2.1 Overview

2.1.1 LINKS WITH OUR TIMES

During the twentieth century more than 230 million people died in wars, and many others have been killed since the beginning of this century. After World War I, people were horrified to learn that almost 9 million troops had died on both sides in that terrible conflict. Yet World War II cost the lives of many times more. Historians’ estimates of the numbers of dead vary from over 50 million to over 70 million. Whatever the correct figure, World War II was by far the deadliest conflict in human history. In this war the number of civilian deaths was approximately double the number of military deaths, and more than a third of the civilian deaths were deliberate killings in Japanese, Nazi and other fascist war crimes.

The grave of an unknown Australian soldier at Kranji War Memorial (left) in Singapore marks the final resting place of one of thousands of young Australians who lost their lives when Singapore fell to the invading Japanese forces in 1942.

BIG QUESTIONS

As you study this topic, look for information that will help you to answer these questions:

1. Why did Australians fight in World War II?
2. Where did Australians serve and what were their experiences?
3. How did the war affect Australians on the home front?
4. What significant events changed the course of the war?
5. What was the significance of World War II for Australia’s international relationships?
6. How does Australia commemorate World War II and does everyone agree on what to commemorate?

STARTER QUESTIONS

1. Was anyone in your family — perhaps a great-grandparent — involved in World War II?
2. Have you heard or read of any wars in which most victims were civilians?
3. Do you think learning about World War II can help to avoid such tragedies in the future?
2.2 Examining the evidence

2.2.1 How do we know about World War II?
In this topic we will be investigating World War II, especially Australia’s involvement in this terrible conflict. Nearly 40,000 Australians died on active service, including almost 8000 Australian prisoners of war who died mostly from malnutrition, diseases and mistreatment. The human cost of World War II was even more horrific for many other nations. Because of its global scale and its impact, the range of sources of evidence for World War II is truly enormous. These sources include artefacts as well as written and visual sources.

Written sources and artefacts
Many thousands of books and articles have been written about World War II. Vast quantities of written primary sources and material remains are held in museums, archives and libraries. They include military records, campaign maps, soldiers’ letters, diaries and memoirs, propaganda and weapons, as well as other kinds of evidence. Australia has extensive collections of such sources, including military equipment and dioramas depicting specific battles. Many can be viewed online through the Australian War Memorial website.

SOURCE 1 Tom Uren was a former minister in the Whitlam Labor Government (1972–75). In this extract from his memoirs he describes events before his unit became prisoners of war on 23 February 1942.

SOURCE 2 A 1949 ration card for tea and butter

All the blokes in our unit were excited and couldn’t wait to go . . . A brigadier gave a talk about what the Japanese were doing in the countries they had overrun, such as China; we were told they were raping women and bayonetting children . . . We disembarked at Koepang on the western side of Timor on 12 December 1941 . . . From 19 January 1942 we endured almost daily bombing raids by the Japanese . . . On 20 February 1942 we heard a rumour that the Japanese had landed on the other side of the island and most of our troops were sent around to engage them . . . Our first engagement was with Japanese paratroops who had landed on the outskirts of a village called Babaoe . . . We got on the last truck pulling out of the village just as the Japanese paratroops came up the main street firing at us. It was a pretty narrow escape . . . The Japanese were not taking prisoners.

About 500 paratroopers had landed and in the four days of intense fighting that ensued, we killed almost all of them. During those four days of the battle, brutal things were done on both sides. Some of our stretcher-bearers had their throats cut [by the Japanese] and were hung up by their feet . . . In the heat of war, man is capable of the most barbaric and inhumane actions.

Visual sources
World War II was the first major conflict in which movie cameras were used extensively to document events and to make propaganda films. The best known Nazi propaganda films were made by Leni Riefenstahl. In her first documentary Der Sieg des Glaubens (Victory of Faith), Riefenstahl recorded the 1933 Nuremberg Nazi Party rally to portray Adolf Hitler as a great German statesman rather than the cruel dictator he was. Film was also used by the Allies both for propaganda and to record events. American director John Ford filmed battles in which US Marines overcame fierce Japanese resistance in the Pacific in 1944 and 1945. Art and still photographs were also widely used to record wartime events, as they had been during World War I. Art and photographs provide some of the starkest evidence of this conflict.
**2.2 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**
1. Where would you find written primary sources from World War II?
2. Explain how the use of movie cameras expanded the kinds of evidence that we have for World War II.
3. Make a list of the visual primary sources that can provide evidence for World War II.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
4. Why do you think the card shown in Source 2 would have been issued to Australians at home during World War II?
5. Read Source 1.
   a. Why were the men in Tom Uren’s unit eager to fight the Japanese?
   b. When and where did they fight?
   c. What was Tom Uren’s view of the way this part of the war was fought?
6. What do Sources 3 and 4 reveal about some reasons why civilians made up so many of the casualties of World War II?
7. Look closely at Source 5.
   a. Why was it thought necessary for the Allies to destroy this historic monastery?
   b. What are the advantages of aerial photographs as sources?
8. Describe the details in Source 6 and explain how this artwork conveys the horror of the Nazis’ persecution of their victims.
2.3 Overview of World War II to 1944

2.3.1 The war in Europe and North Africa

World War II began in Europe but soon spread to North Africa and then to Asia and the Pacific. Its battles were fought on land, in the air and at sea, and its combatants included partisans as well as regular forces. Unlike World War I, it really was a war of ideologies, a war the Allies fought to stop the expansion of fascist rule.

Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939 using a new tactic — blitzkrieg. This method of high-speed attack used tanks supported by fighter planes and dive-bombers. Britain, Australia, New Zealand and France declared war on 3 September. However, British and French troops were too far away to provide any help to the Poles. Despite heroic resistance, western Poland fell to the Nazis and eastern Poland was occupied by the Soviet Union. In April 1940 Germany overran Norway and Denmark to secure iron-ore supplies. In May it again used blitzkrieg tactics to invade the Netherlands, Belgium and France. In late May Belgium surrendered. France was defeated by 17 June.

As the Germans advanced, 340 000 Allied soldiers were pushed back to the beaches of Dunkirk in northern France. Had it not been for the crews of more than 800 hastily assembled British boats that rescued troops, Britain would have suffered terrible losses. Instead, Britain was able to evacuate most of its troops, as well as many French, Dutch and Belgian soldiers.
**The British Empire stands alone**

While Germany occupied most of France, a right-wing, pro-German French government was set up under Marshal Pétain in the south. Vichy France, as this regime was known, was now Germany’s ally. The British Empire stood alone, facing German-occupied Europe. With the US and USSR remaining neutral, Britain’s only allies were the defeated European nations’ governments-in-exile.

