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Teachers' Notes

Anzac Sons: Five Brothers on the Western Front

By

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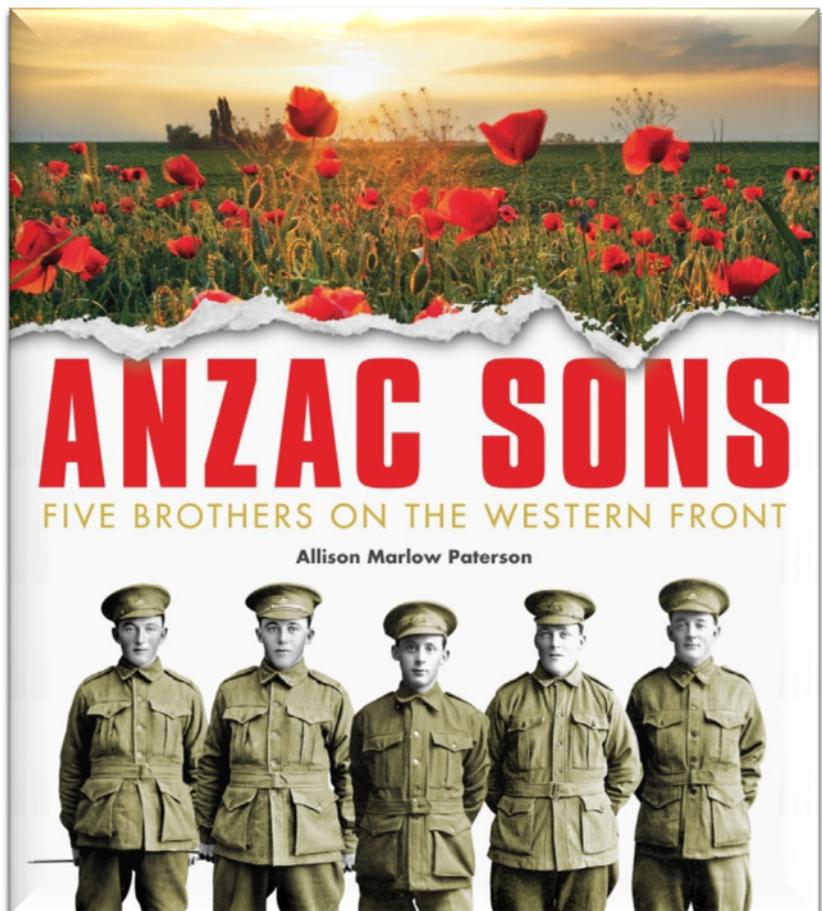
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Recommended for ages 8-14 years

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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 powerful children's book brings their story to life and is supported by letters, postcards and mementoes that the brothers sent to their family at home. It is based on the original title *Anzac Sons: the Story of Five Brothers in the War to End All Wars*, which was compiled by the granddaughter of a surviving brother from over 500 letters found in the derelict family farmhouse. It is a narrative that not only provides an insight into the experiences of a family but also provides a brief 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 photos taken on the Western Front today and concludes with a poignant message of remembrance. Children and teachers can read samples of the letters written from the trenches, walk in their footsteps and remember all those who have served throughout the generations to defend our freedom and our way of life.

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 organising the letters chronologically 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. The original version *Anzac Sons: the Story of Five Brothers on the Western Front* is my undertaking that the sacrifice that our family made will never be forgotten.

My love of reading led me to teacher librarianship which I have enjoyed for 18 years. I believe that in schools we rely heavily on fiction accounts to convey the tragedy of war and this is an opportunity to tell a real story, not one based on events where the reader is constantly challenged and sometimes misled by the blurring of fact and fiction. My intention is that this book can be read individually or aloud to a class. It is a factual account of war which can be used to generate discussion on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day and as a catalyst for more in depth study of Australians on the Western Front.

3. Themes

- Anzacs
- The debt owed to soldiers, past and present
- Australians at War
- 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. Class Discussion and Activities

Anzac Sons: Five Brothers on the Western Front is ideal for discussion and reflection on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. It can also be used as a catalyst for the study of Australians at War at Year Nine level. I suggest an initial reading excluding the break-out boxes to maintain the tone of the narrative text and returning to the detail in the discussion at the conclusion of the reading.

The following suggestions are dependent upon year level and prior knowledge. Specific curriculum links are included in brackets.



