
➤ THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR 1

Target Group: **Year 9**

Australian Curriculum Reference: **History**

Depth Study 3: World War 1

- + The impact of World War 1 with a particular emphasis on Australia such as the use of propaganda to influence the civilian population, the changing role of women, and the conscription debate (ACDSEH096).

LESSON SUMMARY

Students will look at the emergence of the red poppy as a sign of remembrance, and the changing role of women and their work as volunteers in supporting the war effort.

LESSON CONTENT AND METHODOLOGY

- + Teacher introduces topic. Students read the information provided in Worksheet 1 and answer the questions. Teacher leads discussion about what the Red Cross does.
- + Using the work done by Moina Michael in introducing the red poppy and the Red Cross information students have found from their research, teacher leads discussion about the role of women during World War 1.
- + Teacher shows video – *The role of women in the First World War* (BBC documentary narrated by Sir Michael Redgrave) at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMCOzuE1Lvo
- + Teacher leads discussion about why it seemed novel at this time for women to be doing jobs that we now see as normal for them to do, and asks: *what attitudes are expressed in the video that we would see as outdated?*
- + Teacher leads discussion about how many of the tasks taken up by women were done in a voluntary capacity.
- + Teacher introduces Worksheet 2. Students are required to read the three articles provided, and to do their own research so they can develop a diary entry for someone who joined the Red Cross as a volunteer in World War 1.
 - + The diary should cover a month and have at least one entry for each week.
 - + The diary should show how the volunteer is reflecting on her changed role as a result of the volunteer work and what is happening around her.
 - + Each entry should be at least 250 words.
 - + Students must show a bibliography of sources from which they have gathered information.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed on two pieces of written work as follows.

- + Answers provided on Worksheet 1.
- + Research project outlined on Worksheet 2.

RESOURCES

- + Worksheet 1: *The Red Poppy*
- + Worksheet 2: *Women and the Red Cross, The Australian Red Cross in Two World Wars and Volunteers During the First World War (Britain)*
- + *The role of women in the First World War* (BBC documentary narrated by Sir Michael Redgrave, 1964): www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMCOzuE1Lvo
- + *The role of Women in World War One*: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYm30Fb2908
- + *Red Cross Activities During and After WWI*: www.aso.gov.au/titles/historical/red-cross-first-world-war/clip3

WORKSHEET 1

Read the following article and then complete the questions at the end.

The Red Poppy

The Red Poppy has special significance for Australians.

Worn on Remembrance Day (11 November) each year, the red poppies were among the first to flower in the devastated battlefields of northern France and Belgium in the First World War. In soldiers' folklore, the vivid red of the poppy came from the blood of their comrades soaking the ground.

In 1918, Moina Michael, who had taken leave from her professorship at the University of Georgia to be a volunteer worker for the American YWCA, was inspired by the poem *In Flanders Field* by John McCrae and published a poem of her own called *We Shall Keep the Faith*. In tribute to McCrae's poem, Moina vowed to always wear a red poppy as a symbol of remembrance for those who fought and helped in the war.

At a November 1918 YWCA Overseas War Secretaries' conference, Moina appeared with a silk poppy pinned to her coat and distributed 25 more to those attending. She then campaigned to have the poppy adopted as a national symbol of remembrance.

At a conference in 1920, the National American Legion adopted the poppy as their official symbol of remembrance. At this conference, French-woman Anna E. Guérin was inspired to introduce the artificial poppies commonly used today. In 1921 she sent her poppy sellers to London, where they were adopted by Field Marshal Douglas Haig, a founder of the Royal British Legion. The poppy was also adopted by veterans' groups in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The Australian RSL adopted the idea in 1921, announcing:

The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia and other Returned Soldiers Organisations throughout the British Empire and Allied Countries have passed resolutions at their international conventions to recognise the Poppy of Flanders Fields as the international memorial flower to be worn on the anniversary of Armistice Day.

Australians wear a red poppy on Remembrance Day for three reasons. Firstly, in memory of the sacred dead who rest in Flanders Fields; secondly, to keep alive the memories of the sacred cause for which they laid down their lives; and thirdly, as a bond of esteem and affection between the soldiers of all allied nations and in respect for France, our common battleground.

Today, cloth poppies are sold on or around 11 November each year. They are an exact replica in size and colour of the poppies that bloom in Flanders Fields. The RSL sells millions of red cloth poppies with proceeds going towards raising funds for welfare work.

In Britain some people choose to wear white poppies as a pacifist alternative to the red poppy. The white poppy and white poppy wreaths were introduced by Britain's Co-operative Women's Guild in 1933. Today, white poppies are sold by Peace Pledge Union or may be home-made.