**The Battle of Britain**

When the new British prime minister, Winston Churchill, made it clear that his country would not negotiate for peace, Hitler planned Operation Sea Lion, the invasion of Britain, in which devastating air attacks were to be followed by landings of German troops.

For a seaborne invasion to succeed, Germany first had to win control of the air. On 10 July 1940 the **Luftwaffe** struck convoys of ships in the English Channel. It then targeted airfields, military installations, ports and cities, killing 15,000 British civilians. But **RAF** fighter aircraft fought the Luftwaffe tenaciously during the Battle of Britain. Over 500 airmen lost their lives, but they denied the Nazis control of the air and the invasion was prevented.

**SOURCE 2** From speeches by Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1940

We .  .  . shall defend our island whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender .  .  .

I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation .  .  . Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we stand up to him all Europe may be free .  .  .

**New battlefields after 1940**

By the end of 1940 the war had reached a stalemate: Germany had failed to crush Britain, but Britain lacked the capacity to invade Europe. Direct battles could and did take place in North Africa and the Balkans, however. Italy had entered the war as Germany’s ally in June 1940, and within a month Italian forces had captured British Somaliland and parts of Egypt. In November 1940 the British struck back with a devastating air attack on the Italian fleet and a land attack that forced an Italian retreat. German forces came to Italy’s aid and the British were pushed back into Egypt in February 1941. Germany then attacked Yugoslavia and Greece, conquering those countries in April and May 1941. With their nations overrun, Yugoslav and Greek partisans continued to fight behind German lines.

**Germany invades Russia**

In June 1941 Hitler betrayed Stalin by launching Operation Barbarossa, to achieve his original aim, the conquest of the Soviet Union. The invasion force included three-quarters of Germany’s armed forces, as well as Hungarian, Romanian, Finnish and Italian troops and ‘volunteers’ from ‘neutral’ Spain. Partly because Stalin failed to respond quickly, many Soviet planes were destroyed on the ground and the Axis forces were at first able to advance quickly. But **blitzkrieg** tactics were ineffective on Russia’s vast plains. As rain turned the roads to mud the German advance slowed. By December it was halted by the harsh Russian winter and by fresh Soviet divisions from Siberia who drove the invaders back from Moscow. The attack on the USSR gave the British Empire a powerful ally.

**SOURCE 3** From a letter from Hitler to Mussolini explaining the reasons for the German invasion of the USSR

The martial spirit to make war, after all, lives only on hopes. These hopes [of the British] are based solely on two assumptions: Russia and America. We have no chance of eliminating America. But it does lie in our power to exclude Russia. The elimination of Russia means, at the same time, a tremendous relief for Japan in East Asia, and thereby the possibility of a much stronger threat to American activities through Japanese intervention.
Deepen and check your understanding of the topic with the following resources and auto-marked questions:

**World War II in Europe**

**2.3.1 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Where were blitzkrieg tactics used by Germany in 1939 and 1940 and how effective were they?
2. Describe the situation facing the British Empire after 17 June 1940.
3. Explain why the war had reached a stalemate by the end of 1940.
4. Explain how the war expanded to North Africa, the Balkans and the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1940–41.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

5. Create a timeline of events between Germany’s invasion of Poland and the defeat of France as outlined in 2.3.1.
6. Referring to SOURCE 1, explain why the Dunkirk evacuation was vital for Britain’s ability to keep fighting.
7. Read SOURCE 2.
   a. According to Churchill, what was at stake in the Battle of Britain?
   b. Explain how such speeches would have helped to strengthen the will of the British people to fight.
8. Read SOURCE 3.
   a. Identify two reasons Hitler gave for attacking Russia (the USSR) and state them in your own words.
   b. Explain why this might be regarded as a poor decision on Hitler’s part.
9. Study SOURCE 4. Identify and list:
   a. Nazi Germany’s allies in Europe by 1942
   b. countries occupied by Germany by 1942
   c. countries occupied by Italy by 1942
   d. countries that were neutral.
2.3.2 The Pacific War

Japan was Germany's Axis partner, but with a million troops engaged in China it did not widen its role until December 1941. Japan sought an Asian and Pacific empire, or what it described as the 'Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere'. Its first step was the occupation of French Indochina in July 1941 with the cooperation of Vichy French authorities.

On 7 December 1941 waves of Japanese planes from aircraft carriers struck the US naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, destroying half the US fleet. US president Franklin D. Roosevelt had strongly sympathised with the Allies, but many Americans opposed America's involvement. The attack ensured public support when Roosevelt declared war the very next day. Britain had gained another powerful ally.

On 8 December the Japanese invaded Malaya and attacked other British, Dutch and US colonies in Asia. By April 1942 the Japanese had taken Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaya, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies and much of Burma. However, in May 1942, in the Battle of the Coral Sea, a US aircraft carrier force engaged Japanese warships and troopships heading for Port Moresby in Papua. Although both sides suffered heavy damage, the Japanese were prevented from taking Port Moresby by sea.

**Source 5** US battleships burn after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

**Source 6** The extent of the Asia-Pacific region controlled by Japan by July 1942

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**2.3.2 Activities**

**Check Your Understanding**

1. Explain Japan's motives for widening its role in the war from China to the wider Asia-Pacific region from December 1941.
2. Explain how Japanese aggression enabled US President Roosevelt to overcome American opposition to involvement in the war.

**Using Historical Sources as Evidence**

3. Describe what is shown in Source 5 and explain how such images would have convinced US citizens to support Roosevelt's declaration of war.
4. Using Source 6, identify and list the countries attacked and occupied by Japan by 1942. Why might Australia have cause to be concerned by Japan's occupation of these countries?
2.3.3 Turning points and counter-offensives

Crucial land, air and sea battles in 1942 and 1943 represented turning points in the European and Pacific wars. Counter-offensives against the Axis powers and Japan began to inflict serious defeats on both these enemies.

- In the Battle of Midway in June 1942 Japan lost its aircraft carriers, inflicting serious damage to its naval strength.
- In October 1942 British Empire forces defeated German forces at El Alamein in Egypt. By November the Germans were retreating in North Africa, and in May 1943 they were forced to surrender.
- From November 1942 Soviet Red Army troops fought back ferociously at Stalingrad. On 2 February 1943 the German 6th Army surrendered. In July 1943, in the Battle of Kursk, the biggest tank battle of World War II, Germany’s tank force was almost completely destroyed.

