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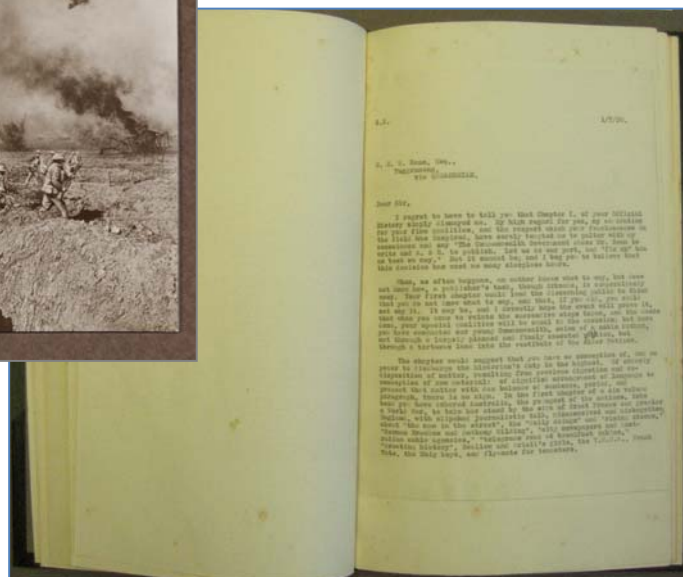
Learning Activities

Stage 6 Modern History

Learning Programs K-12

Outcomes grid for *ONE Hundred* exhibition learning activities, Stage 6

Exhibition artefact	Syllabus outcomes
<p>Bean rejection letter</p> <p>Hurley's Zonnebeke photo (MH)</p>	<p>H3.3 Analyses and evaluates sources for their usefulness and reliability.</p> <p>H3.4 Explains and evaluates differing perspectives and interpretations of the past.</p>



Artefact 67: War history: Bean rejection letter, 1 July 1920

Stage 6 Modern History

Teacher's notes

Stage 6 Modern History outcomes:

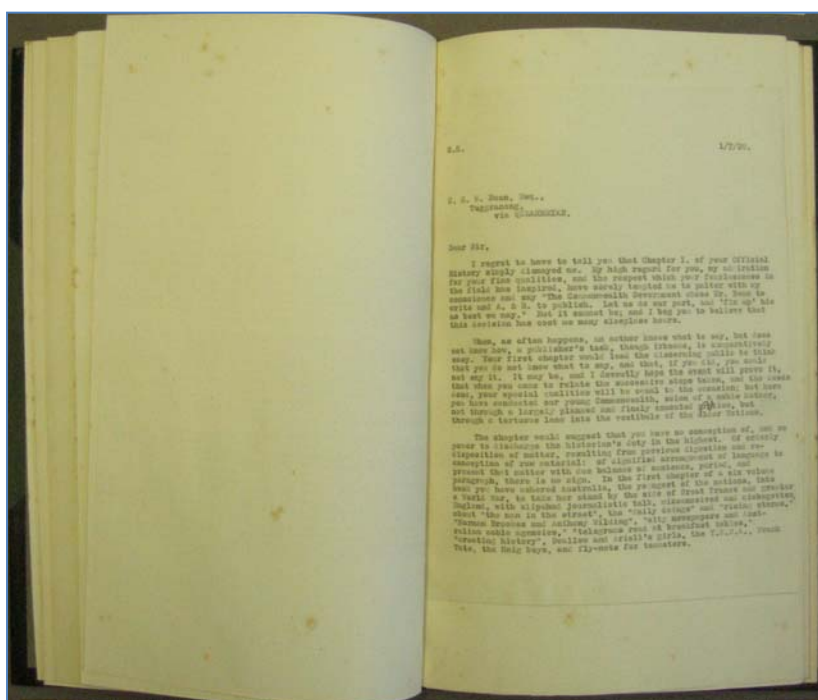
P1.1 Describe the role of key individuals, groups and events of selected studies from the eighteenth century to the present.

P3.3 Comprehends and analyses sources for their usefulness and reliability.

Inquiry Question: How useful is C.E.W. Bean's *Official History* to our knowledge of World War One?

Instructions

1. Students read background information and Sources A-D.
2. Students complete learning activities and 'Take the Challenge' for extension.



Student learning activities

Inquiry Question: How useful is C.E.W. Bean's *Official History* to our knowledge of World War One?

Background

Charles Edwin Woodrow (C. E. W.) Bean was born in 1879 in Bathurst New South Wales. He studied law but later took up journalism and was employed by *The Sydney Morning Herald*. When World War One broke out he was nominated by the Australian Journalists' Association to be the official correspondent to the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) overseas.

Bean went ashore at Gallipoli less than six hours after the first landing and wrote one of the first accounts of the event. His bravery was remarkable and although he was wounded at Gallipoli, he tended to his wounds and refused to be evacuated.