5. Pre-reading

1. What does the cover tell you about the book? Consider the poppies in the field and the tearing of the image to reflect life torn apart.
2. What does Anzac mean to you?
3. What was the Western Front?

Younger students may require some explanation of World War I. Older students may brainstorm their knowledge in groups and present key ideas to the class.

6. Viewing/Reading the Text – progressive page suggestions

Page	Suggested Questions and Activities
1	<p>Recruitment (Year 9 ACDSEH021)</p> <p>Why did Australians volunteer to serve in a war far from their homeland? Page 3 provides some prompts regarding allegiance to the Empire.</p> <p>List possible reasons for enlistment including: 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</p> <p>Would Australians volunteer to go to war today?</p>
2	<p>Why was WWI considered to be the war to end all wars?</p> <p>Consider the map – note the proximity of German New Guinea to Australia. Could this proximity have influenced the Australian people and their perception of the German threat?</p> <p>List the Allied countries on the map List the Central Powers</p>
5	<p>Chart the Western Front on a world map or use the maps on pages 2 and 11 to focus on the distance from Australia and New Zealand. The journey generally took 5-6 weeks, sometimes longer.</p> <p>Discuss the word deadlocked and why this happened in the context of trench warfare.</p> <p>Why is the landing at Gallipoli such an historic event in Australia? (Year 3 ACHHK063, Year 9 ACDSEH097)</p>



6	<p>Propaganda (Year 9 ACDSEH096)</p> <p>Recruitment posters used propaganda to persuade men to volunteer and encourage those at home to work hard for the war effort. Consider the poster <i>Coo-ee: A Call from the Dardanelles</i>. 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.</p> <p>Discuss what propaganda is and ask students if they can provide examples of propaganda in their lives today?</p> <p>For more examples of recruitment posters visit: http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/australia.htm</p> <p>Students could design a recruitment poster using their knowledge of propaganda.</p>
7	<p>Why would George be keen to get to Gallipoli?</p> <p>What is drill? (military training exercises)</p> <p>Consider the 1915 Christmas card with the words ... <i>I go out to return</i> ... in the boomerang. What is the significance of these words?</p>
8	<p>Why were soldiers issued with identification tags?</p> <p>What do the numbers and letters mean?</p>
9.	<p>Reread the excerpt from George's letter and consider his words, "There hasn't been many of our troops killed yet". What do his words indicate to you?</p> <p>Censorship</p> <p>What was <i>the censor</i>?</p> <p>Why were letters censored? In discussions about censorship the "green envelope" on p27 may also be considered. Why were green envelopes precious to the soldiers?</p> <p>Students could independently explore censorship of the media throughout WWI.</p>
11	<p>The Somme is regarded as the bloodiest day in British military history. Consider the statistics in the break-out box. (Year 9 ACDSEH095)</p> <p>For more information visit: http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/battle-of-the-somme</p>



12	Battle research – Fromelles (Year 9 ACDSEH095) https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/fromelles/?query=fromelles What was the purpose of the Allied attack at Fromelles? Why did it fail? Why is it regarded as the bloodiest 24 hours in Australian military history?
13-14	Battle Research - Pozieres (Year 9 ACDSEH095) The Cost of War Compare the photos of the village of Pozieres. Imagine being one of the villagers upon their return to what was their home at the end of the war. Discuss the impact upon the soldiers of being under heavy artillery fire. What is shell shock? Charles Bean wrote that, the battlefield "... marks a ridge more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth". What does this mean?
16 - 17	Conscription Albert had pleaded with his parents to sign the papers for him to enlist. Discuss the possible reasons why they may have agreed? What is conscription? https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/conscription/ Research the two conscription referendums of 1916 and 1917. Why was the Australian public so divided? https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/conscription/ww1/
18	In Egypt and in England the Marlow brothers, like their fellow Australians, took the opportunity to visit famous sites they had read about. The Australians were often referred to as "Six bob a day tourists". What does this phrase mean?
20	Discuss the purpose of field service postcards. When would a soldier use one of these rather than write a letter? Search for images of winter on the Western Front and consider the effect on the Australian soldiers.
21	Consider the embroidery of the 1917 postcard, what does it symbolise? Read Allan's comment regarding the trenches and rats. Soldiers often used humour and wit in their letters. Why do you think they did this?



