



Australian History Mysteries

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Five case studies in twentieth century Australian history

NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF
AUSTRALIA
CANBERRA



"I'LL HAVE YOU!"

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Introducing *Australian History Mysteries 3*

The resource

Australian History Mysteries 3 (five case studies in twentieth century Australian history) is a joint project of the National Museum of Australia and Ryebuck Media Pty Ltd, specialists in educational multimedia.

It follows on from the success of the first two series, which cover case studies in nineteenth and twentieth century Australian history.

This new publication is a print and DVD resource drawing on materials from the National Museum of Australia, national archival collections and historic sites to present students with a rich array of evidence for their investigations.

Aims

The major aim of the resource is to stimulate students' interest in and engagement with aspects of their history and heritage, and to develop the skills needed in pursuing historical inquiries.

The resource also shows teachers and students how museums are an excellent starting point for students' historical inquiries. Objects and displays in museums can raise questions, suggest inquiries, provoke debate, reveal stories, and present mysteries that need to be solved by investigating evidence.

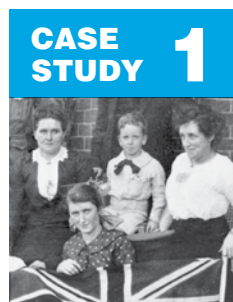
The structure of the resource

The resource contains:

- > **A 66-minute DVD** with an overall introduction, and then 'visit the scene' sections for each of the five case studies. These introductions take students to the places associated with their investigations, and show them current and historical images of the site. Students are also introduced to the 'mystery' or 'mysteries' that they will investigate in each case study.

This element of the resource serves to excite, stimulate, engage and challenge students. It is the 'hook' that will lead them into wanting to explore further the issues raised with them by the narrator, Tim Gurry.

- > **Five print case studies** with photocopiable evidence sheets. The case studies are:



How will *your* family and community be affected by the Great War?

This unit is designed to help students develop knowledge and understanding of the impacts of World War 1 on the home front through an approach that stresses **empathy**.

Students 'become' a family and 'experience' some major aspects of the war on the home front. They see how the characteristics of their family group influence the groups' decision-making, and how this in turn influences whether the community is united or divided as various situations develop during the war.

As they explore this imaginary community, students will be better able to understand the nature of the physical evidence about the impacts of the war that still exists in many communities.

By practising 'interrogating' this type of evidence, students will also develop the skills needed to interpret this evidence.

They can then take this knowledge, skill and understanding and apply it to real communities.

There are several points in this case study at which teachers will need to provide specific guidance to help students make their families as realistic as possible, and to make this activity as effective as possible. Teachers need to carefully follow the approach suggested in the Teachers' Guide thereby ensuring that students create a variety of families that will lead to the richest discussion possible at the end.

This unit is based on the investigation of north-east Victoria during the war in John McQuilton's book *Rural Australia and the Great War* (Melbourne University Press, 2001).

CASE STUDY 2



What happened at Coniston in 1928?

In 1928, a dingo trapper in his 60s was killed by one or more Aboriginal people near the Coniston pastoral station about 240 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs. A month later, a local pastoralist was attacked, but managed to beat off his attackers. The two police patrols that were sent out to arrest the people responsible for these crimes killed 31 people, and arrested two — who were later acquitted of the murder of the old trapper.

A Commonwealth Government inquiry found that the killing of the Aboriginal people was justifiable self-defence.

This event is known as the Coniston Massacre, and is the last known mass killing of Aboriginal people on the frontier.

How could these terrible events have occurred? And, were the killings really justified?

In this unit, students explore evidence that will help them to understand why these events occurred at this time, in this place and among these people.

They will also be able to make an informed and balanced judgement about whether they agree with the verdicts of the trial and the inquiry, and whether later accounts of the events, including the display in the National Museum of Australia, are fair and accurate representations.

