

Teachers' Notes

Anzac Sons: the Story of Five Brothers in the War to End All Wars

By

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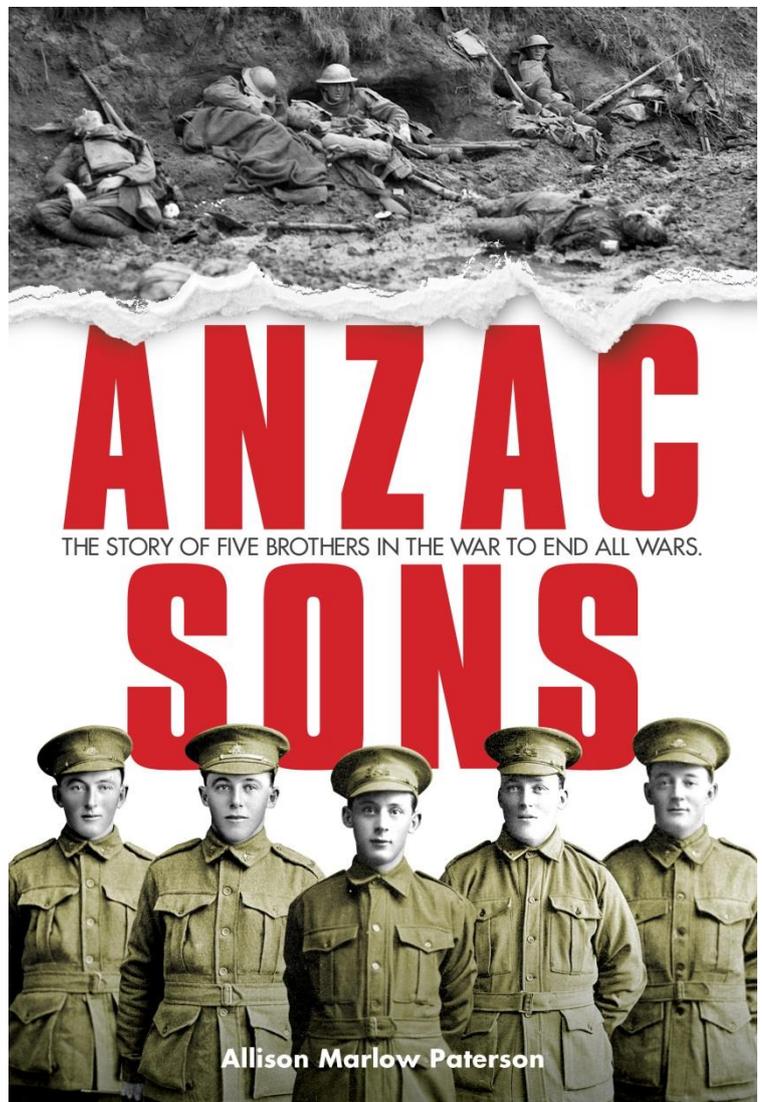
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Recommended for Years 9 -12

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1. Synopsis

Anzac Sons: Five Brothers on the Western Front is the story of the Marlow brothers in World War One, five young Australian men who enlisted with enthusiasm and a sense of duty, three were to lose their lives. This work is unique as it contains never-before published primary sources: letters, photos and postcards from the five brothers, four of whom served in the same company of the 38th Battalion. The collection of over 500 letters came close to being destroyed but through fate were recovered and are the catalyst for this book. Complete letters are used and also excerpts, along with author reflections at key points throughout the manuscript. Unusually it also includes some letters from family and friends to the brothers on the Western Front. It is a narrative that not only provides an insight into the experiences of a family but also provides a history of the role of Australian soldiers on the Western Front.

The story begins before the war years and follows the motivations and journeys of the brothers as they enlist, to their time on the Western Front, the death of each three brothers and the eventual arrival home of the two surviving sons. Heart-wrenching events include the death of the youngest son just weeks after his arrival on the front, the young Australians waiting six weeks to learn another brother had died of wounds and finally, the death of the eldest brother by sniper. He had married just weeks before his departure; he never held his daughter.

