



THE BORELLA RIDE

Accounts of the First World War
History
Year 9

Accounts of the First World War

Lesson objective

Students will examine, discuss and respond to primary sources written by Australian First World War nurses.

Materials

None required.

Key Fact

During the First World War 2239 Australian women volunteered for service overseas as nurses in the Australian Army Nursing Service and the Queen Alexandra Imperial Nursing Service. Twenty three of them died. The nurses served near the front line at Gallipoli in 1915, in Egypt and Palestine, and in France and Belgium from 1916 to 1918. They also worked in hospitals in rear areas such as Egypt, India and the United Kingdom.

Task

Read the sources below and look closely at the pictures. Imagine you are an Australian First World War nurse and that you write a letter to your parents every week. Write a 300 word letter describing your experiences in a typical week during the war.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART50234

AWM ART50234 (copyright expired) The first Australian wounded from Gallipoli at the Third Australian General Hospital, by George Coates. Nurses from Australian Army Nursing Service and Queen Alexandra's Imperial Army Nursing Service are depicted.



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25 April 1915, aboard a hospital ship off Gallipoli

'As we anchored we could plainly hear sounds of guns. About 9am my first patients from the battlefield commenced to pour in. They came in an endless stream, some walking holding arms, hands covered in blood, some on stretchers with broken legs, some shivering and collapsed through loss of blood and some with faces streaming with blood. We went for the worst cases first and worked like fury while the sound of firing was going on. We took on board 570 wounded. We filled every space, mattresses lying everywhere on deck. We got to bed between 2 and 3am.'

Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, 2008, p28

In France, winter, 1916

'The river was frozen, the water pipes burst and we could not get any hot water for some time, not even to wash the patients. We received some casualties straight from the battlefield, some very severely wounded, and feeling the cold very greatly. A number of them had trench feet. Several patients froze to death in the ambulance on its way to the hospital.'

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1992, p 56

In France, 1917

'All the cases came pouring in. We had 1800 men [to take care of] and only 24 sisters. We were bombed every night on and off and that made our work doubly hard, as some of the patients were difficult to control in their weak state.' J an Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1992, p 58

A hospital in Egypt 1918

'Sister Gertrude Munro was only ill for ten days. She was put straight into hospital where she got the very best medical attention possible and one of her friends was constantly with her. She had a bad combination, pneumonia and malaria, which is very hard to fight. Being a strong healthy woman we hoped against hope she might win through, but alas it was not to be. She is buried in a very pretty little cemetery with some other sisters and soldiers who have given their lives for their country.'



AWM ART00194.010 Australian nurse 1918, by John Cadell