**SOURCE 7** Soviet troops advancing on German positions during winter fighting on the Western front

The Allied counter-offensives

- By 1943 the Axis powers were clearly losing the war. Bombing raids by US and British Empire aircraft were destroying German cities and industry.
- After British and US troops invaded Italy in July 1943, Mussolini was killed by Italian anti-fascists and the Allies fought a bloody campaign against German forces in Italy’s north.
- By the end of 1943 the Germans were retreating before the Red Army all along the Eastern Front.
- In the Pacific War, Australian troops defeated the Japanese in Papua between July 1942 and January 1943, and then fought them in New Guinea. In November 1942 the US inflicted another big naval defeat on the Japanese, and by March 1944 British and Indian troops were turning the Japanese back in Burma while US forces were destroying Japanese bases in the islands of the Pacific.
2.3.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What events can be regarded as the main turning points in
   a. the war in Europe and North Africa between October 1942 and June 1944
   b. the war in Asia and the Pacific between June 1942 and March 1944?
2. Make a timeline to display the events during the Allied counter-offensive.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. Soviet Red Army troops, like those shown in Source 7, played a vital role in turning the tide of war in favour of the Allies. What advantages might they have had over their Axis enemies?

2.3 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
1. Make a timeline of all the dates and events referred to in this subtopic. Which of these events led to other events, in your opinion? Create a consequences diagram to show this.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
2. Why were there two main theatres of war from December 1941?

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
3. Conduct research into the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk and prepare a report on whether or not they should be regarded as the major turning points in the war in 1943.

2.4 Australians at war: enlistment and the Mediterranean battles

2.4.1 Enlisting for the war
On 3 September 1939 Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced in a radio broadcast that, because Britain had declared war on Germany, ‘Australia is also at war’. While most Australians agreed it was their duty to support Britain, they no longer imagined that war was a glorious adventure.

Menzies’ statement was a continuation of Australia’s adherence to a common British Empire foreign policy and it was immediately supported by the Labor Party. Yet, Australia was ill-prepared for another world war. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) had been equipped to assist the Royal Navy, so it was better prepared than the other services. But the RAAF had only 3500 personnel in 1939 and no modern warplanes, while the army had only a small core of professional soldiers and a militia of part-time reserves, who met once a week for training.

Much larger land forces had to be recruited but the Australian government was at first reluctant to send troops to Europe, as it feared that Japan might suddenly enter the war and threaten Australia. However, many Australians believed that their government had a duty to help Britain as quickly as possible. The result was that Australia formed two separate land forces. The militia, or Citizen Military Forces, was expanded by voluntary and compulsory service for the defence of Australia. A second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF) was raised by voluntary enlistment for service overseas.

Recruiting the Second AIF
Recruiting for the 2nd AIF began in October, but there was no great rush to enlist. This was partly because there was little action at this stage of the war, which came to be called the ‘phoney war’. Hitler had completed the invasion of Poland, but the Allies took no effective steps against him. It was not until the lightning fast German advances of April–June 1940 that most Australians realised how serious the war situation was.

DID YOU KNOW?
Approximately 39,800 Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen and 700 civilians were killed in World War II from a population of almost 7 million, compared with around 60,000 out of fewer than 5 million in World War I.
At least two other factors impeded recruiting. One was that Australia still discriminated against Indigenous volunteers through the requirement that recruits must be ‘substantially of European origin’, although Indigenous Australians were soon to be fighting in the overseas campaigns of 1940–41. A further reason was that the Great War had shattered the myth of war as a glorious adventure. People now understood that victory, if it could be won at all, would come at a high cost in lives.

There was, however, a rush to enlist in the RAAF, as many young men realised that this would be an aerial war. But the RAAF was initially prepared to accept only a tiny fraction of the almost 70,000 who had applied to join by March 1940.

Unfortunately for the patriots, recruiting proved to be a great disappointment. Instead of a flood there was a trickle in all centres . . .

Uncertainty over the use of the special force and rates of pay influenced some ‘eligibles’ not to enlist . . .

Many of the early recruits testified that their army pay was the first wage they had ever received, moving from school to the dole to the army.

Recruiting in 1939 was, therefore, utterly different from the wild, excited scenes enacted outside army depots in 1914 . . .

The failure of recruiting . . . alarmed the government . . .

SOURCE 1 Extract from Michael McKerman, All in! Australia during the Second World War, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1983. Michael McKerman was a senior lecturer in history and an assistant director of the Australian War Memorial.

2.4.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Describe the state of Australia’s readiness for war in September 1939.
2. Explain how attitudes to enlistment were affected by:
   a. the experience of World War I
   b. discrimination against Indigenous volunteers
   c. the ‘phony war’.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

3. Read SOURCE 1.
   a. Explain why this source can be regarded as reliable and thoroughly researched.
   b. Why was recruiting a ‘great disappointment’?
   c. Describe how economic considerations influenced some to enlist and others not to enlist.
   d. Write a script of a dialogue between two potential recruits, one whose father suffered terrible injuries in World War I and the other who has been unemployed since leaving school. Their dialogue should be discussing whether or not to enlist.

2.4.2 The AIF goes to war

Four divisions were raised for the Second AIF. As there had been five divisions in the First AIF, these were called the 6th to the 9th divisions. The 6th, 7th and 9th Divisions were sent to the Middle East. The 8th was sent to Malaya. Early in 1940 the 6th Division was trained in Palestine. In battles in Libya, between January and March 1941, the 6th Division achieved spectacular victories over the Italians. By March, 10 Italian divisions had been destroyed, tens of thousands of Italian troops had surrendered and British Empire forces had gained their first victory of the war.

Greece and Crete, March–May 1941

The next campaign, in Greece, saw a tragic defeat. The Australian 6th Division fought alongside Greek, British and New Zealand troops to halt the German invasion. But the Germans used tanks supported by dive-bombers, and the under-equipped Allied defenders were forced to retreat to Crete, where they fought a rearguard action. While the main army was evacuated, the Australian 2/7th Battalion held the Germans back. More than 3000 Australians were taken prisoner.
30 May 41
Food shortage acute and plane not yet arrived, as arranged . . .
High ridge on right fwd flank occupied by enemy — from here he directed fire onto our posns [positions].
Our fire unable to reach them . . .
Heat terrific and nerves straining under the terrific hammering. All troops anxious to be allowed to attack . . .

31 May 41
Orders to hold on for another 24 hrs . . . position hopeless, and the fact that no further ammn [ammonition] is arriving, makes it necessary to safeguard every round.
No air support is rendering our position untenable . . . orders to withdraw received . . . a nightmare trip down the cliffs to the beach.
BN [BATTALION] personnel embark but majority left 12 Bn personnel got aboard a barge, but nothing seen of the rest . . . there were no more barges left.

4 Jun 41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OFFICERS</th>
<th>ORs [other ranks]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit strength, as at 10 Apr 41, when Bn sailed for GREECE</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost in Greece</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bn strength on landing on CRETE</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost on CRETE</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of the remaining members of the Bn . . .</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tobruk and El Alamein

In June 1941 two brigades of the Australian 7th Division took part in a campaign to defeat Vichy French forces in Syria. The Australians captured several forts and defeated the experienced French Foreign Legion.