It is supported by the reflections of the author as she walks in the footsteps of her ancestors on the Western Front and concludes with a poignant message of remembrance.

2. From the Author

I grew up on a farm near Pyramid Hill, the small Victorian town where I was born. I travelled 24 miles to school at Kerang on an ancient bus – top speed 40mph. My interest in the service of my ancestors began when I was studying to become a teacher. I used a selection of their letters to complete a university assignment. The dream to honour them by telling their story was ignited. I began transcribing the letters 12 years ago and reading whatever I could lay my hands on. It was not until we visited the Western Front in 2011 could I gain a greater understanding and move forward with a purpose.

I began by chronologically organising the letters and slowly transcribing each one, which took years. Many are written from the trenches with faint pencil and are badly stained. I then researched – I read everything I could find on Australian involvement in WWI, spent days in the online archives of the National Archives of Australia and on the Australian War Memorial website reading the details of the brothers, their friends and neighbours. I ploughed through battalion diaries for specific information. I made contact with local museum curators who assisted with detail I could not find online and travelled to the Western Front where we toured the region, stood on the ridges, visited the graves and spent a lot of time reflecting. All the while I was writing, editing and gathering more information. I came to a point where I knew the research would never end if I did not draw the line, which I did. I completed the work, gave it to a valued colleague for comment and then, with his

comments digested; I considered the purpose of my work and began a major edit. The result is publication.

Primarily, I undertook the writing of this story to honour my family. I have a conviction that their story needs to be shared with others. I have a sense of empathy with my great-grandmother, who I never met but to whom I feel a sense of duty. *Anzac Sons: the Story of Five Brothers in the War to End All Wars* is my undertaking that the enormous sacrifices that were made will never be forgotten.

3. Themes, Concepts

- Anzacs
- The debt owed to soldiers, past and present
- Australians at War
- Nationalism
- Western Front
- Anzac Day
- Remembrance Day
- Duty
- Courage
- Mateship
- Sacrifice
- Family
- Censorship
- Conscription
- Recruitment
- Propaganda
- Commemoration
- War memorials
- Correspondence – letters/postcards
- The Cost of War

4. Links to the Australian History Curriculum

The extensive primary sources in *Anzac Sons: the Story of Five Brothers in the War to End All Wars* make the text an ideal support document for the depth study of World War One at Year 9 level, covering the main understandings and more detailed elaborations. Excerpts provide opportunities for analysis (ACHHS169), research (ACHHS168) and identification and exploration of the perspectives of people from the past (ACHHS172).

In addition, the younger readers' version titled *Anzac Sons: Five Brothers on the Western Front* is an ideal catalyst for the depth study of Australians at War. An initial reading excluding the break-out boxes is suggested to maintain the tone of the narrative text and to provide an overview of the experience of the Marlow brothers and their family. The reader can return to the detail in the discussion at the conclusion of the reading. Notes are also available for the younger readers' version.

An overview of the causes of World War I and the reasons why men enlisted to fight in the war - ACDSEH021

Pages 18-21 - Australia

- Discuss the reasons given by the author regarding the causes of the war and further explore the concepts of alliances, imperialism, militarism and nationalism. Create a class summary of each cause.
- Why did Australia declare war?
- List five possible reasons why a young Australian man would rush to enlist. Possible answers could include: loyalty to King and Country, good pay (six shillings per day - British soldiers only received one shilling), sense of duty, proof of manhood, to support friends and family, adventure.

Pages 23-25 – the First Anzacs

- Bert Wishart was in the initial rush to enlist. How had his experience at Gallipoli changed his attitude?

Pages 93-95 – Farewell to soldiers

- The Pyramid Hill Advertiser reports on the farewell events given to Allan Marlow. Identify elements of nationalist sentiment and idealistic notions of war.
- Imagine you are in the audience on these evenings and are eligible to enlist. How would these speeches make you feel?

Pages 161-162 & Pages 295-297 Larkhill, England

- The Australian soldiers were often referred to as “six-bob-a-day tourists”. The Preface (Page 3) explains the origins of this term. Percy’s letter on p. 162 provides an example of a young soldier experiencing an adventure as do Albert’s on p. 295-297. Imagine being an Australian soldier in 1916 who had not travelled any further than to the capital city of the state in which you were born. Write a brief letter to your family about seeing the prehistoric site of Stonehenge.

