

1918 Australians In France

the kit consists of the following components:

Background information:

- *Outline of Australian involvement in 1918*
- *War tales — information about some of the individuals and events that appear in the exhibition *Beaucoup Australiens ici* — an excellent resource supplied by DVA*

Pre-visit activities:

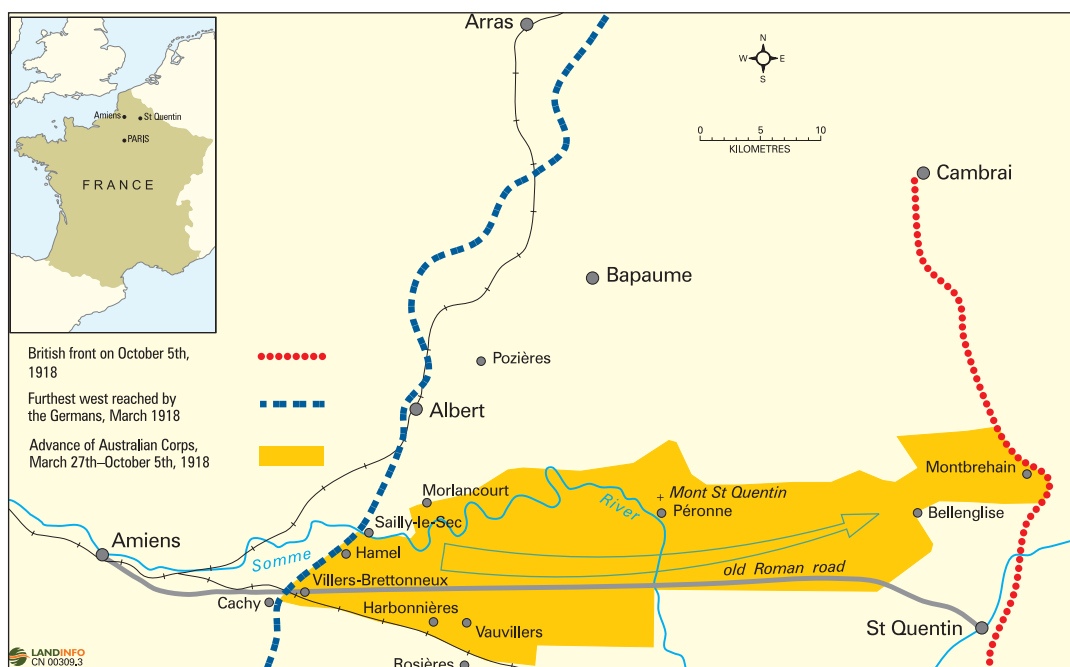
- *Glossary exercise — an interactive way of increasing literacy and understanding*
- *1918 role play — a staged performance in the newsroom*

At the exhibition:

- *Something to think about — designed for students up to Year 8*
- *Five personalities — for more senior students*

Post-visit activities:

- *Label your own museum collection*
- *Postcards from 1918*
- *Reflection and review*



1918 Australians In France

introduction

THIS KIT has been developed to provide teachers with a framework of activities for helping their students interpret the exhibition *1918 Australians in France*.

The material in the kit has a focus on the key learning area, *Studies of Society and the Environment*, but could also be used successfully in other areas, such as *English* and *Art*.

The kit encourages the development of students' abilities in critical thinking and literacy. It contains material which could be used or adapted for use by students from upper primary to senior secondary level.

Teachers are encouraged to use this kit as the basis for a class unit of work, with a highlight being a visit to the exhibition. In this way students will gain most from the exhibition and can use the exhibition to develop skills in a visual context. Aspects of the kit can be used in isolation to make a visit to the exhibition more rewarding.

using the kit:

The material provided in this kit can be used in a variety of ways. Although it has been divided into pre-visit material, worksheets for the visit as well as post-visit material, these designations are for convenience only. For example, much of the pre-visit material could be used as extension work after the visit.

Teachers can prepare themselves and their students to identify useful focus points prior to visiting the exhibition by using the pre-visit material provided in this kit. Most students readily relate to the experiences of others through individual life stories. Short stories about individuals and significant military events of 1918 might be shared in class to provide entry points for students when they visit the exhibition. These may grow into larger concerns or simply lead on to new opportunities provided by the exhibition itself.