Meanwhile, the defeat of the Italians in Libya had forced Hitler to send in German forces in February 1941. The Allies were pushed back to Tobruk, on Libya’s coast, where an epic siege began. The Allied troops were ordered to hold Tobruk to delay the German advance on the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf oilfields. The garrison of 24 000 included 14 000 Australians, mostly of the 9th Division. The siege of Tobruk lasted from April to December 1941. The defenders suffered from disease, flies, fleas, intense heat and insufficient water. They sustained 3000 casualties during daily German air raids and ground attacks led by tanks. The defenders were caught in a trap so the Germans called them the ‘Rats of Tobruk’. The Australians adopted that name with pride.

When Japan entered the war in December 1941, the AIF divisions, except for the 9th, were shipped home to face the new danger. The 9th Division spearheaded the British infantry attack in the first major Allied victory over the Germans. This was the 12-day-long Battle of El Alamein in October 1942.

2.4.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Explain why the new AIF divisions were called the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th.
2 Why did the Australian government send only three of the four AIF divisions to the Middle East?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3 Using SOURCE 2 and other information in this spread, briefly outline the campaigns in which Australians fought around the Mediterranean in 1941–42.
4 Read SOURCE 3.
   a Explain why this diary should be considered a reliable source.
   b Using the diary extract as your evidence, describe the problems endured by 2/7th Battalion and explain why its losses were so great.
5 Suggest why the Australians in SOURCE 4 were using Italian weapons and how they had acquired them.
2.5 Australia under threat

2.5.1 A major turning point in the war for Australia

Australia’s deepest fear became reality when Japan entered the war in December 1941. Australia’s most experienced troops, three AIF divisions, were far away, fighting alongside British forces. Australians had hoped that, if Japan entered the war, the British would defend Australia. But Britain was fighting for its own survival and lacked the resources to protect Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

On 27 December 1941 Japanese troops were advancing quickly down the Malay peninsula towards Singapore. On that day John Curtin, Australia’s recently elected Labor prime minister, declared that Australia would look beyond Britain to shape its own foreign policy.

**SOURCE 1** Curtin’s call for American help against Japan

The Australian government . . . regards the Pacific struggle as one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the Democracies’ fighting plan . . . Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional kinship with the United Kingdom.

We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces. We know the constant threat of invasion . . . But we know too that Australia can go, and Britain can still hold on.

We are therefore determined that Australia shall not go, and we shall exert all our energies towards shaping a plan, with the United States as its keystone, which will give to our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy.

**SOURCE 2** Japanese troops advancing during the invasion of Malaya on 14 January 1942

‘Fortress Singapore’ falls

To Australia’s near north, Malaya and Singapore were defended by more than 130 000 British Empire troops, consisting of Indian and British forces and the Australian 8th Division. It was said that Singapore, with its British naval base, could not be taken, but by the end of January 1942 Malaya had fallen and Singapore was directly threatened. Japanese bombers had sunk two British battleships sent to Singapore within a few days of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Singapore’s defence was poorly organised and, on 15 February 1942, the British commander surrendered his army to a Japanese force that was less than half its size and would soon have run out of ammunition. Singapore’s defenders, including 15 000 Australians, became prisoners of war (POWs).
When Singapore fell, Australians felt even more exposed. Their fears were justified when, on 19 February, Darwin was hit in two Japanese air raids by about 90 bombers with fighter escorts. At least 243 people were killed and there was widespread panic. Many more air raids followed throughout 1942 and 1943. The Japanese had overrun Rabaul, in New Britain, on 23 January, and captured the small Australian forces on Java, Ambon and Timor in February. However, ‘Sparrow Force’, an independent Australian company, waged guerrilla warfare on Timor with the help of Timorese people until 1943.

Despite Australia’s concerns, both Winston Churchill and the US government wanted the Australian 7th Division, returning from the Middle East, to be sent to Burma. Curtin, however, angrily insisted that these men return to Australia. They were later to fight in the New Guinea campaigns.

**SOURCE 3** British and Australian POWs in Korea on 24 October 1942. These soldiers were transported to Korea after being captured at the fall of Singapore.
2.5.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What events in December 1941 aroused great fears in Australia?
2. Identify reasons Australia lacked troops for its defence in December 1941 and for Britain's inability to assist Australia.
3. What groups comprised the British Empire troops defending Malaya and Singapore?
4. Explain why the Australian government clashed with Britain over the redeployment of the Australian 7th Division.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
5. Read SOURCE 1.
   a. What did John Curtin say about the danger to Australia and the need to seek support other than what could be provided by Britain?
   b. Explain what Curtin meant when he said, 'But we know too that Australia can go, and Britain can still hold on. We are therefore determined that Australia shall not go.'
6. SOURCES 2 and 3 depict Japanese troops advancing through Malaya and British and Australian prisoners of war. What effects do you think such scenes would have had on the morale of both sides and on their attitudes to each other?

2.5.2 The cruel fate of the people of Singapore

Australian historians have tended to focus their research on the consequences of the fall of Singapore for Australia and particularly for the POWs. However, vast numbers of Singaporeans were also to die as a result of the Japanese occupation that followed the British surrender. As it had done in China from 1937, the Japanese Imperial Army unleashed a reign of terror against the ethnic Chinese in Singapore. The main aim appears to have been to destroy ethnic Chinese resistance before it could begin. Under a system called Sook Ching, the Kempeitai, the Japanese military police, rounded up ethnic Chinese civilians, took them to isolated spots and slaughtered them. Estimates of the numbers killed this way range between 25,000 and 50,000. In 1962, the unidentified remains of many of the victims were unearthed and in the following year they were buried beneath the site where a memorial was to be erected (see SOURCES 4 and 5).

SOURCE 4 The Memorial to the Civilian Victims of the Japanese Occupation, in Singapore

SOURCE 5 The inscription on the Memorial to the Civilian Victims of the Japanese Occupation

During the remaining years of the occupation, the Kempeitai maintained control through a network of informers who reported on any signs of resistance among the ethnic Chinese population. Singaporean schoolchildren were forced to learn Japanese and to sing the Japanese national anthem and the people lived in constant fear of further Japanese atrocities.

### 2.5.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Who were the Kempeitai?
2. Describe the methods used by the Japanese to control the ethnic Chinese population of Singapore.
3. Explain the Japanese motives for such acts.
4. Why might estimates of the number of Chinese killed vary so widely?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

5. Look closely at SOURCES 4 and 5 and suggest what the memorial reveals about Japanese treatment of Chinese civilians in Singapore and about Singaporean feelings about those experiences.

