



Centenary education

A letter writing research project

Middle/upper primary

Introduction

The Centenary of ANZAC from 2014 – 2018 will provide you and your students with many opportunities to remember the brave men and women who participated in World War I (WWI), and specifically, the Gallipoli campaign.

The 'Letter writing research' section of the Centenary education website provides your students with a Letter writing research project that has the following aspects:

1. Students research a local person who served in WWI, in particular in the Gallipoli campaign.
2. Students record their research findings.
3. Students then practise their letter-writing skills and how to correctly address an envelope.
4. Students write a letter to another student at their school telling him/her what they discovered about the WWI service man or women they researched.
5. Letters are exchanged under the management of classroom teachers. A template of an Australia Post posting box has been provided on the Centenary education website, so that students can construct a posting box and 'post' their letters, ready for exchanging with another class.



This project is designed to provide you with a wonderful English and History based activity for your students, involving the gathering and recording of information followed by writing a personal letter in the correct format.

The purpose of this activity is for students to be able to share the information they have discovered about their local WWI veterans with students from another class, while practising their letter writing skills.

Learning outcomes

Participation in this project will enable students to:

- discover the history of a local person who was involved in the Gallipoli campaign
- practise their research and recording skills
- learn to write a personal letter and correctly address an envelope.





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Researching WWI veterans

The first step of this project is for students to find out more about a service man or woman from their local community who served in WWI. Encourage students to consider all Defence Force branches (Army, Air Force and Navy) and also to consider nurses and indigenous personnel.

The first step is to find a name. Here are some options for doing this:

- Visit a local cenotaph (memorial) and record the details written on the commemorative plaque/s. These details may include the name, service number, battalion or infantry and where he/she served.
- Inquire if any of your students have an ancestor who served in World War I. If not, you may be able to place a note in the school newsletter asking if anyone has a family member that students could research.
- Use the military personnel search facility on the Australian War Memorial website www.awm.gov.au/people/roll-search. This allows you to search using a family name only or a full name if you have one. It can also search by service number, unit name or conflict. This facility may be useful for students to discover if they have an ancestor who served at Gallipoli.
- Contact your local RSL or Legacy branch. Inquire if they have the names of any local service men or women who served in World War I.
- Contact a local retirement facility to find out if any of the residents have ancestors who served in WWI and if they would be willing to speak to your students.

The second step is to research the selected service person.

- The Australian War Memorial website military personnel search facility can also help with this step. Students can enter a name, service number or unit name and find out more information. They may find the persons rank, unit, where they served, where and when they died (if applicable), honours and awards, and a digitised record card. You will find the facility at www.awm.gov.au/people/roll-search
- Students can use the internet to conduct their research about their chosen service man or woman, but they must be mindful of using reliable sources and ensure they are researching the correct person.
- As they research, students should record any questions they have about the person or the conflict in which they served.





Centenary education

A letter writing research project

Middle/upper primary

- The Australian War Memorial has an excellent research centre that may be able to provide students with information about the person they are researching or World War I in general. You can email them with queries at info@awm.gov.au
- Your local Legacy agency may also have some useful information for your students. To find your local agency visit www.legacy.com.au

Writing letters

In the second part of this project students will be invited, under the teacher's supervision, to write a letter to another student in the school. The letter will contain the information they have discovered about the service man or woman they have been researching.

The 'Letter writing interactive' (found in the student section) is an excellent tool to help students write their letters. It includes a step-by-step guide to writing a personal letter, colourful letterheads which can be added to the letter, and a 'save' facility so students can work on their letters over time. The completed letters can then be printed, placed in an addressed envelope and 'posted'.

Students can also write their letters by hand, using one of the 'Letterhead templates' provided in the student section of the website.

To 'post' their letters, students will correctly address an envelope to their designated student using the school address and the students' class name/number. Instead of using actual stamps, students will design and draw their own 70 cent stamp on their envelope.

Students can refer to the 'Letter writing hints and tips for your students' (in the teacher section of the Centenary education website) about how to correctly write a personal letter and address an envelope.

Once the completed letters have been sealed in the addressed envelopes, students will have the opportunity to participate in a 'posting' activity where a classroom Australia Post posting box can be constructed for the students to 'post' their letters (instructions and a template to construct a classroom posting box can be found in the letter writing research project introduction on the Centenary education website). Teachers may like to choose a class 'postie' to deliver the letters.





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In addition to writing a letter about their research, students can choose from the following creative ideas for additional letter writing activities.

- Students write a letter to the person they have been researching. They share their feelings, thoughts and questions. Students may also wish to reflect upon how Australia, as a nation, appreciates the sacrifice of the people who served in WWI.
- Students imagine that they are the person they have been researching and write a letter home to their loved ones.

Provided in the 'Letter writing research' section of the Centenary education website is an example letter from 1915. It was written by Claude to his brother Tom. Claude was stationed on the Gallipoli Peninsula and writes about the initial landing, as well as the aftermath and difficult conditions the soldiers faced. This letter comes from the Australia Post archive and may provide your students with some inspiration.

- Conversely, students imagine that they are a loved one of the person they researched. Students write a letter explaining what life is like at home and provide words of encouragement and support.

Also provided on the Centenary education website is an example of a letter from a mother to her son, which may provide students with some thoughts about what to include in their letter. It was written in 1917 and includes news and best wishes from home. This letter is taken from the Australia Post archive.

- Students imagine that they are the war-time Prime Minister of Australia. They write a letter to the service men and women thanking them for all their hard work.

Another letter, written in 1916 by Prime Minister Fisher to a soldier (also found on the Centenary education website), may provide students with some ideas. The Prime Minister writes to Mr Bishop to thank him for his long service to the Australian Imperial Force and wishes him a safe trip home. This letter is taken from the Australia Post archive.

Please note: the original letters can be difficult to read, so transcribed copies have also been provided.