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1918

background Information

Outline of Australian involvement in 1918

This outline of Australian involvement is linked to items in the exhibition; it could be used during a visit as a chronological guide.

At the beginning of the year

The war hung in the balance: the British troops were exhausted, the French armies were in a state of mutiny and Russia had withdrawn from the war. Things looked bad for the allies. But the Germans were also exhausted. How would the two sides face the new year? Would the impending arrival of the Americans make a difference?

1: Start of the German offensive

21 March Start of German offensive

Until now the war had been fought in the trenches, and had proved a to be a stalemate impossible to break. The Germans now advanced rapidly towards the strategically vital town of Amiens, sweeping all before them.

From now on, this would be a war of great mobility.

4 April The battle of Villers-Bretonneaux

Here, the Australians halted part of the German drive towards Amiens and saved the town. This battle was part of a larger campaign that brought the German advance to a halt.

2: German offensive hanging in the balance

April–July 'peaceful penetration'

For several months in the middle of 1918, Australians carried out 'peaceful penetration' of the German lines, largely successfully. 'Peaceful penetration' meant small, aggressive and spontaneous raids on German positions. These damaged German morale.



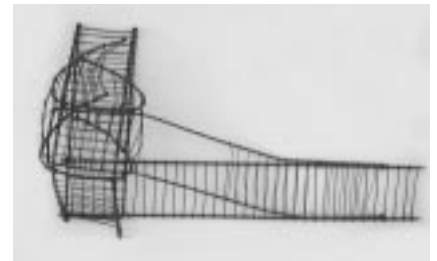
4 July: The battle of Hamel

This was the first major Australian offensive of 1918, and the Australians under Monash played a vital role in defeating the Germans in a battle lasting only 93 minutes. This battle was so well planned and successful that both its planning and leadership became a model for future battles.

3: The allies strike back

8 August The battle of Amiens

The Germans still threatened Amiens. On the morning of 8 August, the battle of Amiens began. The Australians advanced rapidly, and together with the other allied troops did so well that the German General Ludendorff named this the black day of the German army. From now on, the Germans were on the retreat.



28 Aug–1 Sept

Battle of Mont St Quentin

Mont St Quentin was a fortified hill overlooking the important strategic town of Péronne, and was believed to be impregnable. Over three days, the battle-weary Australians cleared the approaches to the hill and captured it.

5 October Battle of Montbrechain

The Germans still held the Hindenburg Line: the allies planned an attack, part of which was carried out by the Australians. On 5 October the Australians fought their last engagement at Montbrechain, before being withdrawn to rest.

4: Victory

11 Nov The end of the war

Hostilities ceased at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, 1918.



background Information

War Tales

*War tales provides contemporary information about some of the individuals and events that appear in the exhibition. More information and a broader context can be found at the exhibition, in the book **Beaucoup Australiens ici**, or by using other sources.*

Monash: the Australian commander

In the 1920s, Monash was broadly accepted ... as the greatest living Australian.

(G. Searle, Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 10, p. 549)

Monash, the corps commander, was neither a hero nor a mighty strategic genius but an extraordinarily careful and versatile organiser — which was precisely what the interests of his 80,000 men demanded at a very difficult and critical time.

(letter from C.E.W. Bean to Gavin Long, 30 June 1930, quoted in D. Winter, Making the legend: the war writings of C.E.W. Bean, p. 213)



Pearl Corkhill: an Australian nurse

For courage and devotion on the occasion of an enemy air-raid. She continued to attend to the wounded, without any regard to her own safety, though enemy aircraft were overhead. Her example was of the greatest value in allaying the alarm of the patients.

(from the citation for her Military Medal)

William Rawlings: an Australian soldier

Private Rawlings displayed rare bravery in the performance of his duty, killing many of the enemy, brushing aside all opposition and clearing the way effectively for the bombers of his team. His irresistible [sic] dash and courage set a wonderful example to the remainder of the team.

(from the recommendation for an award for William Rawlings)

I knew casualty, he was a man about 5ft 10ins, well built, he was an aboriginal.