### 2.5 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

1. Referring to all sources in subtopic 2.5, identify why the fall of Singapore, the bombings on the Australian mainland and the Japanese capture of islands to Australia's north should be regarded as a turning point in the war.

**DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

2. During the two decades following the Paris Peace Conferences of 1919, Australia had shown almost no independence from Britain. Curtin's speech of 27 December 1941 is regarded by many historians as a turning point in Australian foreign policy. Curtin was criticised by former Prime Minister Robert Menzies, who was intensely pro-British, and by other conservative politicians, who called the speech 'deplorable'.
   
   a. How significant was Curtin's 'Australia looks to America' speech given Australia's history to that point?
   
   b. Conduct a role-play of an argument between Labor and anti-Labor politicians on this issue at the time. Try to convey their different perspectives and, especially, reasons for their opposing positions.

### 2.6 Australians in the Pacific War: Kokoda

#### 2.6.1 The Kokoda Track

In early 1942 Japan's advances in the Pacific seemed unstoppable. Australia lacked the ships and planes to prevent a Japanese landing on the north or west of the Australian mainland. If that happened, a 'scorched earth' policy was to be adopted. In fact, by March the Japanese had insufficient ships and troops to invade Australia. However, their fortress at Rabaul was crucial for their Pacific operations and they wanted to occupy Papua and New Guinea to strengthen their hold on it. A Japanese invasion force was sent to take Port Moresby, in Papua. But between July and November 1942 Australian troops repelled them on the Kokoda Track.

With the AIF 6th and 7th Divisions not yet available, the 8th Division in captivity and the 9th Division in the Middle East, the only Australian troops standing in the way of a Japanese
invasion of Papua were three militia battalions stationed in Port Moresby. The Kokoda Track was a steep and muddy trail that wound from Port Moresby through the dense jungle, across the rivers and over the mountains of the rugged Owen Stanley Range (see SOURCE 1). In June 1942 militiamen of the 39th Battalion were ordered to advance with troops of the Papuan Infantry Brigade (PBI) along this track to stop any Japanese advance towards Port Moresby from Papua’s north coast.

Japan’s attempt to take Port Moresby by sea had already been prevented by the Battle of the Coral Sea in May. So the Japanese planned to capture it by two land attacks. The first was to be across the Kokoda Track; the second was to follow a landing at Milne Bay. For their Kokoda advance, almost 6000 Japanese troops were landed near Gona on Papua’s north coast on 19 July.

SOURCE 1 The Kokoda Track in 1942

DID YOU KNOW?
The Kokoda campaign is sometimes called the ‘Battle for Australia’. Had the Japanese captured Port Moresby, they would have been able to dominate the Coral Sea and bomb Queensland, almost at will.

2.6.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Explain why and how the Japanese aimed to capture Port Moresby.
2 Identify reasons the Australian government would have considered it vital to hold Port Moresby.
3 Using the scale and other information from SOURCE 1, explain what difficulties soldiers would have experienced fighting along the Kokoda Track.
2.6.2 The Kokoda battles

The men of the 39th Battalion were mostly 18- and 19-year-old Victorian conscripts. They were barely trained, under-equipped, poorly supplied and at times outnumbered. They reached Kokoda village on 15 July and on 23 July they first clashed with the Japanese at Awala. The Australians and Papuans were forced back to Kokoda village and then further back to Deniki. After more than two weeks of attacks and counterattacks, the defenders were carrying out a fighting retreat. On 14 August they fell back to Isurava.

It was not until late August that reinforcements from the 53rd Battalion of militia and the 7th Division AIF began to reach them. But even with these reinforcements, the Australians were forced back to Imita Ridge, just 50 kilometres from Port Moresby, on 17 September. They were ordered to hold that position at any cost. On 24 September lack of supplies forced the Japanese to withdraw in a fighting retreat. The tide of the battle had turned. On 2 November the Australians regained Kokoda. During the campaign, 607 Australian troops lost their lives and 1015 were wounded. There is no accurate record of the numbers of Papuans who gave their lives in this crucial campaign.

[Japanese] tactics appeared to follow a definite pattern. A mobile spearhead advanced rapidly... While the spearhead deployed and engaged the opposition, support troops would site a machine-gun... Feint or deliberate attacks disclosed the width and strength of the defensive positions by drawing the enemy’s fire... The stronger support elements, coming forward, cut their way round their opponents’ flanks, either to force a withdrawal or to annihilate the defenders in a surprise attack from the rear.

SOURCE 2 An account of Japanese tactics in the Kokoda campaign

ENEMY were reported to be advancing on our posns [positions] from the NORTH. Lt. Col. OWEN... was hit just above the right eye by a sniper... By this time (0320 hrs) the ENEMY were firing from our rear and closing in on the flanks... Our line then broke completely and orders were given for a hasty withdrawal... Our tps [troops] retired to DENEKI where they again took up defensive posns. They were very tired and morale was low.

SOURCE 3 From the war diary of the 39th Battalion for 29 July 1942

SOURCE 4 Members of 39th Battalion after fighting at Isurava, September 1942

AWM 013288
2.6.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**
1. Why were the Australian 39th Battalion and Papuan Infantry Brigade disadvantaged in the Kokoda battles?
2. Describe the assistance they received from late August 1942.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
3. Draw a diagram to illustrate the Japanese tactics described in SOURCE 2.
4. Explain how SOURCE 3 provides supporting evidence for the description in SOURCE 2.
5. Describe the conditions shown in the photograph in SOURCE 4 and explain how such conditions would have added to the hardships of the Kokoda campaign.

2.6 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

**ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT**
1. Make a timeline of the events of the Kokoda battles from July to November 1942. What do you consider to be short-term effects and long-term effects of the outcome of the battles?

**IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**
2. Before Kokoda, the militia was popularly regarded as inferior to the AIF. Explain how its achievements on the Kokoda Track would have changed that view.

**DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**
3. How different might the outcomes for Australia in the Pacific War been if the Japanese had captured Port Moresby?
4. Hold a class discussion on whether the Kokoda campaign should be regarded as of such significance that it should rank alongside Gallipoli in Australian military history. In your discussion, you could consider such factors as the youth and inexperience of the 39th Battalion and the importance of the Kokoda battles in the overall outcomes of the Pacific war.

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2.7 Australians in the Pacific War: beyond Kokoda

**2.7.1 Papua and New Guinea and the ‘unnecessary campaigns’**

During the remainder of the war Australian soldiers fought the Japanese in several parts of the southwest Pacific. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) played a wider role, being involved in both theatres of the war.

