ambon, Timor
Feb 2 First trial blackout in Sydney
15 Singapore surrenders
19 First Japanese air raid on Darwin
Mar 3 Japanese air attack on Broome and Wyndham
15 Introduction of compulsory ID cards for all adults in Australia



- 17 General MacArthur arrives in Australia to command Allied forces
20 Japanese air raid on Derby
30 Rationing of tea, sugar, butter begins
May 5-8 Battle of the Coral Sea
31 Japanese midget submarines in Sydney Harbour
June 4-6 Battle of Midway
July 21 Japanese land at Buna to advance on Port Moresby
25 Minor Japanese air raid on Townsville
Sep 25 Australian counter-offensive in the Owen Stanley Ranges begins
7 Defeat of Japanese at Milne Bay by Australian and American troops
Oct 23 Battle of El Alamein starts
Nov 2 Australians recapture Kokoda
Dec 3 Single women aged 18 – 30 called up for war work
9 Australians defeat the Japanese at Gona
14 Australians and Americans capture Buna
18 Ban on the Communist Party lifted

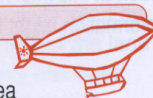
1943

- Jan 22 Australians and Americans defeat the Japanese at Sanananda
Mar 9th Division returns to Australia from Middle East
May 14 Sinking of the hospital ship *Centaur* by a Japanese submarine
Sep 11 Australians enter Salamaua
16 Australians enter Lae
Oct 2 Australians capture Finschhafen
Nov 12 Last Japanese air raid on Darwin



1944

- April 24 Australians at Madang
Fighting in many parts of New Guinea
Jun 6 'D-Day' invasion of Europe
Aug 5 Japanese POW outbreak at Cowra



1945

- Jan 27 Soviet forces liberate Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Poland
Feb 14 Devastating Allied bomb attack on Dresden, Germany
March 10 Major air raids on Japanese cities
April 29 Italy surrenders
30 Adolf Hitler commits suicide
May 1 Australians land at Tarakan
8 VE Day – Germany surrenders
11 Australians capture Wewak
Jun 13 Australians capture Brunei
Jul 1 Australian troops land at Balikpapan
5 Death of Prime Minister John Curtin
Aug 6 Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima
8 Soviet Union declares war on Japan
9 Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki
15 VP (or VJ) Day – Japan surrenders
Sep 2 Japanese surrender signed – Australians and other Allied troops begin occupying Japan
Oct 24 United Nations Charter ratified