To commemorate animal victims of war, Animal Aid in Britain has issued a purple poppy, which can be worn alongside the traditional red one as a reminder that both humans and animals have been – and continue to be – victims of war.

(This article uses information extracted from wikipedia.org/wiki/Remembrance_poppy and www.army.gov.au/Our-history/Traditions/The-Red-Poppy)

Questions

- + What does the red poppy represent?
- + Who introduced the idea of wearing a poppy for remembrance?
- + When did Australia adopt the red poppy as a symbol of remembrance?
- + What are the three reasons why Australians wear a red poppy?
- + What other coloured poppies have been adopted and for what purpose?
- + Why do you think that people still wear red poppies on November 11?

Research Question

- + What is the Red Cross and what does it do?

WORKSHEET 2

ARTICLE 1

Women and the Red Cross

Women have been at the forefront of Red Cross since its foundation in Australia.

In the days after the outbreak of World War I, the wife of the then Governor-General, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, established the first branch (as part of the British Red Cross Society) in Australia on 13 August 1914. She wrote to the wives of each State Governor to secure their support and Red Cross branches were quickly formed in each state. Australian women flocked to the cause.

Australian women's efforts on the home front to support the nation during WWI and WWII were monumental. They worked tirelessly for Red Cross in response to the national emergency, serving the humanitarian needs of the nation.

During WWI, Red Cross formed the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) in Australia, based on the British Red Cross model. The vast majority comprised women and girls, known as VAs, who were trained in first-aid and home nursing to carry out unpaid domestic and quasi-nursing duties in hospitals and convalescent homes. They became the public face of Red Cross.

Red Cross enabled women to do something tangible for the war effort. Women volunteered in the Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureaux that researched the whereabouts of soldiers serving in Europe and sent word to their anxious families. Australian women also raised funds – over one-third, or almost £5 million pounds, of all monies donated in Australia over the four years of WWI to the patriotic funds.

Women produced millions of pounds worth of in-kind support through volunteer labour and goods, sending an astonishing volume of goods overseas to servicemen and prisoners of war. They knitted and sewed socks, towels and vests for soldiers, much of the work done by hand in small rural communities where there was often no electricity.

By June 1918, the Red Cross had established member based branches in each state, with 886 in Victoria, 632 in NSW, 369 in South Australia, 225 in Queensland, 148 in Western Australia and 175 branches in Tasmania. Most of these branches were run by women, many of whom went on to give a lifetime of service to Red Cross.

(Article from: www.redcross.org.au)

ARTICLE 2

The Australian Red Cross in two world wars

The International Committee of the Red Cross was formed in 1862. Initially its purpose was to try and find ways of overcoming the inadequacy of army medical services so as to alleviate the suffering of those wounded in armed conflict. Over time it has extended its work to include many forms of humanitarian aid in times of peace and war.

The Australian Red Cross Society (ARCS) was formed just after the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, originally as a branch of the British Red Cross. It is especially remembered in the provision of “comforts” for soldiers overseas. Enormous sums of money were raised, and thousands of women volunteers contributed their time by making vast quantities of clothing: socks, vests, mittens, mufflers, pyjamas and a variety of linen. Items were sent to headquarters located in the state capitals, often using government houses as depots, where, after being sorted and packed by yet more volunteers, they were sent to Britain or the front. The effect of this work for the recipients was to bring comfort in its truest sense, for a seemingly trivial gift of a bar of chocolate or a pair of dry socks could bring the most profound relief for a soldier on the Western Front. From the date of its inception until the armistice the ARCS dispatched 395,695 food parcels and 36,339 clothing parcels.

Between 1914 and 1918 more than £3,500,000 was collected and spent on Red Cross services to the Australian Forces and Empire Forces. Dame Nellie Melba raised more than £90,000 for the sick, wounded and prisoners of war by her Red Cross charity concerts and grand opera in Melbourne. Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) also provided an important public face for the Australian Red Cross. Young women served in VADs to provide nursing and domestic services in hospitals and convalescent homes. A few served overseas in Britain.

Less well known is the work the Australian Red Cross undertook at an international level by establishing agencies overseas dedicated to supplying families in Australia with information about wounded and missing soldiers, and for providing information about and comfort to soldiers declared prisoners of war.

During the Second World War the Red Cross performed other services as well as the traditional catering, fundraising and medical work. This included welfare work, hospital visiting, vocational training, home help, library services, and lorry and ambulance driving. The Red Cross VADs again worked at hospitals and convalescent homes alongside doctors and nurses. Similarly, the Red Cross contributed to the wellbeing of prisoners of war through food parcels and medical attention.