22	What feelings do you think soldiers such as these might experience as they trudge toward the frontline?
23	<p>Using the research facilities of the National Archives of Australia access the records of Jack Lockett and use his war records as a model for students to research their own family.</p> <p>Go to: http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/NameSearch/Interface/NameSearchForm.aspx Enter surname as Lockett and category as WWI. Find John Henry Lockett then click on the digitised item to view Jack's records.</p> <p>Read the letter from the Red Cross regarding Allan's injury. Ask students to imagine they are a member of the family at home and describe their feelings as they wait for news on a loved one.</p>
24	<p>Battle research - Bullecourt Research (Year 9 ACDSEH095)</p> <p>What was the Hindenburg Line? Why did the Australians not receive artillery support when they needed it? What was the reaction of soldiers to the early use of tanks on the battlefield?</p>
25-26	<p>Battle research – Messines (Year 9 ACDSEH095)</p> <p>What significant event occurred at Messines? How were Australian soldiers involved prior to the battle? What gains were made at this battle?</p>
27	<p>The Cost of War</p> <p>Spuddy Kerr appears in both photos on this page; his leg was amputated soon after these photos were taken. Discuss the reasons why so many soldiers died of their wounds.</p>
28 -29	<p>The death of Albert is described on these pages.</p> <p>Ask students to place themselves in the shoes of George and attempt a letter of their own to Albert's parents.</p> <p>Discuss the emotions that Albert's parents may have felt at this time.</p>
30	<p>The Cost of War</p> <p>The group photo on this page is of men who had fought at Pozieres. Consider the expression on their faces and compare to the photo on p7 in which the men have not yet experienced war. What do you notice?</p>
31	<p>Ypres Salient (Year 9 ACDSEH095)</p> <p>Using the resources of the Australian War Memorial https://www.awm.gov.au/ students research the battles that occurred here and brainstorm significant events.</p>
32-33	<p>These pages describe the death of George.</p> <p>His brothers were only 15-20 kilometres away at the time. Ask students to consider why they did not receive the news for six weeks.</p>



	<p>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/</p>
34	<p>Battle research - Passchendaele (Year 9 ACDSEH095)</p> <p>Why was Passchendaele important in the battles around Ypres?</p> <p>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?</p> <p>Commemoration (Year 3 ACHHK063)</p> <p>Visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and using the Virtual Cemetery tool, students explore the symbolism.</p> <p>http://cwgc-virtual-cemetery.org/virtual-cemetery/</p> <p>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?</p>
35	<p>Battle Research - Passchendaele cont.</p> <p>The Battle at Broodseinde Ridge was successful, yet the next stage failed. Give reasons why.</p>
37	<p>German Offensive - Operation Michael 1918 (Year 9 ACDSEH095)</p> <p>What was the aim of the German Offensive?</p> <p>Detail can be found at the AWM site: https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/1918/battles/?query=german+offensive</p> <p>Discuss the effect of the German advance on soldier morale.</p> <p>In groups students research and report on a particular battle related to Australian involvement in 1918: Villers-Bretonneux, Dernancourt, Hamel, The Battle of Amiens, Mont St Quentin and Peronne.</p>
38	<p>Villers-Bretonneux - The Cost of War</p> <p>Read the inscription on the plaque at the school – what impact do these words have on you?</p>
39-40	<p>These pages describe the death of Charlie.</p> <p>Allan wrote home to his parents and to Jim. The letter on this page is to Jim. Students write the letter that Allan may have written to his parents.</p> <p>Consider the photo of Pearl and Beatrice Eva. What impact would the death of Charlie have on them?</p>



41	Allan was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, how did his uniform change? Why was Allen withdrawn from combat?
42	Mateship Mateship was significant to the Australian soldier. What does the word mean to you? In the last months of the war Allan's best mate is killed. Allan is not with him at the time, how would this make him feel?
43	Armistice (Year 3 ACHHK063) How do we commemorate the Armistice today?
44	The Cost of War Discuss the cost of war including the loss of life, impact upon families, lost generations and social change. Allan visited the graves of his brothers before returning home. How would it feel to leave his brothers behind?
45	Commemoration (Year 3 ACHHK063) Why would Allan name his home Passchendaele? War memorials are found all over the world. What is their purpose?
47-48	This image of the brothers who lost their lives 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 see the final resting place of their sons. How would this feel?
48	What does legacy mean? (Year 3 ACHHK063) What message is conveyed on this page? Consider the image of the poppies in the discussion