



Bravest of the Brave education activities

Teachers' notes



Images: John Leak, centre; Lawrence Weather; cross remembering the fallen at Pozieres

What drives a person to show incredible bravery under fire? Where does that strength and nerve come from?

The travelling exhibition *Bravest of the Brave* recounts the stories of South Australia's eight Victoria Cross winners from the First World War.

The Victoria Cross is the highest award for acts of bravery in wartime. It is possible for any serving member of the armed forces to obtain this award. It was first awarded by Queen Victoria to honour acts of valour during the Crimean War.

As well as each soldier's citation and replica medals, the exhibition includes background information on the individuals and the First World War, to give visitors a sense of the person behind the Victoria Cross.

The activities described here are designed to encourage students to explore the ideas of the exhibition in greater detail, and to help them construct their own opinions about the events and circumstances of the First World War.

The three activities have been designed to fit within the Year 9 Australian Curriculum: History. They require students to conduct their research using a number of sources, including the resources on the Australian War Memorial's website <http://www.awm.gov.au/> and the National Archives site *Mapping our Anzacs* <http://mappingouranzacs.naa.gov.au/>. Each soldier's war service record is available on *Mapping our Anzacs* and although the hand-writing can be difficult to decipher, students are able to get a sense of the soldiers' identities and their war service through looking at the documents.

The projects listed can be done as stand-alone activities, or can be combined.



Images: Roy Inwood, The ruins of Le Verguier, Australian artillery horses passing an empty shell dump near Menin Rd

The first activity option explores contemporary notions of heroism, and asks students to compare their own understandings of what makes a hero with those of other people and in other times, asking them examine different perspectives on the issue.



Images: Pozieres in the snow, stretcher bearers at Noreuil, searching the ruins of Peronne for unexploded bombs

The second activity option asks them to use the resources on the Australian War Memorial website to construct a PowerPoint presentation about one of the battles in which a Victoria Cross was won. The AWM website has a vast bank of images, which can be accessed under the 'Collections' tab, and is searchable by key words. There are also unit histories and summaries of each of the major campaigns. These can be accessed by going to War History > Units and selecting the soldier's unit. This will take students to a short summary of that unit's major campaigns, and contains links at the end to significant people, places and battles. Students can construct their narratives from this information and then then illustrate them from the image collection.



Images: James Park Woods, Arthur Seaforth Blackburn (2nd from left) after receiving his VC at Buckingham Palace, Joergen Christian Jensen

The third activity option provides students with an opportunity to examine the service record of an individual soldier. Links are given to each Victoria Cross winner's service record on the National Archives site. All Australian First World War soldier's records are available on the site, so students could alternatively research the record of another soldier – either someone local or a family member. These service records can be hard to read because of handwriting and acronyms used throughout, but documents such as "Attestation paper" documents are generally easy to access. Many of the documents have been transcribed, and transcriptions are included in the files.

This activity asks students to write a commemoration of a soldier that includes information about their service, including some personal reflection about their own feelings.



Image: 'All that was left of Merris'

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1. WHAT MAKES A HERO

Perspectives and interpretation



Image: soldiers firing at German aircraft at Noreuil

As a group, make a list of people you think are heroes. Does everyone in the class agree with the list?

List the qualities you think someone needs to be considered a 'hero'.

Watch the video 'Definition of valour' on the Australian War Memorial website (<http://www.awm.gov.au/visit/hall-of-valour/>). Using the citations from the exhibition, make a list of the characteristics these soldiers showed in battle.

Using newspapers and magazines create a collage of images, headlines and words relating to the idea of 'heroes' as presented by the media today.

Does the way that the media presents heroes match your own ideas?

Think about the statement:

WARTIME CHANGES THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT HEROES

Would you say you **strongly agree**, **agree**, **not sure**, **disagree** or **strongly disagree**? Justify your position.

Create a Popplet (<http://popplet.com/>) to share your findings. Use text, images and video to share your thoughts about what it means to be a hero.

2. FIRST WORLD WAR BATTLES

Multi-media project – explanation and communication



Image: guns in action at Noreuil

In groups of two or three, choose one of the Victoria Cross winners' stories and create a short PowerPoint presentation about the battle during which it was awarded.

Use information and images from the Australian War Memorial website (<http://www.awm.gov.au/>) to create your presentation.

3. COMMEMORATION

Analysing and using sources; explanation and communication



Image: the Menin Road cemetery

Select one of the soldiers whose story is told in the exhibition. Using the exhibition text and information from the Australian War Memorial website along with the soldiers' service records from the National Archives of Australia (Mapping our Anzacs <http://mappingouranzacs.naa.gov.au>) write a commemoration of their First World War experience that might be read at ceremony such as Anzac Day. Reflect on your own feelings about the soldier's actions.