The ARCS has been officially recognised since 1944 as an auxiliary to the medical services of the Defence Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia – Navy, Army and Air Force. The Red Cross still performs humanitarian work in peacetime, including tracing missing persons and prisoners of war.

(Article from: www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/redcross/redcross_bothwars)

ARTICLE 3

Volunteers during the First World War (Britain)

90,000 volunteers worked at home and abroad during World War One. They provided vital aid to naval and military forces, caring for sick and wounded sailors and soldiers.

Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs)

County branches of the Red Cross had their own groups of volunteers called Voluntary Aid Detachments (often abbreviated to VAD). Voluntary Aid Detachment members themselves came to be known simply as 'VADs'.

Made up of men and women, the VADs carried out a range of voluntary positions including nursing, transport duties, and the organisation of rest stations, working parties and auxiliary hospitals.

Training

At the outbreak of the war, many people were inspired to train to help the sick and wounded. Women needed to be taught first aid, home nursing and hygiene by approved medical practitioners. They also took classes in cookery. Men were trained in first aid in-the-field and stretcher bearing.

Talented VADs could take specialist classes to become a masseuse or use an x-ray machine.

VADs had to pass exams to receive their first aid and home nursing certificates.

Special service

In February 1915 the War Office proposed that volunteers could help at Military Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) hospitals. These had previously been staffed exclusively by army nurses and orderlies from the RAMC.

The first request from military hospitals for these 'special service' VADs in England came early in 1915 and from France in May of the same year. These were quickly followed by demands from Malta and Egypt.

General Service

A 'general service' section of the VADs was established in September 1915. As men went off to fight VADs were supplied in their place, carrying out their roles such as dispensers, clerks, cooks and storekeepers. By 1919, 11,000 men had been released for active service and replaced by women.

Overseas service

VADs were sent abroad during both world wars to countries such as France, Italy and Russia. Male detachments were frequently sent to France to work as transport officers or orderlies in hospitals.

Working parties and work depots

On the outbreak of the First World War, local Red Cross working parties formed across the country with the co-operation of their surrounding villages. They organised the supply of hospital clothing including socks, shirts, blankets and belts for soldiers. They also made essential hospital equipment such as bandages, splints, swabs and clothing.

Work depots were established in every major town to collate and despatch clothing from the working parties. Items were sent to Red Cross headquarters or directly to soldiers in auxiliary hospitals at home and abroad.

Air raid duty

VADs undertook air raid duty in London. The emblem of the Red Cross seemed to inspire a certain feeling of confidence in the crowds which gathered in the underground railway stations and other shelters. Armed with a respirator, the VADs performed first aid.

Rest stations

At railway stations, VADs provided food and other supplies for soldiers arriving by ambulance train whilst they waited to be transported to local hospitals or to travel on to another destination.

Transport

The first ever motorised ambulances to transport wounded people were used in the First World War. The Times appealed for ambulance funds in October 1914, raising enough for us to buy 512 vehicles within three weeks.

Male detachments were almost entirely in charge of transporting sick and wounded soldiers from ambulance trains or ships to local hospitals. They also ferried patients between hospitals.

Male volunteers were also frequently sent to France to work as ambulance drivers, often coming under fire as they transported men away from the Front.

Three hospital trains in France carried 461,844 patients throughout the war. Hospital ships and barges were also used to transport patients.

Women during the war: female volunteers

The war saw women entering the workforce in all sorts of different roles, ranging from medics and farmers to teachers and bus conductors. Many women worked as VADs.

As the number of injured servicemen rose, a call was made for women to join the medical profession. Medical degrees were opened up to women for the first time.

Our VADs carried out duties that were less technical, but no less important, than trained nurses.

They organised and managed local auxiliary hospitals throughout Britain, caring for the large number of sick and wounded soldiers. Many were also deployed abroad to help in field hospitals.

Famous volunteers

Famous women who volunteered for the Red Cross during the war include:

- + Agatha Christie – served as a VAD nurse at a hospital in Torquay. She said it was “one of the most rewarding professions that anyone can follow”.
- + Vera Brittain – most famous for writing *Testament of youth: an autobiographical study of the years 1900–1925*. She became a VAD in 1915 and was posted to France in 1917.
- + Enid Bagnold – author of *National Velvet* and *The Chalk Garden*. She served in London as a VAD.
- + Clara Butt – superstar singer of the Victorian era, Dame Clara Butt lived in Bristol and was a legend in her lifetime, performing to packed concert halls all over the world.

(Article from: www.redcross.org.uk/en/About-us/Who-we-are/History-and-origin/First-World-War/Volunteers-during-WW1)