



Post visit

Learning Activities

Stage 6 History Extension

Learning Programs K-12

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

Exhibition artefact	Syllabus outcomes
<p>Hurley's Zonnebeke photo (EXT)</p>	<p>E1.1 Analyses and evaluates different historical perspectives and approaches to history and the interpretations developed from these perspectives and approaches.</p> <p>E2.1 Plans, conducts and presents a substantial historical investigation involving analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information from historical sources of differing perspectives and historical approaches.</p>



Artefact 64: Composite image, Frank Hurley War Photograph, 1918

Stage 6 – History Extension

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

History Extension outcome

E1.1 Analyses and evaluates different historical perspectives and approaches to history and the interpretations developed from these perspectives and approaches.

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.

In World War One 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 metre 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)

Source A – View a brief segment from the 2004 documentary ‘Frank Hurley: The Man Who Made History’ by Real Pictures

This film discusses Frank Hurley’s frustration in getting the war photos he wants, how the Zonnebeke photo was constructed and Charles Bean’s reaction.

<http://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/frank-hurley/clip2/>

Source B – Article by Paul Byrnes in the Sydney Morning Herald on 11 June 2004.

This article discusses fake photos throughout history, their motives and effect.

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/06/11/1086749890727.html?from=storyr>

Source C – Australian War Memorial site with controversial war photographs.

This site illustrates the consequences of two photos on Australian history.

<http://www.awm.gov.au/publications/contact/controversy.asp>

Questions

1. Examine Sources A, B and C. Develop a list of questions you would use to analyse a photo as an historical source.
2. The Zonnebeke photo is often published without mentioning it is a composite. What problems do you think this may present to students of history?
3. Do you consider photos more or less reliable than written sources? Support your opinion with examples.

4. Conduct your own research on World War I photographers Ernest Brooks and William Ivor Castle.
 - Information about Ernest Brooks (British) can be found in Charles Bean's diary entry for 2 June 1916
http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/war_diaries/cew_bean/folders.asp?type=Diary
 - Information about William Ivor Castle (Canadian) can be found at
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/forgery/002035-200-e.html>

Compare Hurley's work with that of Brooks and Castle. In your opinion, are Hurley's photos more reliable than those of Brooks or Castle as historical sources? Support your opinion with evidence.

HSC - style question

Critically evaluate the way photographs have been used as sources of evidence in war. Support your argument with reference to the work of at least TWO photographers you have studied.

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 NSW.

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