

WOMEN AT WAR

Target Group: **Year 10**

Australian Curriculum Reference: **History**

Depth Study 3: World War II

- + The impact of World War II, with a particular emphasis on the Australian home front, including the changing roles of women and use of wartime government controls (conscription, manpower controls, rationing and censorship) (ACDSEH109).

LESSON SUMMARY

Students explore the idea that at the outbreak of WWI women were expected to manage the home and look after children, and their contribution to the war effort was made by joining voluntary organisations.

Contrast this with the variety of (non-traditional) roles women undertook during WWII such as working on the land, in factories and in the defence forces. Analyse the motivations for this, apart from necessity. Explore concepts of duty and sacrifice. Relate this to modern understandings of volunteering and compare the motivations of those involved. Analyse the impact of these changed roles on the later development of the Women's Liberation Movement.

LESSON CONTENT AND METHODOLOGY

- + Brainstorm what were considered traditional roles for women in Australia from the outbreak of WWI until WWII and what the social attitudes towards women were at the time. Students explore evolving government policy regarding women in military service, the Women's Auxiliary Services (WAAAF, AWAS and WRANS), the Australian Women's Land Army, women's responses to food shortages and rationing, and supplying the troops with extra items. Students break into groups to do further exploration of each topic.
- + Discussion topics include the following.
 - + Were these considered 'volunteer' activities? Did necessity negate their voluntary nature?
 - + How were women convinced to do these activities in a pre-TV and internet society?
 - + Ask students what is different about women's roles in our current society.
 - + Discuss the value of volunteer work when it is mandated, such as part of an academic unit of work.
 - + Explore how the women of WWII taking on non-traditional work may have developed skills for other areas in their lives.
 - + How did this 'volunteer' work contribute to the changing nature of Australian society?
- + Ask students to keep notes of their own research, as well as the discussions, in order to respond to the two suggested assessment tasks below.

ASSESSMENT

Students will search Google Images using search terms such as *women at war*, *women during World War Two*, *women in the 1940s* etc to find images of women during WWII.

In groups of no more than three, students design a campaign using written text, as well as artwork, to encourage women to leave the workforce after WWII has ended and re-enter their previous roles. The campaigns must include a consideration or argument about volunteering.

OR

Research music, literature and film prior to WWII, during WWII and post WWII and, using specific examples, develop a 1500 word written response showing how these things were used to reflect the social ideal of women in the US and Australia during each time period. Student responses must include a consideration or argument about volunteering.

RESOURCES

Useful links

- + Australian Women in War (Department of Veterans' Affairs): www.anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/australian-women-war
- + The Australian Home Front During World War I – Women's role and place: www.anzacday.org.au/history/ww1/homefront/women.html
- + Australian War Memorial, Forging the Nation – Australian Women: www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/forging/australians/women/
- + The Battle for Australia – The Home Front at War: www.anzacday.org.au/history/ww2/bfa/homefront.html
- + South Australians at War – Women and War: www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=851
- + Knitting Garments for Men at War (Australians at War): www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories_ID=217_war=W2.html

Stories of women in wartime

- + Nora Heysen – The War 1943–1946: www.pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/36338/20030703-0000/www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/noraheysen/war/war.html
- + Australians at War: www.australiansatwar.gov.au

Organisations

- + War Widows' Guild of Australia: www.warwidows.org.au

Memorials

- + Australian Service Nurses National Memorial: www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0604b.htm

Print references

- + Adam-Smith, P 1996, *Australian Women At War*, Penguin Books, Australia.
- + Adam Smith, P 1992, *Prisoners Of War From Gallipoli to Korea*, Viking, Penguin Books Australia.
- + Bassett, J (ed.) 1998, *As We Wave You Goodbye: Australian Women and War*, Oxford University Press Australia.
- + Kenny, C 1986, *Captives: Australian Army Nurses in Japanese Prison Camps*, University of Queensland Press.
- + Hardisty, S (ed.) 1990, *Thanks Girls and Goodbye: The Story of the Australian Women's Land Army 1942-1945*, Viking O'Neil, Australia.