 Investigating modern history – the investigation of historic sites and sources program

Duration - Approximately 5-7 weeks (15 hours)

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Unit description

Students will have an opportunity to study the ways historians investigate and construct the past by undertaking an investigation of the significance of historic sites and sources, as well as the contribution of archaeology and science, in developing our understanding of the recent past.

As part of this topic, students will examine the range of archival material pertaining to the World War I, but more particularly, the Battle of Fromelles. This will include an examination of the search to discover the lost soldiers of this fateful battle, as well as the subsequent excavation and DNA identification of the deceased. This will provide students the opportunity to develop and apply their understanding of the methods employed by modern historians in researching the past.

Background knowledge

It is expected that students will have some prior knowledge of the experiences of Australian soldiers in the First World War, as well as the main course of the war on the Western Front, as a result of their study of the Stage 5 Core Study – Australians at War: World Wars I and II (1914-1918, 1939-1945).

Focus questions

* What written records and archives are available to historians of modern history? How important are these archives to a historical investigation?
* How historic sites are reconstructed using the evidence available to historians?
* How does archaeology and science contribute to our understanding of the past?
* How do historic sites and sources contribute to our understanding of the past?

Outcomes

A student:

* MH11-6 – analyses and interprets different types of sources for evidence to support an historical account or argument
* MH11-7 – discusses and evaluates differing interpretations and representations of the past
* MH11-9 – communicates historical understanding, using historical knowledge, concepts and terms, in appropriate and well-structured forms
* MH11-10 – discusses contemporary methods and issues involved in the investigation of modern history

Related Life Skills outcomes – MHLS6-1, MHLS6-2, MHLS6-8, MHLS6-9, MHLS6-11, MHLS6-12

Historical concepts and skills

Analysis and use of sources

* Explain the meaning and value of sources for an historical inquiry (ACHMH007, ACHMH009)
* Analyse and synthesise evidence from different types of sources to develop reasoned claims (ACHMH008)
* Identify and analyse problems relating to sources in the investigation of the past (ACHMH011)

Historical interpretation

* Identify and analyse the varying causes and effects of events and developments in order to construct historical arguments (ACHMH001)
* Form judgements about historical significance, recognising that significance may be attributed for different purposes

Historical investigation and research

* Frame questions to guide historical inquiry and develop a coherent research plan (ACHMH004)
* Use evidence from a range of sources to inform investigation and research (ACHMH005)
* Acknowledge sources appropriately (ACHMH015)

Explanation and communication

* Develop texts, particularly historical accounts and arguments, supported by relevant evidence from sources (ACHMH013)
* Communicate historical understanding, using historical knowledge, concepts and terms, in forms appropriate to purpose and audience (ACHMH014)

Assessment

Formative and summative forms of assessment are used throughout this unit of work on “The Investigation of historic Sites and Sources’. Different types of assessments are found within the unit of work table under the ‘teaching and learning’ column. A research report is to be completed by the end of the program.

