THE BORELLA RIDE

Albert Borella
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Australia in the First World War

Lesson objective
Student test on Australian participation in the First World War.

Materials
A class set of atlases is desirable but not essential.

Key Fact
From 1914 to 1918 Australians fought in the First World War. More Australians died in that war, 60,000, than in all our other wars combined.

Task
Read the text below and find in an atlas each country or city mentioned, then write out each question and answer it.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL   ART00239

Questions
1. Who was Australia's Prime Minister when the war began?
2. What happened to the SMS *Emden*?
3. Which was the first place Australian troops landed in the First World War?
4. What do the letter AIF stand for?
5. What country is Anzac Cove in?
6. Was Gallipoli an Australian victory, or a defeat?
7. Which other countries fought with the Australians at Gallipoli?
8. Where is the western front?
9. List five Australian battles on the western front.
10. Who was Australia's enemy on the western front?
11. Where did the Australians lose over 5000 men killed and wounded in one day?
12. What happened at Beersheba?
13. In which countries did the Australian Light Horse fight?
14. What year did the war end?
15. A casualty is a soldier killed or wounded in some way. How many Australian casualties were there?

AWM ART00239 (copyright expired) Sausage Valley, by Frank Crozier, 1916. Depicts a view of the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions in Sausage Valley, Pozieres, behind the front line on the Western Front.

Australia in the First World War

Reading

For Australia the First World War began when Britain and Germany went to war in August 1914, and Prime Minister Andrew Fisher's government pledged full support for Britain. The outbreak of war was greeted in Australia with great enthusiasm.

Australia's earliest involvement in the war was when the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force landing at Rabaul on 11 September 1914 and took possession of German New Guinea. On 14 November 1914 the Royal Australian Navy made a significant contribution when HMAS *Sydney* destroyed the German raider SMS *Emden*.

The Australian Imperial Force trained in Egypt, then sailed to the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey with troops from New Zealand, Britain and France. The Australians landed at what became known as Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915 and established a tenuous foothold on the steep slopes above the beach. During the early days of the campaign, the allies tried to break through Turkish lines, while the Turks tried to drive the allied troops off the peninsula. Attempts on both sides ended in failure and the allies evacuated Gallipoli in December 1915. Following Gallipoli, Australian forces fought campaigns in France and Belgium, called the Western Front, and in the Middle East.

When the AIF arrived in France, the war on the Western Front had long been settled in a stalemate, with the opposing armies facing each other from trench systems that extended from the English Channel to the Swiss border. The development of machine-guns and artillery favoured defence over attack and compounded the impasse, which lasted until the final months of the war. In July 1916 Australian infantry were introduced to this type of combat at Fromelles, where

they suffered 5,533 casualties in 24 hours. By the end of the year over 40,000 Australians had been killed or wounded on the Western Front. In 1917 a further 76,000 Australians became casualties in battles at Bullecourt, Messines, and at Ypres, also known as Passchendaele.

In March 1918 the German army launched its final offensive of the war, hoping for a decisive victory before the military and industrial strength of the United States could be fully mobilised in support of the allies. The Germans initially met with great success, before the offensive lost momentum. Between April and November the stalemate of the preceding years began to give way, as the allies combined infantry, artillery, tanks, and aircraft more effectively, demonstrated in the Australian capture of Hamel on 4 July 1918. The allied offensive, beginning on 8 August at Amiens, also led to Australian victories at Mont St Quentin and Péronne and to the capture of the Hindenburg Line. In early October the Australian divisions withdrew from the front for rest and refitting; they were preparing to return to battle when Germany surrendered on 11 November.

The Middle East campaign began in 1916 with the Australians participating in the defence of the Suez Canal and the allied reconquest of the Sinai peninsula. In the following year Australian and other allied troops advanced into Palestine and captured Gaza after the famous charge of the Australian Light Horse at Beersheba. They then captured Jerusalem and by 1918 they had occupied Lebanon and Syria. On 30 October 1918 Turkey surrendered.

For Australia, as for many nations, the First World War remains the most costly conflict in terms of deaths and casualties. From a population of fewer than five million, 416,809 men enlisted, of which over 60,000 were killed and 156,000 wounded, gassed, or taken prisoner.

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Department of Veterans' Affairs

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