CASE STUDY 3

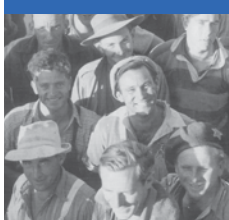


How bad was the Great Depression?

This unit provides a way of introducing students to the social impacts of the Great Depression on Australians in a simple, entertaining and challenging way. On completing this unit, students can choose various pathways for further research.

Its aim is to help students be more aware of the variety of experiences, and the complexity of the factors involved in determining how people were affected by the Depression. It does this by using an empathetic approach to the period, while still tackling it in an historically accurate way.

CASE STUDY 4



Why were former enemies able to work together successfully on the Snowy Mountains Scheme?

Between 1949 and 1974, the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme saw 100,000 people, mainly men, from over 30 countries, work together to complete one of the world's great engineering feats.

It is now usually represented as a triumph of Australian multiculturalism.

But was it? Or was it a triumph of assimilation?

In this unit, students look at evidence to identify a range of possible reasons why people, many of them very recently wartime enemies, were able to work together with very little disharmony.

In doing so they explore a major aspect of Australia's modern national identity.

CASE STUDY 5



Can you be a Vietnam War 'myth buster'?

This unit is designed to help students develop knowledge and understanding of a number of aspects of the Australian experience of the Vietnam War through analysing a number of 'myths'. By 'myth' we mean an event or belief that is widely accepted, but which may or may not be true, and which needs to be tested. Students therefore act as historians, critically analysing a variety of evidence about eight myths of Australian involvement in the war, to decide if they will accept or reject each myth, or whether they need more information and evidence.

An exciting part of this approach is the opportunity to use interviews with the Vietnam generation (and not just the soldiers). Students can use interviews to understand the myth, and also as evidence that supports or challenges it. This also engages them in a consideration of the nature of historical memory.

The unit can be used to introduce a study of Australian involvement in the Vietnam War, or as a way of encouraging students to explore particular aspects in more depth.

Each unit includes detailed and practical suggestions for its use in the classroom.

There is an **introductory ‘tuning in’ activity** to help students engage with the key concepts involved in the case study in a way that makes sense in their own lives today. Once they have focused clearly on the nature of the investigation, they will be better able to critically analyse the evidence.

There are then **practical teaching strategies** for each of the case studies, so that even the least experienced history teacher will feel confident in presenting the unit to their classes. The approaches recommended include individual student, group and whole class activities. Of course, teachers are able to select and adapt the ideas, resources and suggested questions and strategies and shape them to their own needs and approaches.

There are also some **key suggested resources** for further exploring each unit.

The choice of case studies

The case studies are not exhaustive investigations of the topics to which they relate; rather, they provide a way of focusing on a key aspect of each and can be regarded as studies in depth, not in breadth.

Each of the case studies has been selected because it involves a key aspect of Australian history that has usually been studied in secondary schools. Each study provides a way for students to explore aspects of the craft of the historian in a different way, thus enriching history teaching in schools.

An inquiry approach

All the units in *Australian History Mysteries 3* come from the practical classroom experience of the writers, and reflect a commitment to inquiry learning.

By ‘inquiry learning’ we mean a process that as far as possible involves students in ‘finding out by working out’. This means that, while we have selected and sometimes edited or adapted the evidence and provided an appropriate framework for presenting it to students in the classroom, it is still up to the students to critically analyse the evidence, and to come to their own conclusions about it.