Pages 180-182 Mologa – the Conscription Debate

- How would the threat of conscription have influenced the decision of Albert’s parents to sign his enlistment form?

Page 288 – Charlie’s letter – lend a hand

- Charlie explains to his uncle that he would like a few more young fellows from the local area to “come and lend a hand”. If you had volunteered to serve would you also feel this way?

Page 293-295 – Five Sons Serving the Empire

- In addition to being a key example of his sense of adventure and being a “six-bob-a-day” tourist, Albert’s letter mentions that he saw their photos in the Bendigo Advertiser. Find the article using an advanced search in Trove:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

List the possible reasons for newspapers featuring articles such as *Mologa Family: Five Sons Serving the Empire*.

- Consider the embroidery of the 1917 postcard on p 274, what does it symbolise?

The places where Australians fought and the nature of warfare during World War I, including the Gallipoli campaign - ACDSEH095

Trench conditions

The following excerpts provide examples of trench conditions and the nature of warfare both at Gallipoli and on the Western Front.

- Pages 46-47 – George to his brother Charlie describing a lecture he had attended about the conditions and weapons/tactics at Gallipoli.
- Pages 89-93, p.106-107 – Read of the transition George made to the Western Front in his letters. Consider his comment that, “There hasn’t been many of our troops killed yet”. What does this statement imply?
- Pages 118-120 - Soldiers developed various strategies to lighten the burden of the trenches. Read the adaptation of a poem which George scribed in his notebook. Using internet resources search for the phrases *Jack Johnson* (include World War I in your search), *nappers* and *bully beef*.
- Pages 125-127 – George describes his role in the Brigade Trench Mortar Battery, the Australians interaction with German troops and life behind the frontline. How would you react to life in the trenches?
- Read Allan’s comment regarding the trenches and rats on p. 260. Soldiers often used humour and wit in their letters. Why do you think they did this?

Fromelles Pages 136-137

- German positions along the frontline were often on the “high ground”. Consider the possible reasons how this had occurred and the advantages such positions allowed.
- What was the purpose of the Allied attack at Fromelles?
- Fromelles is considered to be Australia’s greatest single military disaster. Using the research tools in Resources outline the reasons why this attack failed.
<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/fromelles/?query=fromelles>
- Why is Fromelles regarded as the bloodiest 24 hours in Australian military history?

Poizieres/Mouquet Farm Pages 137-151

- Search for photos of the Poizieres battlefield on the AWM site. Consider the impact of being under severe artillery fire. George wrote little of his experience. Why do you think this would be?
- German fortifications of concrete and steel were developed all along the frontline. Read the description George provides on pp. 152-53. How would these protect the enemy soldiers and impact upon the Allied soldiers?
- Read the account of EJ Rule on p. 141 – how would we describe the effect upon these men today?
- Mouquet Farm was heavily fortified and defended and the AIF suffered enormous casualties. Consider Charles Bean’s quote on p. 147. What do his words mean?
- The group photo on p. 399 is of men who had fought at Poizieres. Consider the expression on their faces and compare to the photo on p. 44 and p. 100 in which the men have not yet experienced war. What do you notice?

Bullecourt Pages 333-339

- The use of tanks to support the infantry was much maligned by the soldiers until later in the war. Give reasons for this attitude.
- What was the Hindenburg Line?
- Why did the Australians not receive artillery support when they needed it?
- Bullecourt was a disaster for the Australian forces. Imagine you are a survivor and have the opportunity to write an uncensored letter to a friend. Write your brief account.

Messines Pages 366-396

- The Allied attack on Messines was considered a success despite heavy losses, why? What strategy did the Allies use that they did not use at Fromelles? How were Australian soldiers involved prior to the battle?
- Allan, Albert and Charles wrote letters home about their experience. Can you identify the different reactions that each man had?
- Many mates of the Marlow brothers were listed as casualties. If you were an AIF soldier how would the loss of a mate affect your attitude to the war?