(extract from a Red Cross Record written by Sgt M.A. Pitt referring to Rawlings' death on 9 August 1918)

The battle of Villers-Bretonneux

At the sight of the eager, swiftly approaching line with its flashing bayonets the Germans ... first hesitated and then ran back to the old trenches more than a mile from the town.

(from C.E.W. Bean, Anzac to Amiens, p. 424)

In once more congratulating the Corps on a series of successes unsurpassed in this great war, I feel that no mere words of mine can adequately express the renown that they have won for themselves, and the position they have established for the Australian nation not only in France but throughout the whole world.

(from a letter by General Lord Rawlinson to the Australian Army Corps in 1918)

... there is no spot in the whole of the tortured soil of France which is more associated with Australian history and the triumph of the Australian soldiers, than Villers-Bretonneux.

(from a letter by Sir John Monash to Gilbert Dyatt, 1920)

The battle of Mont St Quentin

The capture of Mont St Quentin and Pèronne is held by many to be the most brilliant achievement of the AIF. ... in general the dash, intelligence and persistence of the troops dealt a stunning blow to five German divisions, drove the enemy from one of his key positions in France, and took 2,600 prisoners at a cost of slightly over 3,000 casualties.

(from C.E.W. Bean, Official history of Australia in the war of 1914-1918, vol. 6, pp. 873-4)

previsit activities

Glossary Activities

This glossary exercise can be used in conjunction with any of the other pre-visit material, eg. War tales, or with the visit to the exhibition itself. Teachers can assist students to identify, discuss and negotiate new words and ideas such as allies, bayonet, Beaucoup Australiens ici, strategic genius, mobile warfare, infantry, etc.

STEP 1: Students examine the material (be it War tales, the chronology or the exhibition itself) in groups of two to four. Each group identifies any terms that are puzzling.

STEP 2: The teacher records the terms chosen by the first group. Successive groups only add to the master list terms that are not already recorded.

STEP 3: The process is reversed, with each group in succession explaining any of the terms with which they are familiar. Each group should record explanations.

STEP 4: Each group in succession eliminates any terms from the master list which can be satisfactorily explained.

STEP 5: The remaining list of terms becomes the focus of collaborative research with dictionary/thesaurus/discussion with teachers or parents.

STEP 6: Groups contribute their explanations to a class glossary.

previsit activities

1918 Role Play – Newsroom

This exercise might become a staged performance of a radio or TV news broadcast (although this is wildly anachronistic for 1918). The scenario is the cutting room, where final editorial decisions are made about what goes to air. Older students could investigate the reality of news dissemination at the time and adapt the role play to a newspaper room of the time, taking due notice of the delays involved in getting the news to the readers, eg. because of censorship, or other difficulties.

Students can play different roles at different stages. The possible roles include sub-editors, presenters, a production team, a chief editor and possibly a technical crew.

STAGE 1: Groups of two to four students share tales of people, deeds and events during wartime. (This could come from the background information, the exhibition or from other sources.) (10–15 mins)

STAGE 2: A sub-editor or presenter should then be chosen from within each group. Each group then provides material, orally or in writing, to their sub-editor or presenter, who will in turn deliver the news to the production team (see below). They should synthesise the research material to produce their own stories rather than simply re-hash the material. (20–30 mins)

STAGE 3: One of the groups should now be appointed as the production team. The sub-editors or presenters write up their group's final story for publication or broadcast, subject to final edits by the production team. (20–30 mins)

STAGE 4: The production team makes the final, last-minute decisions about the order and format of the broadcast or the layout of the front page. The chief editor (possibly the teacher) should impose a real deadline, to imitate the tension of the newsroom. (10–15 mins)

STAGE 5: The news goes to air or to press. If broadcasting, try to videotape it, in which case a technical crew will be required. In the case of a newspaper, the front page should be photocopied and distributed. (10–15 mins)



at the exhibition

Five personalities

Read about Monash, Corkhill and Rawlings in the War tales exercise before you visit the exhibition. Find these three Australians in the exhibition and discover more about them.

Does everything you find agree with the quotations in War tales?

Find these five personalities. What were they like? What did they do? What happened to them?

This worksheet is just a starting point — you will have to search the exhibition to find the answers to the questions.