Whilst covering the action in France from 1916 to 1918 he decided the 'official history' he would write would need multiple volumes to cover the significant contribution Australia was making in World War One. He aimed to make his history as truthful as possible by covering as many viewpoints as needed. To do this he interviewed the infantry officers who participated in the battles. This meant he spent much time travelling around the front lines. Bean's eye-witness approach was quite radical at a time when most histories relied on the view of those in headquarters reporting on the course of a battle.

After the war Charles Bean became editor of the twelve-volume history known as *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, and also wrote six of the volumes. It was commissioned by the Commonwealth Government with Bean heading the project. The Australian publishers Angus and Robertson published the volumes as they were produced. The series was a massive undertaking that took twenty-two years to complete. Bean's many field notes, maps and interviews which he recorded at the time proved to be invaluable.

Bean's *Official History* was later credited with the creation of what has come to be known as 'the Anzac legend' and Australia's unique identity. Charles Bean was also instrumental in the establishment of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and the acquisition of items for its collection. He died in 1968.

Recall questions

1. How soon after the first landings at Gallipoli did Bean arrive?
2. How long did it take Bean to write his history of World War I?
3. What else is Bean credited with creating?

Source A - Edited transcript of 1920 letter from George Robertson to Charles Bean rejecting his *Official History* for publication.

Dear Sir,

I regret to have to tell you that Chapter 1 of your official history simply dismayed me... Your first chapter would lead the discerning public to think that you do not know what to say, and that, if you did, you could not say it...

The chapter would suggest that you have no conception of, and no power to discharge the historian's duty in the highest. Of orderly disposition of matter, resulting from previous digestion and reconception of raw material: of dignified arrangement of language...there is no sign.

Source B - Review of Volume 1 of Bean's *Official History* by the Ottawa Citizen, a New Zealand newspaper, 29 March 1922.

"For wealth of detail and comprehensiveness of narrative, it is probably unique. The intimacy of the story is extraordinary. To an Australian the narrative must be absorbing. Even the adventures of little parties of private soldiers are told if they throw light on the campaigns. It is evidently the intention of the Australian government to produce a set of books that will find a place in nearly every Australian household and library. Besides being a mine of information and a record of achievement, it is also a personal document to many parents and others."

Source C - Last paragraph of C. E. W. Bean's sixth volume, 'The Australian Imperial Force in France during the Allied Offensive', 1918.

"What these men did, nothing can alter now. The good and the bad, the greatness and smallness of their story will stand. Whatever of glory it contains, nothing now can lessen. It rises, as it will always rise, above the mists of ages, a monument to great-hearted men; and, for their nation, a possession for ever."

Source D – Extract from article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* by Geraldine O'Brien, 12 February 2000.

"To many historians, C.E.W. Bean was Australia's Herodotus, and the man who immortalized the spirit of mateship and the courage of his countrymen in World War I and who, for better or worse, created the legend of Anzac."

Questions

1. List the reasons the author of this letter gives for rejecting Bean's manuscript.

2. The author of this letter talks of 'the historian's duty'. Explain what the author means by 'the historian's duty'.

Take the challenge

7. The chapter that was rejected in 1920 was later inserted into Volume VI and published in 1942. The theme of this rejected chapter was that the Australian Imperial Forces had ‘created the history of their country’ (Robertson–Bean correspondence quoted in M. Ball, 2003). Discuss reasons why this theme would be rejected in 1920 but deemed appropriate in 1942.

8. In Source C Bean described the accomplishments of the men of the Australian Imperial Force as ‘a possession for ever’ of the nation. Discuss whether Bean’s history should be considered a national treasure.

9. Assume the role and character of C.E.W. Bean. Write a response to Mr. George Robertson of Angus & Robertson Publishers defending the value of your work as a history of World War I.

References

Ball, M. (2003). *Re-reading Bean’s last paragraph*. Australian Historical Studies, 122, 231-247.

Winter, D. (1992). *Making the legend: the war writings of C. E. W. Bean*. Australia: University of Queensland Press.

On-line copies of Bean’s war histories at <http://www.awm.gov.au/histories/>

Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Artefact 64: Composite image, Frank Hurley war photograph, 1918

Stage 6 – Modern History

Inquiry question: How reliable are Frank Hurley's composite photos as primary sources of evidence for the conflict on the Western Front?

Modern History outcomes

- H3.3 Analyses and evaluates sources for their usefulness and reliability.
- H3.4 Explains and evaluates differing perspectives and interpretations of the past.



Background

Frank Hurley was born in 1885 in Sydney and began his photographic career with a postcard company in 1905. He was adventurous and ambitious and made his reputation with the spectacular photographs he took as a member of several famous expeditions to the Antarctic.

During World War I the official Australian War Historian, Charles Bean, was annoyed with the staged photographs made by the English photographers he was forced to rely on. In May 1916 he called press photography a ‘flimsy fake’ and ‘the last thing a historian wants to build on’. He was denied permission to take them himself, and requested the appointment of Australian photographers who would accurately document Australian participation in the war. In 1917 Frank Hurley became an official photographer for the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).