Menin Road and Polygon Wood Pages 449-454

- The Menin Road attack was considered a success despite the human cost. What qualified success in WWI?
- George was wounded in the opening stages of the battle. Why did soldiers frequently die from wounds?
- Why would it take six weeks for George's brothers to learn of his death?

The Ypres Salient - Broodseinde Ridge and Passchendaele Pages 461-473

- Why was Passchendaele strategically important in the battles around Ypres?
- The battle at Broodseinde Ridge was a stepping stone to Passchendaele and was described in German records as "the black day of October 4th". Why was it described in this way?
- The Battle at Broodseinde Ridge was successful, yet the next stage failed. Give reasons why.

German Offensive 1918 - Villers Brettoneux, Hamel, Peronne & Mont St Quentin pp 555-573

- What was the aim of the German Offensive which commenced in March, 1918?
Further detail can be found at the AWM site:
<https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/1918/battles/?query=german+offensive>
- Discuss the effect of the German advance on the morale of the Allied soldiers. What emotion does Allan convey in his letters?

Villers-Bretonneux Pages 587 -588

- The battle at Villers-Bretonneux is significant to the people of the village and to Australians. Explore what occurred there in April, 1918 and the ongoing relationship which the village community has with the people of Australia.
- Tom Alford fought at Villers-Bretonneux . Read his letter on P599 and discuss how he now feels about the war and his attitude toward the “Tommies”.

Hamel and The Hundred Days Offensive Pages 611-630

- In groups students research and report to the class on a particular battle related to Australian involvement in 1918: Villers-Bretonneux, Hamel, The Battle of Amiens, Mont St Quentin and Peronne.
- Research General Monash and discuss the reasons why he is often considered to be Australia’s greatest wartime commander.

The impact of World War I, with a particular emphasis on Australia (such as the use of propaganda to influence the civilian population, the changing role of women, the conscription debate) – ACDSEH096

Propaganda

Discuss what propaganda is and ask students if they can provide examples of propaganda in their lives today.

White Feathers:

- White feathers are mentioned on page 49. What was their purpose? How would you react to receiving a white feather? What forms of social pressure could be used today?

Mologa Honour Roll Unveiled:

- Propaganda came in many forms. Identify the various comments that Reverend Plumtree on pages 130-131 makes that could influence the members of his audience to enlist.
- Imagine you are Jim or Albert Marlow, would this sermon inspire you to enlist?

Recruitment Posters:

- Recruitment posters used propaganda to persuade men to volunteer and encourage those at home to work hard for the war effort. Visit the AWM site and search for the poster *Coo-ee: A Call from the Dardanelles*. What was the purpose of the poster?

How would it make young men feel? Why does the word *Dardanelles* appear on the poster? Discuss the position of the Australian soldier in the poster. For more examples of recruitment posters visit:

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/australia.htm>

Students could design a recruitment poster using their knowledge of propaganda.

Censorship

Pages 107, 127-128, 198 Newspapers and Letters

- Censorship occurred both in newspapers and in soldiers' correspondence. Soldiers needed to hand in their letters unsealed to be checked by the censor before being sent. Why were letters censored? Students could independently explore censorship of the media throughout WWI.

Pages 242 -247 Beating the Censor

- Compare Albert's letter dated 9 November which he knew would be censored and his letters of November 10 and 16 which Albert took care to ensure he would beat the censor by giving his letters to a local on the pier at Cape Town to post. Imagine you are the censor what would you delete from Albert's letter and why?

Pages 200-201 Field Service Postcards

- View the field service postcards. When would a soldier use one of these?
- How would they be considered to be a form of censorship?

Pages 340-341 Green Envelopes

- In discussions about censorship the "green envelope" on pp 340-341 may also be considered. Why were green envelopes precious to the soldiers?

Conscription

- What is conscription? The AWM articles will provide additional background.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/conscription/>

<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/conscription/ww1/>

- Why was the Australian public so divided and why did religious differences play a part?
- Read Albert's postcard on p327 where he mentions "Ireland on their faces"- what did he mean and why would he have this attitude?