Jot down your responses on the other side of the page. Teachers — photocopy this single-sided only!

Sergeant James Lihou was highly decorated, and was killed in the final weeks of the war on 18 September. On this day, he was posthumously awarded a bar to his Distinguished Conduct Medal. *What does 'highly decorated' mean? What did he do to earn his medals? What does 'posthumously' mean?*



The following is an extract from the *London Gazette* of 30 October 1918, referring to Lihou's actions in earning his DCM:

... Shortly after, when one of his section became a casualty, he carried [the casualty's] gun as well as his own right up to the final objective. He set a splendid example of cheerfulness and cool confidence to his men.

Why was this important?



Vera Deakin worked with the Red Cross Wounded and Missing Bureau. *What work did this bureau do? Why was this work so important? How would you have felt if your soldier relative at the front had not written to you for several months?* The following is part of a letter written to Vera Deakin by Gunner A. Marginson:

I have to thank you for the kind and sympathetic letter I have received

notifying me of the manner and details of the way in which my dear Brother ... met his death in action and the system by which you gain your information reflects great credit on the society which is doing so much to alleviate the suffering of relations of the men who go out.



Lieutenant Will Dyson was an Australian official war artist.

The cap that you will find on display in the exhibition was made for Dyson, who had lost his own cap, by a Belgian refugee from an old pair of riding breeches. *Why did the Australian government appoint official war artists to record the war?*

Captain Manfred von Richthofen, the 'Red Baron', shot down 80 allied aircraft before he was himself shot down on 21 April 1918. The allies gave him a funeral with full military honours, even though he was a German. *Why do you think they did this?*



Lieutenant Bruce Thomson served for nearly the entire war, starting on Gallipoli and ending with the Australian Flying Corps in France. He was accidentally shot down by friendly fire on 3 October 1918.

How long was this before the war ended?

Wing Commander H.N. Wrigley wrote of his death:

It was later reported that an RE8 aircraft had been hit by a shell whilst in the air, but, although a thorough search was made near the locality mentioned, no trace of any aircraft could be found and nothing concerning the fate of the missing officers was heard until three days later. A report then came to hand that Lieutenants Gould-Taylor and Thomson had been buried near Folemprie farm north-west of Estrées.

at the exhibition

Something to think about!

Find these items in the exhibition, then consider the questions.

NB. There are no 'right' answers to these questions, but you could jot down or sketch your responses on the other side of the page. Teachers — photocopy this single-sided only!



Amiens gun spanner

Wow! If this is the spanner, how big must the gun have been?

(The barrel of the actual Amiens gun is on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.)



German boot

This boot has a bullet hole in the heel.

It was taken from a wounded German prisoner.

How do you think he received this wound? How many possible explanations can you come up with?



German horn

This horn was used for summoning medical assistance to wounded soldiers after a battle was over.

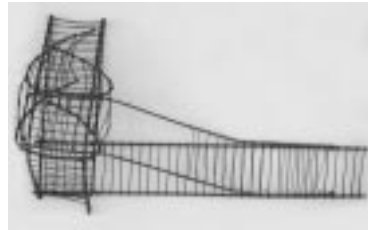
Imagine how a battlefield could have sounded after the battle.



Australian flag

This flag was flown over Harbonieres church as soon as the Australians captured it.

How would you have felt if you were told that it was your job to fly this flag?



Arm splint

This German splint was used by German prisoners of war to treat Australian p.o.w.s.

What do you think happened? Can you work out how it was used? Does it look very comfortable?



Roff the German messenger dog

What were dogs like Roff used for? Why were they used in this way?



Message streamer

How and why has this been used?

Do you think it would have been useful?



Photo of soldiers going home

Do they look pleased to be going home? What do you think are they thinking?



Photo of four diggers who returned to France in 1998

How long is it today since the war ended?

Why do you think the French government awarded each of these men a medal in 1998?

Now find two more items in the exhibition that you think show what the war was really like. Draw them so that you remember what they are! Compare your choices when you get back to school.

postvisit activities

Postcards from 1918: Somewhere in France

This exercise is best carried out after the visit to the exhibition. Teachers should discuss this activity with students before the visit so that they are on the lookout for ideas.