Hurley was dubbed the ‘mad photographer’ by the troops on the Western Front because of the risks he took to get good pictures. Even so he was disappointed that they never quite conveyed the reality of the war. Hurley wished to combine several different photos into ‘composites’ or photo-montages, as a means of adding other elements and increasing the dramatic effect, a technique he had used in the Antarctic.

This innovation was criticized by Charles Bean who wanted factual images of the war. Hurley threatened to resign, and was instead sent to the Middle East to photograph the Australian effort there. In 1918 he displayed six photos labelled as ‘composites’ at the Australian Art Exhibition at Grafton Galleries, London which opened on 25 May, 1918. One of these photos was a huge 6.4 meter by 4.7 metre print of the Zonnebeke photo.

The photo is intended to show the action near Zonnebeke, a small Belgian village. The village was near Polygon Wood and behind German lines at the time of the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) in September 1917.

(see <http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/captured/official/index.asp> for information on Charles Bean’s attitude to war photographers).

Carefully read the sources and answer the questions

Source A – Reconstruction of the assembling of the Zonnebeke composite photo

Go to the link on the State Library of NSW website

http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/services/learning_at_the_Library/hurley_video.html

This short film shows how the image may have been constructed. The photograph is known by many names including *An Episode after the Battle of Zonnebeke*, *Over the Top*, *The Raid* or *Battle of Zonnebeke*. This recreation of the process shows 11 separate photos, however the original was made up of 12.

Source B – Hurley's diary entries

26 September 1917

To get pictures one must go into the hottest [action] and even then come out disappointed. To get War pictures of striking interest and sensation is like attempting the impossible.... Had a great argument with (C.E.W) Bean about combination pictures. Am thoroughly convinced that it is impossible to secure effects without resorting to composite pictures.

1 October 1917

Had a lengthy discussion with (C.E.W) Bean re pictures for exhibition and publicity purposes. Our Authorities here will not permit me to pose any pictures or indulge in any original means to secure them. They will not allow composite printing of any description...I have decided to tender my resignation at once...I conscientiously consider it but right to illustrate to the public the things our fellows do and how war is conducted. They can only be got by printing a result from a number of negatives or reenactment.

6 October 1917

Headquarters have given me permission to make six combination enlargements in the exhibition so I withdrew my resignation. They must at least appreciate my efforts, as they were dead against this being done. However, it will be no delusion on the public as they will be distinctly titled setting forth the number of negatives used, etc. All the elements will be taken in action.

The Australian War Memorial

<http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/cdview?pi=nla.ms-ms883-1-5&chunk=1>

Source C – C.E.W. Bean’s diary entry (from before Hurley arrived)

2 June 1916

I have applied to the High Command to be allowed to take photos for the record of the actual facts for future Australians to see; the Australian government has asked that I should take photos. The British government or war office put them off with a lie that none except the official photographer were allowed...[and] by sending down their official photographer [Ernest Brooks] and asking me to take him round and show him what wants to be photographed...I am very tempted to send in my resignation after this.

The Australian War Memorial

http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/war_diaries/cew_bean/folders.asp?type=Diary

Questions

1. Describe what you think is happening in the photo in Source A.
2. After viewing the reconstruction of the photo in Source A, how many different elements can you now identify in the photograph? Which feature is missing from the reconstruction?
3. Using Source B, explain why Hurley made this photograph.

4. Read Source C. Explain why Bean was annoyed about the British providing the Australian forces with a photographer. [Keep in mind that, up until that time, Bean had been taking most of the photos of Australians at Gallipoli and knew the British photographer Ernest Brooks had ‘faked’ a number of his photos.]

5. Go to <http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P01438.001/>. The website clearly shows the size of the Zonnebeke photo that Hurley exhibited in London in 1918. It was an incredible 6.1 metres by 4.7 metres!
 - a. Explain why Hurley presented the photo in these proportions.

 - b. What sort of impact do you think it would have made on visitors to the exhibition in 1918?

 - c. How reliable do you consider this version of the photo to be to be as a depiction of the war?

6. Assess how useful Sources B and C would be for a historian studying World War I. In your answer, consider the perspectives provided by the TWO sources and the reliability of each one.

References

- McGregor, Alasdair (2004) *Frank Hurley: a photographer's life*. Camberwell Vic: Viking.
- Real Pictures (now Mitra Films), (2004) *Frank Hurley: the man who made history*.
<http://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/frank-hurley/clip2/>
- Mitchell Library. State Library of New South Wales



Wally Shiers, Frank Hurley, Keith Smith and Jim Bennett with the Vickers Vimy, 1920
Photographed by Walter Burke
Mitchell Library
DG ON 2/2

STATE LIBRARY OF NSW

Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000

Phone:+61 29273 1414

Fax:+61 29273 1255

Email:learning@sl.nsw.gov.au

www.sl.nsw.gov.au

Contributing writers: Louise Zarmati, Bradley Wood, Anneke Blom

Editor: Megan Perry

Community Learning Services

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