| Outcomes/content | Teaching and learning | Differentiation |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Students investigate:   * the significance of the Battle of Fromelles in Australia’s military history | * Conduct a pre-test to determine the level of background knowledge students have from Stage 5 – Australians at War: World War I. * Explain to the students that this topic will focus on methodologies of historians and the contribution of archaeology and science to our understanding of World War I, rather than the course of the war itself. * Think-pair-share activity – what do students already know about the Battle of Fromelles and the search for the lost soldiers of Fromelles. The teacher may need to provide prompts to guide the discussion. * Watch the YouTube clip titled [Australia’s Darkest Hour – The Battle of Fromelles](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAJaefX-F34&t=138s), produced by The Great War channel. Students are to take notes on the course, outcome, and overall strategic significance of the battle. Conversely, students could also read the following [article published by The Australian newspaper](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/paul-kelly/fromelles-australias-forgotten-sacrifice-on-the-western-front/news-story/4b7dde761da9cd1e26748a10f3ac8e89) and summarise the main points of the article. * Teacher to provide students with a brief overview of the search for the lost Diggers of Fromelles. There will be an opportunity to go into more detail later in the unit. The following [article provides a brief overview of the investigation](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/ww1-anniversary/after-a-century-tenacity-gives-names-to-our-fallen-heroes/news-story/4e63667fc299d1efdfd70b010e46b3cd) which may be useful. | Structured – students write down 5 things they remember about WWI.  Extension – assess the strategic significance of the Battle of Fromelles in the course of the war. |
| Students investigate:   * the nature, range and importance of archives to historians of modern history and the digitisation of archival records | * Students define these topic terms – archive, record, evidence, primary sources, secondary sources, finding aids, interpretation, perspective, reconstruction, and reliability. ‘Finding aids’ can be defined as documents compiled by librarians, curators or archivists containing information about the nature and scale of an individual record or a collection. Often appended by notes, they are used by researchers to determine whether data may be relevant to their work. * Students are to brainstorm and list the various forms archives may come in, as well as where and how these are stored. Answers may include the following – letters, reports, minutes, registers, maps, photographs and films, digital files, sound recordings. * Provide students with a copy of the National Archives of Australia – [Fact Sheet #4 What are Archives?](http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs04.aspx) Students are to read through and summarise the information under each of the sub-headings. * Using the National Archives of Australia website and working in pairs, students are to explore the range of topics and archives which are available to Australian researchers. Each pair should report their findings verbally to the class. Prompts include the following – were there any unexpected or surprising topics? How did students find the workability of the online databases? * In addition to the NAA website, students should work in pairs to create a list of some of the other archives available to historians of World War I:   + The [archives of the Australian War Memorial](https://www.awm.gov.au/collection)   + The [Australian Army primary materials collection](https://www.army.gov.au/our-history/primary-materials/world-war-one-1914-to-1918) * International:   + [The National Archives](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/), Kew, London   + The [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](http://www.cwgc.org/)   + The [British Imperial War Museum](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections)   + The [German Federal Archives](https://www.bundesarchiv.de/benutzung/sachbezug/militaer/index.html.en) * In small groups, students should access one of these websites and compile a list of the archival material available (Personal diaries, Unit Histories, maps, photographs etc.). Students should also attempt to identify any ‘finding aids’ if present. Each group should share their findings with the class. This activity could also be completed using a Google Document, allowing for greater collaboration. * Teacher led discussion of the process of digitisation. What is the purpose of digitisation? How are documents chosen for digitisation? How are digitised documents stored? Complete a S.W.O.T analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of the digitisation process. * To give students practical experience working with digital records, they can access the [digitised World War I service record of a Fromelles Digger](https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/SearchScreens/NameSearch.aspx). Six new Fromelles soldiers were identified through DNA analysis and named in 2016. Students should select one soldier to research. Research findings can be presented to the class in a multimedia format:   + Second Lieutenant James Benson (Item barcode 3074214)   + Private Justin Breguet (Item barcode 3116005)   + Private Clifton Sydney Brindal (Item barcode 3124205)   + Private Sidney Broom (Item barcode 3130431)   + Private Robert Maudsley (Item barcode 8030285)   + Private William Burke (Item barcode 3170320) * Using everything they have learned so far, students should answer this extended response question:   Assess the importance of archival material to historical investigations, and specifically, to our understanding of events in the First World War. | Structured – using laminated cards, students can match the terms with their definitions.  Extension – assess the usefulness of the NAA website to historians researching modern Australian history.  Structured – provide a scaffolded worksheet for students to fill out.  Extension – present his information in a shared Wikispace.  Structured – create a Glogster (digital poster) presenting this information  Extension – present this information as a podcast.  Structured – outline the archival materials available to historians of World War I. |