This approach is built into each unit. The principles involved are the active elements behind students’ learning activities. In this inquiry process, students:

Engage ↓	They reach a point where they are interested and engaged, and want to find out what has happened in this case.
‘Tune in’ ↓	Students see the key concepts involved in the study in a way with which they can identify — the study has <i>meaning</i> for them.
Hypothesise ↓	They draw on existing knowledge and ideas, and state what they expect to find, or what they anticipate the outcome might be. Their hypotheses then become the things that they are testing by evidence.
Structure an inquiry ↓	To carry out their inquiry, students have to follow a logical and coherent structure. They determine what they need to know to answer the questions they are exploring.
Critically examine evidence ↓	Students now go through the process of gathering, sorting, comprehending, classifying, interpreting, testing, accepting, rejecting, qualifying, contextualising and synthesising this evidence.
Reach a conclusion ↓	Students are now ready to reach an informed conclusion that they can defend and justify. The conclusion is theirs, and they will be aware of the degree of certainty with which they can hold that conclusion. They are able to complete a summative task that demonstrates their knowledge and understanding, and that reflects the processes they have gone through.
Reflect and apply ↓	Students are able, finally, to go beyond the particular case studied, and think in terms of the broader concepts involved. They can apply their new knowledge and understandings to other periods, places and peoples.

Application to the curriculum

Australian History Mysteries 3 has been written for students at the middle secondary years of schooling (years 8–10), and it can be adapted for both higher and lower levels.

Teachers will be able to identify the areas within their own state or territory curriculum documents in which this resource will be suitable for use in their classrooms, most notably in:

- > History
- > Values education
- > Studies of society and environment
- > Discovering democracy
- > Civics and citizenship education
- > The proposed National Curriculum to come into effect in 2011.

The main use will be in the history syllabi in all Australian states and territories:

NATIONAL	Unit 4 Australia in the Modern World (1901–present)
ACT Studies of society and environment	High School band Time, continuity and change
NSW History 7–10	Stage 5 Topics 3, 4, 5
NT Social systems and structures	Bands 4 and 5 Time, continuity and change
QLD History 9–10	Levels 5 and 6 Time, continuity and change
SA Society and environment	Standard 5 Time, continuity and change
TAS Society & History	Standards 4-5 Stages 10-15
VIC Studies of society and environment	Level 6 History
WA Society and environment	Early adolescence Time, continuity and change

Learning based outcomes

Australian History Mysteries 3 is designed to help students develop **historical knowledge, understanding and skills**. Key elements developed within units include:

- > historical significance
- > evidence
- > continuity and change
- > cause and consequence
- > historical perspectives
- > historical empathy and moral judgement
- > contestation and contestability
- > problem solving
- > historical skills — the identification, comprehension and interpretation of sources, use of chronology, and research and communication.

Making history active

We believe the case studies, the multimedia materials that go with them, and the suggested approaches for implementing them all work together in this resource. They create the real possibility for active engagement, argument, enlightenment, outrage, pride, wonder and, above all, excitement to be generated in classrooms.

A search for truth

History is a search for truth — what happened, why, and with what effects and impacts.

Some of the case studies raise many difficulties that need to be addressed honestly.

- > A case study such as the Coniston Massacre is, for many people, still a very important part of their lives. It is central to some people's sense of personal identity.
- > Some case studies, such as the Vietnam War and the Coniston Massacre, involve myths. Some of these can be easily addressed because they are based on inaccuracies; others are more difficult, because they are important to people's sense of identity.
- > Some case studies, notably the Vietnam War, Coniston and the Depression case studies, raise the issue of the reliability of memory — and some people may take this as questioning their integrity and honesty.
- > All case studies involve looking at human behaviour in time of danger and stress, when both the best and worst aspects of people may appear more starkly than they do in ordinary life.
- > All require empathy, a difficult quality to develop and apply while at the same time making critical judgements.
- > All involve an awareness of complexity, rather than accepting generalisations.

This resource seeks to help students address these challenges, to make their study of Australian history accessible and engaging, and to help them come to their own conclusions and decisions based on a consideration of fair and representative evidence.

Evaluating this resource

The National Museum of Australia and Ryebuck Media are determined to produce resources that meet the needs and standards required by teachers. We have included an Evaluation Page with this kit. We would appreciate it if you would complete and return this page. It will be very helpful in helping us to monitor teachers' needs, and to ensure that we are producing the best resources possible.

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Investigating five case studies in twentieth century Australian history