While the Kokoda campaign was being fought, 9000 Australian and US troops stopped the Japanese force that landed at Milne Bay on the night of 25–26 August 1942. RAAF Kittyhawk fighter planes destroyed many Japanese landing barges, and by 6 September the outnumbered survivors were defeated. During December and January Australian and US troops defeated the Japanese in their well-prepared positions at Gona, Buna and Sanananda. The fighting and tropical diseases took a heavy toll on both armies. The Papuan campaign ended on 22 January 1943 with the surrender of those Japanese who had not fought to the death.

Australia’s next and biggest campaigns were in the soaking jungles of New Guinea. In March 1943, in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, the Japanese lost eight troop transports and four destroyers, so only 850 Japanese reinforcements were able to land at Lae. From then on they received few supplies. By September 1943 the Australians had captured Lae and Salamaua, and by April 1944 they had defeated most of the Japanese in New Guinea.
This painting shows Australian infantry, supported by tanks, breaking through Japanese bunkers and foxholes at Buna.

Mainwaring, Geoffrey, Australian action at Buna (1932)
Oil on canvas, 274 × 137 cm, Australian War Memorial ART27547

'bunkers' fortified underground shelter, usually with openings from which to fire at enemies
'foxholes' a concealed dugout or pit used by one person to shelter from and shoot at the enemy

‘Unnecessary campaigns’
After 1944 Australia expected that its troops would join with US forces in recapturing the Philippines. Instead they were used in wasteful campaigns against isolated Japanese garrisons in New Guinea, New Britain, Bougainville and Borneo. The 6th Division fought to clear the remaining Japanese from New Guinea. On New Britain, where the Japanese had 90,000 troops around their base at Rabaul, militia divisions recaptured three-quarters of the island. On Bougainville the militia fought a Japanese garrison of 40,000 troops. Three campaigns in Borneo were fought by the AIF 7th and 9th Divisions. These six campaigns cost more than 1000 Australian lives but had no influence on the outcome of the war.

2.7.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Identify and list places where Australians fought the Japanese between late August 1942 and April 1944.
2 Describe the outcomes of those battles and the reasons for those outcomes.
3 Why have the campaigns against isolated Japanese garrisons in the closing stage of the war been called the 'unnecessary campaigns'?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4 Examine SOURCE 1.
   a Describe the details you can see in this painting.
   b Explain what the painting reveals about tactics on both sides.
   c Explain why it would be almost impossible for a war photographer to have taken a photograph of this event.
   d List the types of primary sources that the artist would have had to use to ensure the accuracy of the painting.
   e Identify types of sources that could be used to corroborate the accuracy of the painting.

2.7.2 The RAAF and RAN

The RAAF
During the war the RAAF grew from 3500 personnel to a peak of 184,000, including 18,000 women. In the war's early stages the RAAF trained Australians to serve in Britain's Royal Air Force. About 100 Australian airmen fought with the RAF in the Battle of Britain. Australian airmen fought in the Middle East, India, Burma and Italy and in the strategic bombing offensive over German-occupied Europe. Throughout 1943 and 1944, RAAF squadrons raided Japanese positions and helped to destroy Japanese air and sea power at Rabaul. They also helped to protect the US Army during its drive into the Philippines.
Source 2 An RAAF recruiting poster, from 1940

The RAN
When Japan entered the war the Royal Australian Navy was fighting in the Mediterranean. Its ships were ordered back to face the threat and several were sunk fighting the Japanese. By 1942 the RAN had 68 ships and nearly 20,000 men. It supported US landings in the Solomon Islands and helped the Royal Navy against the Germans and Italians and against the Japanese in Burma and Japan’s home islands in the final months of the war.

2.7.2 Activities

Check your understanding
1. Describe some of the work of the RAN in World War II.
2. Recount some achievements of the RAAF in World War II.
3. Do you think Source 2 would have been effective in recruiting for the RAAF? In your answer, consider whether this poster conveys a sense of glamour and excitement.

4. Study Source 3. What does it reveal about the specific types of dangers faced by sailors?
5. Use the internet to locate at least two other photographs depicting Australian experiences during campaigns in 1944–45. Frame a series of questions to investigate what these photographs reveal about the nature of these campaigns.

2.7 Putting it all together

Identifying continuity and change
1. Identify the ways in which Australia’s armed services changed due to the demands of the war.

Determining historical significance
2. Evaluate the contribution of Australia’s three armed services to the war effort in both theatres of the war.

DID YOU KNOW?

Despite official discrimination against them at the point of enlistment, Indigenous Australians served in both theatres of the war and some rose through the military ranks. The best known is Sergeant Reg Saunders, who was commissioned lieutenant after serving in North Africa and Greece. The RAAF had several Indigenous airmen, including Flight Sergeant Arnold Lockyer, who was shot down over the Celebes (in what is now Indonesia) and killed by his Japanese captors days after the Japanese surrender.
2.8 Australian prisoners of war

2.8.1 Contrasting motives for treatment of POWs

Among the most appalling atrocities of the war was the brutal treatment inflicted upon many prisoners. Over 30 000 Australians became POWs. Of the 8 591 Australians captured by the Germans, 97 per cent survived the war, despite inadequate food and illness. A total of 21 467 Australians, over two-thirds of all Australian POWs, were taken prisoner by the Japanese, mostly in Singapore and the Dutch East Indies at the beginning of 1942. Almost 8000 of those prisoners died in captivity due to disease, malnutrition and mistreatment. Historians view the fact that the remaining Australian POWs survived as an achievement that owed much to their tradition of mateship and the sharing of what little they had.

Why were Australian POWs generally treated so much worse by Japanese captors compared with German captors? Much can be explained by differing ideas about race, about conquered peoples and about soldiers who surrendered. Small numbers of Australian POWs were placed in Nazi slave labour camps and those prisoners suffered terrible conditions. However, because of Nazi racial ideas, the vast majority of Australian POWs, like British, American and Western European POWs, rarely suffered the kinds of brutalities, including genocide, that the Germans inflicted on Jews and Slavs (see subtopic 2.13).

The main victims of Japanese racism were the Chinese, who were slaughtered in their millions. But the Imperial Japanese Army had little respect for the rights of conquered peoples generally. Some South-East Asian nationalists at first looked upon the Japanese as liberators from colonial rule, but they soon found that the Japanese treated them with brutality as conquered subjects. Soldiers of the Japanese army were told to fight to the death and had contempt for soldiers who surrendered. Most POWs suffered years of starvation, disease, brutal treatment and forced labour.

Hundreds of Australians, including some women, were massacred by the Japanese upon capture. Thousands more endured forced labour, brutality and near starvation. They had grossly inadequate medical facilities to treat their diseases. They were virtually denied mailing rights and the Japanese also refused to distribute supplies from Allied Red Cross societies. Germany and Italy informed the Allies of the names of their prisoners of war, who were allowed some meagre correspondence with their relatives. Photographs were published in Australia of groups of Australians in German prison camps . . .