| Students investigate   * the reconstruction of historic sites and site chronology using evidence | * Re-cap the following terms and their meanings – evidence, primary sources, secondary sources, interpretation, reconstruction, and reliability. Students should also re-cap their understanding of the term chronology. * Students need to understand that the reconstruction of historic sites doesn’t always occur just in a physical sense – such as the reconstruction of a Viking settlement at Avaldsnes Norway; but rather, it could also be a hypothetical reconstruction that aims to determine the sequence of events at a particular historic site based on the written and material evidence available – such as a reconstruction of the events surrounding the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. * Examples:   + Ancient - written and geological evidence pertaining to the stages of Mt Vesuvius’ eruption in AD79   + Modern - the archaeological evidence, written histories and oral testimony that assist in our understanding of the transformation of Sydney’s The Rocks district, from the time of pre-European occupation through to today. * Class discussion of the roles and methods used by historians and archaeologists. Students to answer the following question:   + Explain how the work of historians and archaeologists complement each other and contribute to an enhanced understanding of our past. * Students are to create a table on the archaeological and written sources available to historians studying the modern world. Teachers may also wish to focus purely on sources available for the First World War, for example: * Archaeological Evidence   + Weapons   + Bodies   + Ammunition   + Trenches   + Dugouts   + Barbed wire   + Clothes   + Badges   + Medals   + Helmets   + Identity discs   + Field kits   + Personal keepsakes * Written Evidence   + Postcards   + Personal diaries   + Letters home   + Journals   + Memoirs   + Telegrams   + Photographs   + Film   + Unit diaries   + Field maps   + Trench maps   + Official documents   + Newspaper articles * Teacher to model the effective analysis of historical sources, both written and material, in terms of their perspective, reliability and usefulness to a historian. Provide students with the opportunity to practice this skill. * Teacher led discussion of the ways historic sites have been reconstructed. In small groups, students should brainstorm of list examples of reconstructed historic sites, both ancient and modern. The internet may be used to assist in this process.   + Ancient - Arthur Evans and the Palace of Knossos, Skara Brae, 3D reconstructions of Pompeii or the Roman Colosseum, virtual reconstruction of the Giza Pyramid Complex, the Theban Mapping Project, Ötzi the Iceman, any of the Bog Bodies, Wroxeter Roman Villa (UK), excavations at Akhetaten.   + Modern – Tasmania’s Port Arthur, Victorian slums, the sinking of the Titanic, military fortifications, colonial cemeteries, battlefields of the First and Second World Wars, the murder of the Romanov family and the mystery of Anastasia, U.S Civil War battlefield reconstruction, Spanish Civil War mass graves. * Watch an episode of Finding the Fallen, a documentary series which involved the excavation and ‘reconstruction’ of World War I trenches. Students to take notes on the process, the evidence gathered, and the conclusions made by the historians. A class discussion should ensue. * To give students an example of reconstructed First World War trenches, they can conduct internet-based research on the 1917 Battle of Vimy Ridge and the Canadian Government’s subsequent decision to leave the battlefield untouched, thus preserving their trenches for posterity. This information can be written in a paragraph using the SEEL writing strategy. Students are also able to utilise Google Maps – Street View to undertake a virtual tour of the reconstructed trenches. * If students have a particular interest in PC Games, and examination and discussion of the [PC Game Battlefield 1](http://metro.co.uk/2016/05/26/battlefield-1-interview-before-we-start-looking-at-making-things-up-lets-look-at-what-history-provides-us-5905319/) might be beneficial. The following website provides a brief interview with the game’s design director, Lars Gustavsson, discussing the historical foundations of the game and the moral dilemmas involved in reconstructing the conditions experienced by soldiers of the First World War. | Structured – previous matching activity.  Extension – analyse the strengths and weaknesses of each discipline – history and archaeology.  Structured – create a virtual museum exhibition with visual examples of each of these items.  Extension – students are to choose one of the examples listed to research and write a summary report on.  Structured – provide students with guided comprehension questions.  Extension – explain why some WWI sites have been preserved while others have not. Provide examples.  Structured – play the game and write a review of the game’s historical accuracy. |
| Students investigate:   * the contribution of archaeological and scientific techniques in the investigation of the past, including site surveys, excavation, forensic examination, DNA analysis and exhumation | * Re-cap student responses to the discussion of the complimentary nature of history and archaeology. Read the following article on [‘Battlefield Archaeology’ written by archaeologists Tony Pollard and Neil Oliver](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/archaeology/two_men_01.shtml) and answer comprehension questions on the nature of battlefield archaeology, how it contributes to our understanding of the past, and what methods are employed in this field. * Class brainstorm regarding how historic sites are located. Answers may include – common knowledge, luck, the presence of tells/mounds, human activities (ploughing, digging foundations and so on), using literary or other documentary evidence, aerial and satellite photography, crop/soil marks, and surveying (both resistivity and magnetic). * Provide students with the various steps involved in an archaeological excavation, including site surveys, excavation techniques, recording and preserving finds. Explain that open-area excavations, rather than the use of grids, are more commonly used to unearth World War I trenches. Explain the reasons for this. * Optional – watch the following documentary titled [Digging up the Trenches: The Battle of the Somme](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LO1dYuI6g0&t=2331s). Students should take note of the methods employed by the archaeologists, particularly the exhumation of human remains. * Students should investigate how uncovered material evidence, including human remains, is examined. This [link provides information to reinforce the information](http://aboutforensics.co.uk/forensic-anthropology/) presented in the above documentary. Students should make a recount. * Explain to students that the identification of soldiers of the First World War is dependent on the following: cross-referencing of records listing soldiers who went missing in the same location and on the same date, DNA match (sometimes this isn’t possible due to degradation of the remains or the lack of comparable DNA), artefacts, anthropological data, and dental records. * Students to answer this extended response question:   + How does archaeology and science contribute to our understanding of the past? | Extension – assess the contribution of science and archaeology to our enhanced understanding of WWI battles.  Structured – matching activity.  Extension – summarise this information using the procedure text-type.  Extension – explain the methodologies of forensic anthropology. |
| Students investigate:   * the contribution of historic sites and oral testimony to an understanding of events, developments and life in the past | * Watch the documentary titled ‘The Lost Diggers of Fromelles’ (PG). The documentary goes behind the scenes of the largest excavation of First World War human remains in modern times. Students to take notes. * Teacher explanation on the role of oral testimonies in historical investigations. Access some of the [Australian War Memorial’s World War I oral history collection](https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/remember-remembering-oral-histories-of-the-first-world-war) * Students to answer this extended response question:   + Explain how historic sites, oral testimonies and other historical sources contribute to our understanding of the past? | Extension – complete a S.W.O.T analysis on the use of oral histories as a historical source.  Extension – assess the usefulness of historic sites and oral testimonies to a historian studying WWI. |