Read the excerpts from pages 180-182, 211-213, 229-230, 268-269

- Albert had pleaded with his parents to sign the papers for him to enlist. Discuss the possible reasons why they may have agreed.
- Why would Allan berate Albert for signing up?
- How do you think Sarah Marlow may have voted?

Pages 499-500 One soldier's view

- Read Allan's letter and discuss his thoughts on the war, his attitude to battle and his views on conscription. Why would he feel this way?
- Imagine you were a soldier on the Western Front who voted no to conscription. Outline your reasons.

Letters from home – Conscription and Fundraising

Pages 400-403

- These letters from home sent to George provide primary evidence of the social and religious divisions which the conscription debate was to fuel across Australia. Discuss Eddie's reference to Conscription and his attitude toward the Roman Catholic community.
- The fundraising activities of the Red Cross are also discussed in these letters. What role did women take throughout the war? Students research the changing role of women in the workforce.

The commemoration of WWI, including debates about the nature and significance of the Anzac legend - ACDSEH097

Death of Albert 412-418

- The death of Albert is described on these pages. Ask students to place themselves in the shoes of George and attempt a letter of their own to Albert's parents.
- Discuss the emotions that Albert's parents may have felt at this time.

Death of George 451-453

- George is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery near Ypres in Belgium. Students may visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and research the cemetery or a family member <http://www.cwgc.org/>
- Visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and using the Virtual Cemetery tool, students explore the symbolism used in Commonwealth War Cemeteries.

<http://cwgc-virtual-cemetery.org/virtual-cemetery/>

- View the video related to the Cross of Sacrifice.
 - What does the Cross of Sacrifice represent?
 - Why is the sword on the cross placed downwards?
 - Why were faith and religion important in people's lives in the war?
- Georges' brothers were only 15-20 kilometres away at the time. Ask students to consider why they did not receive the news for six weeks.

Death of Charlie 577-588

- What effect would the death of Charlie have on Allan?
- Allan wrote home to his parents and to Jim. The letter on page 577 is to Jim. Students write the letter that Allan may have written to his parents.
- Consider the photo of Pearl and Beatrice Eva. What impact would the death of Charlie have on them?

Mateship

Pages 618-621

- Mateship was significant to the Australian soldier and a key element of the Anzac legend. What does the word mean to you?
- In the last months of the war Allan's best mate Les Townsend is killed. Allan is not with him at the time, how would this make Allan feel?

Discuss the cost of war including the loss of life, impact upon families, lost generations and social change.

Commemoration

Coming Home - Pages 640-641, 661-662

- Allan visited the graves of his brothers before returning home. How would it feel to leave his brothers behind?

A mother grieves - Page 667

- The image on p. 667 is of the brothers who lost their lives. This was on a badge that their mother wore. Imagine being Sarah Marlow who, like so many parents across the world, did not have the opportunity to visit the final resting place of their sons. How would this impact upon families and their recovery from the loss of loved ones?

War Memorials - Pages 669 -678

- War Memorials come in many forms. Why are they significant to communities? Explore the **Remembering Them** website <http://www.rememberingthem.com.au/>
- Consider the examples of different memorials and what they commemorate.

- Why did the Oxenham write to the Marlow family?
- Discuss reasons why Allan named his home *Passchendaele*.

Remembering - Page 678

- What message is conveyed on page 678? Consider the image of the poppies in the discussion.
- Why would the author consider the commemoration of Anzac and Remembrance Day to be significant? What are the arguments against commemorating these days and explain a different perspective to that of the author.

Australian identity - Page 678

- How would the deeds of the Australian soldiers give Australia its soul? List aspects of Australian identity that could be attributed to the Anzacs.

5. Resources

Australian War Memorial

<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/conscription/>

<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/conscription/ww1/>

<https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/1918/battles/?query=german+offensive>

<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/fromelles/?query=fromelles>

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

<http://www.cwgc.org/>

<http://cwgc-virtual-cemetery.org/virtual-cemetery/>

First World War: a multimedia history of WWI

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/australia.htm>

National Archives of Australia

www.naa.gov.au

National Library of Australia

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

Remembering Them

<http://www.rememberingthem.com.au/>