Imagine that you are an Australian soldier or nurse sending a postcard home from the Western Front in 1918. What will you write? What picture would you choose to send? (a pretty scene? a scene of battle?)

Remember: Your mail will be censored! Any reference to where you are or what you are doing will be eliminated. (Many letters were sent from 'somewhere in France').

Some points to consider are:

How long have you been away from home?

What has your war experience been?

Are you likely to tell your loved ones of the reality of war — pain/death/lice/blood/disease? Why?/Why not?

If not, what will you tell them?

Do you miss your family?

How will you tell them so in a few short words?

How long would it have taken for a letter to reach Australia from Europe in 1918? It took several months by sea. But if you had the bad luck to be killed, the news would be telegraphed to your family within hours. Imagine how your loved ones would have felt if this postcard had arrived weeks after they knew that you had died.

On completion of the postcards, appoint one or more of the class to act as censor. Remember that these postcards might fall into the hands of the enemy, so no information that might be useful to them can remain!

Read the censored postcards out to the class and put them on display. What would your thoughts have been, reading these words back home in Australia in 1918?



Reflection and review

This exercise is intended to complete this unit of study.

Sharing and reflection

After visiting the exhibition and completing classroom activities, students may think that they have considered all the main factors that would contribute to an Australian's experience of war in 1918. Students will usually need some help to access the wider range of perspectives, however. In this exercise, students can use any or all of the previous exercises to assess whether or not they have covered all the main aspects.

In the course of reflecting on the exhibition and the units of work completed, each student should identify and list five important aspects about Australians in France in 1918. Students then come together in groups of three to produce a combined list of eight aspects. The teacher facilitates the sharing of these aspects, each group contributing one in turn, together compiling a class list.

The class then discusses and decides:

Which factors would have most affected an Australian's experience of war in France in 1918? What would these factors have contributed to this experience?

postvisit activities

Label your own museum collection

This exercise is best carried out after the visit to the exhibition. Teachers should discuss this activity with students before the visit so that they are on the lookout for ideas.

In 1917 the Australian War Records Section (AWRS) was established to document and preserve the history of the AIF. One of its tasks, commenced in September that year, was to obtain objects from the battlefield for historical preservation and exhibition in Australia. This activity was well organised by 1918, and there was plenty of opportunity to collect objects. Orders were issued for troops to collect interesting things, and many entered the hunt with enthusiasm. It was later said that every Australian went into action with a pocket full of museum labels.

Museum labels were attached to all the items that the soldiers collected, so that the AWRS would know their history. It was important for the collectors to record information for all the categories as on this museum label reproduced here, so that they could be properly sorted, stored and displayed.

Divide the class into groups of two to four students to discuss the following questions:

You are Australian soldiers in France in 1918, collecting for the AWRS. *What sort of items might you collect?*

Questions to consider:

What might the biggest item be? How will you transport it?

What might the smallest item be?

What item might be the most valuable? Will you want to give it to the AWRS?

Note the use of the word 'trophy' on the label. *Why do think that word was used? C.E.W. Bean preferred the word 'relic' — which word do you prefer and why?*

Remember that you are collecting these items for display at an Australian war memorial, yet to be built. The mission of the future memorial will be to assist Australians to understand, remember and interpret the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society.

Further questions to consider:

What items will best help Australians at home to remember the war? (Remember, in 1918, most Australians had never been to France, and had no firsthand knowledge of the war. There was no television either!)

What do you want the Australians at home to remember? the horror? the achievement? the adventure?

How are items in the actual exhibition displayed in a way that helps you to understand the war?

There is a story that claims one Australian soldier even put museum labels on German prisoners! Why do you think he might have done this?

Having discussed these questions, each group should then imagine one item that they would choose to bring home, they should draw it and then write an appropriate label for it.

MAIN DESCRIPTION	
<i>Charred remains of a luminous watch from a German aircraft</i>	
COLLECTED BY	Sapper J.C. Smith 4th Field Coy Australian Engineers
NOTES	Taken from a German plane (no details) brought down in flames in no man's land near Hamel 4/7/18
AN AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL TRAVELLING EXHIBITION  REL/00508	