Resources

Books

* Lycett, T. and S. Playle., Fromelles: The Final Chapters – How the buried diggers were identified and their lives reclaimed. Penguin Books, 2013.
* Barton, P., The Lost Legions of Fromelles: The true story of the most dramatic battle in Australia’s history, Allen & Unwin, 2016.
* Lindsay, P., Fromelles: The story of Australia’s darkest day – the search for our fallen heroes of World War One, Hardie Grant Books, 2007.

DVDs

* The Lost Diggers of Fromelles, directed by Wain Fimeri, Tattooed Media, 2010.

Online articles

* Kelly, P., Fromelles: [Australia’s Forgotten Sacrifice on the Western Front](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/paul-kelly/fromelles-australias-forgotten-sacrifice-on-the-western-front/news-story/4b7dde761da9cd1e26748a10f3ac8e89), The Australian, 16 July 2016 (Payment required)
* Stewart, C., [After a century, tenacity gives names to our fallen heroes](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/ww1-anniversary/after-a-century-tenacity-gives-names-to-our-fallen-heroes/news-story/4e63667fc299d1efdfd70b010e46b3cd), The Australia, 18 July 2016
* Pollard, T. and N. Oliver., [Battlefield Archaeology](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/archaeology/two_men_01.shtml), BBC History, 17 February 2011
* [Forensic Archaeology](http://aboutforensics.co.uk/forensic-anthropology/)
* Remember remembering: [Oral histories of the First World War](https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/remember-remembering-oral-histories-of-the-first-world-war)

Clips

* Australia’s Darkest Hour – [The Battle of Fromelles, The Great War Channel](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/paul-kelly/fromelles-australias-forgotten-sacrifice-on-the-western-front/news-story/4b7dde761da9cd1e26748a10f3ac8e89) (Payment required)
* [Finding the Fallen – Beaumont Hamel](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1860jWey9Q), yap Films
* [Digging up the Trenches – The Battle of the Somme](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LO1dYuI6g0&t=2331s)

Websites

* National Archives of Australia – [Fact Sheet #4 What are Archives?](http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs04.aspx)
* The [archives of the Australian War Memorial](https://www.awm.gov.au/collection) and [Record Search](https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/SearchScreens/NameSearch.aspx)
* The [Australian Army primary materials collection](https://www.army.gov.au/our-history/primary-materials/world-war-one-1914-to-1918)
* The [National Archives](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/)
* The [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](http://www.cwgc.org/)
* The [British Imperial War Museum](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections)
* The [German Federal Archives](https://www.bundesarchiv.de/benutzung/sachbezug/militaer/index.html.en)
* [Interview with the design director of the PC game Battlefield 1](http://metro.co.uk/2016/05/26/battlefield-1-interview-before-we-start-looking-at-making-things-up-lets-look-at-what-history-provides-us-5905319/)
* Gripton, A., [Your History: A few ideas about teaching history](http://www.yourhistorynsw.com/)

Reflection and evaluation