Prisoners of the Japanese just disappeared . . . For long periods, families in Australia had no knowledge of [their] fate or whereabouts.

SOURCE 1 From John Robertson, Australia goes to war 1939–1945, Doubleday Australia, Lane Cove, 1984, p. 206

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2.8.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Approximately how many Australians were POWs during World War II?
2 Explain how German treatment of different groups of prisoners was influenced by Nazi racial ideas.
3 Explain how Japanese treatment of prisoners was influenced by racial ideas and beliefs about the rights of those who surrendered.
4 Calculate the percentage of Australian prisoners of the Japanese who died during the war.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
5 Read SOURCE 1.
   a John Robertson was an Associate Professor of History in the Faculty of Military Studies at the Royal Military College, Duntroon. In your view, should this make him a reliable source and why should it?
   b Describe the examples that Robertson gives of contrasting German and Japanese treatment of Australian POWs.
   c Explain what difference it might have made to POWs and their families to have at least some contact by mail.
2.8.2 Experiences of Australian prisoners of the Japanese

Nearly all Australian prisoners of the Japanese spent the remainder of the war as slave labourers in camps in Singapore, Malaya, Borneo, Timor, Burma, the Dutch East Indies, Thailand, the Philippines, China, Korea and Japan. All suffered but not all in the same ways.

During the war, the Japanese executed some 600 Australian POWs. About another 1500 died when the US Navy sank ships transporting them to Japan. Many thousands of POWs were used along with many more conscripted Asians to build the Burma–Thailand railway. Here, men who looked like living skeletons were forced to work in the jungles for 12 hours a day and sometimes longer. Many suffered severely from tropical diseases, such as dysentery, malaria and cholera, as well as tropical ulcers and malnutrition. Often, terribly sick men went out to do hard labour in the place of others who were even sicker. For POWs who tried to escape, there was the Japanese prison at Outram Road in Singapore that was run by the dreaded Kempeitai. POWs held there were not even allowed to move about or talk in their tiny cells and were sometimes brutally beaten.

SOURCE 2 A modern artist’s impression of life in a Japanese POW camp in South-East Asia

A. Japanese officers believed in the bushido code of the Japanese warrior, which states that prisoners are disgraced persons. Hence, there was seldom any compassion shown for the lot of the prisoners.

B. Food was scarce. Each prisoner was allowed some water and a small portion of corn, soy meal or rice each day. There was no meat, fruit or vegetables. Towards the end of the war, rations were halved.

C. The Japanese denied nurses rights, such as Red Cross packages and the supplies needed to write home. Some women were treated very brutally.

D. Camps were rife with diseases caused by malnutrition, mosquitoes, poor sanitation and overwork. Many soldiers arrived at the camp suffering combat injuries. Those POWs with medical training cared for the sick and injured as best they could. There were few medical supplies.

E. At least 12 Indigenous Australian servicemen were among the Australian POWs captured by the Japanese.

F. Escape was difficult, but not impossible. Any escapee who was recaptured was usually executed.

G. Forced labour tasks ranged from clearing land to building railroads and bridges.

H. Punishment — in the form of withdrawing food, forcing the sick or injured to work, being locked in a bamboo box placed in the sun, being beaten, or even killed — was meant to deter further disobedience.

I. Mateship was maintained by Australian soldiers, even under the most difficult circumstances. Soldiers shared the workload, as well as the food and money.

J. POWs were sometimes paid in cigarettes for the work they did. This system helped to establish a black market within the camps.
The Sandakan Death Marches

The worst single atrocity against Australian POWs took place in North Borneo. In 1942 and 1943, the Japanese shipped almost 3000 POWs, of whom almost two-thirds were Australians, to North Borneo to construct an airfield at Sandakan. There they were beaten, starved and overworked. Ten men died under torture when they were caught stealing food. On 2 March 1944, Captain Lionel Matthews and eight other men, including six Chinese, were executed following the discovery of two secret radios.

During the Allied offensive in January 1945, a group of 470 of the Sandakan POWs were marched 260 kilometres west to Ranau but only 350 survived the ordeal. At the end of May, a second death march was ordered for the remainder of the surviving POWs at Sandakan. These POWs had almost no food and those who collapsed with exhaustion were shot. On 26 June, the survivors arrived at their destination. From the 500 who began the second march, only 142 Australian and 61 British POWs reached Ranau. There they met five Australians and one British POW, the only men remaining alive from the 350 survivors of the first death march. At the end of July, only 30 POWs survived at Ranau. Those who remained were shot on 1 August.

Only six of the original Sandakan POWs survived. Two had escaped into the jungle during the second march and been cared for by villagers. Five others had escaped from Ranau and had hidden in the jungle, but one died before they were rescued by Australian guerrilla units. The survivors included Warrant Officer William Sticpewich, who was warned by a sympathetic Japanese guard to get away or be shot.

SOURCE 3 From the memoirs of former POW and Labor Member of Parliament, Tom Uren, in Straight Left, Random House, Sydney, 1994, p. 40

Japanese military discipline was sadistic . . . This was also carried out on their own troops, but when it was administered to prisoners it was particularly vicious and brutal . . . Whilst I was in Fukuoka camp I met a young Aboriginal who had no legs. He had been punished [by the Japanese] by being made to kneel on a piece of bamboo for several days. The bamboo cut into his knees and gangrene set in. In the end they had to amputate both his legs.

SOURCE 4 From an interview with Sylvia McGregor, a former member of the Australian Army Nursing Service who became a POW when Singapore fell to the Japanese

You cannot explain to anybody what it is to be hungry and there is nothing to eat and no way of getting any . . . some of the Indonesian women showed us what plants you could eat . . . In some camps they would bring you in food and put it outside the barbed wire. Now, if you went out, there were guards there all the time and you were shot . . .

DID YOU KNOW?

Thousands of civilians — men, women and children — also became prisoners of the Japanese. By the war’s end, some young children had spent almost their entire lives in prison camps.

2.8.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Describe conditions for prisoners working on the Burma–Thailand railway and in the Outram Road prison in Singapore.
2 Explain why the Sandakan Death March is considered the worst single atrocity committed by the Japanese Imperial Army against Australian POWs.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

3 Study SOURCES 2, 3 and 4.
   a How reliable would you judge each of these sources to be? Justify your opinions.
   b Explain what you can learn about the experiences of Australian POWs from each of these sources.
   c Identify evidence in each of these sources to explain why so many Australian prisoners of the Japanese died.

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2.8 Putting it all together

Using historical sources as evidence
1. Research at least two accounts about their experiences by Australia prisoners of war in Japanese POW camps during the Pacific War. To what extent do they support the sources in this subtopic?

Analysing cause and effect
2. Several Australian historians have attributed the survival under such terrible conditions of almost two thirds of Australian POWs to Australian traditions of mateship and sharing. Hold a class discussion on whether or not it is likely that such traditions were the cause of their survival.
3. Explain how the experiences of Australian POWs would have affected attitudes of many Australians to Japan after the war.

2.9 The Australian home front

2.9.1 Homeland defence
Thanks to the efforts of Australia and the United States in the Pacific, the Japanese launched very few attacks against the Australian mainland. However, the war caused changes politically, financially and socially, the effects of which we still feel today.

While Australian forces were fighting in Pacific battles, thoughts of those at home turned to defending Australia itself, including its thousands of kilometres of vulnerable coastline. Protecting vital infrastructure such as public utilities also became a priority for citizen volunteers.

Coastwatchers
When an invasion of Australia by the Japanese seemed likely, it was decided to station small groups of highly trained soldiers, called coastwatchers, at key points along the coast. If the Japanese invaded, their task was to travel alongside the enemy, undetected, and monitor their movements. They would then report back to the army, who would arrive and, it was hoped, repel the invasion.

Most coastwatchers never saw the Japanese. Their enemy, instead, was loneliness. One of Morrie Vane’s fellow ‘knackeroos’ (as they were known) cracked under the strain of having to remain constantly alert in case of invasion. He kept a rifle under his bed just in case, and started firing it one night, shouting, ‘They’re here!’

SOURCE 1 Morrie Vane was a signaller in north-west Western Australia. His group of coastwatchers was taught to live off the land with the help of local Aboriginal people.

SOURCE 2 Australian air-raid wardens practise bomb removal in 1940. Other precautionary measures taken included installing air-raid sirens and distributing tin helmets and respirators.

The Volunteer Defence Corps
As the war continued, many citizens, including World War I veterans, became increasingly anxious about the idea of sabotage from within Australia. They wanted to do something to...
protect public utilities such as water, energy and public transport systems. These citizens met publicly, giving speeches, running drills and taking oaths of allegiance. The government quickly realised that it was not good for public law and order to have citizens taking things into their own hands, and so the Volunteer Defence Corps was established. Its responsibilities were to ‘preserve law and order, protect public utilities and prevent subversive activities by aliens or disaffected persons’. This charter effectively restricted what the volunteers could do, while still encouraging their contributions. Many became air-raid wardens, teaching others what to do in case Australian cities were bombed.

Before the Japanese threat to Australia, during the period of ‘business as usual’, many Australians felt the war, although serious, had no direct impact on them. For many this was entirely the case. But the situation changed with the attack on Pearl Harbor, and particularly with the fall of Singapore. People started digging air-raid trenches and building shelters. They filled sandbags to help brace buildings in an air attack, blackened or bricked up windows to dim lights, and removed any public signs or street names that might help an enemy.

2.9.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Describe the purpose and role of coastwatchers.
2 Explain what motivated members of the Volunteer Defence Corps.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3 Using SOURCE 1, describe the hardships faced by coastwatchers in remote areas.
4 Look at the details in SOURCE 2.
   a Describe what is being done.
   b Explain why this practice would have been undertaken even though no bombs had fallen on Australia by 1940.

2.9.2 Government powers for the war effort

As the war effort increased after the Pacific War began, supplying both troops abroad and citizens at home placed an ever-increasing burden on the government. At a security level, peacetime laws would not suffice in a time of war. The government of Australia needed increased powers.

Rationing
In order to maintain supplies for the people at home and for the troops, rationing was introduced in 1942. Ration tickets were issued to every household, but they were useless without money; just as money was useless without the tickets. Because supply of so many items was restricted, people had to put their name down on a list if they wanted common household goods like lamps, irons and radios. Petrol was also rationed. People learned to go without, or to use their imaginations. Garments were cut down to make other clothes, women drew lines up the backs of their calves to look like stocking seams, and plants such as maidenhair fern were used to make tea.

Internment
The slogans ‘loose lips sink ships’ and ‘even the walls have ears’ were devised to make ordinary people careful about what they said and what they wrote in letters. However, this campaign also made many Australians suspicious of their neighbours.

For the second time in 25 years, recent immigrants to Australia (and even some Australian citizens of foreign origin) were locked up in ‘internment camps’. These people, often respected members of the community, were targeted because they were of German, Italian or Japanese descent. People with particular political or religious beliefs were also interned. The Australian Communist Party was banned, and many of its members were locked up. The Jehovah’s Witnesses were targeted because their refusal to bear arms was seen as a show of support for the Nazis.

Widening powers
The dangers and hardships of World War II generally helped to unite Australians. The Curtin government convinced the people to accept a war effort that affected the lives of almost everyone. During World War I the burdens had been borne mainly by the workers, so Curtin wanted to
Every effort was made to conserve resources, recycling wherever possible. This photograph shows scouts collecting tyres and hoses for recycling.

SOURCE 3

Australians at home were encouraged to support the war effort.

SOURCE 4

ensure that this time there would be equality of sacrifice. To achieve that aim, the government introduced controls over wages, profits, rents and prices. Besides rationing essentials, interning ‘enemy aliens’ and banning organisations that might hinder the war effort, the Commonwealth Government assumed wide powers to:

• declare any goods to be essential for the war effort
• require factories to manufacture war materials
• compel people to work in jobs necessary for the war effort
• control banks and shipping
• increase taxation on high incomes
• censor newspapers
• ban public meetings and acts that might hinder the war effort
• restrict sporting events and non-essential travel
• extend conscription to include overseas service.

Conscription

Introducing limited conscription for overseas service was one of the government’s most difficult decisions. Curtin himself had been imprisoned for opposing conscription during World War I, but he recognised that defending Australia against Japan meant fighting outside Australian territory (then defined as Australia and Papua). The conscription issue had torn Labor apart during World War I, and Curtin had a hard task convincing many Labor Party members that it was now necessary. The Militia Bill that was passed on 3 February 1943 enabled the government to send conscripts to any area within the South-West Pacific Zone.

DID YOU KNOW?

John Curtin led Australia through its time of greatest danger but from mid 1944 his health was failing under the strain of work. He died on 5 July 1945, two months before the final Allied victory, and his death was mourned by the nation.

South-West Pacific Zone area, including New Guinea and what is now Indonesia, within which Australian conscripts could be sent to fight after February 1943

Deepen and check your understanding of the topic with the following resources and auto-marked questions:
World War II at home

2.9.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Give three examples of ways in which people learned to go without items that were restricted by rationing.
2. List the groups who fell victim to the policy of internment.
3. Explain why the Australian government assumed wider powers, including limited conscription for overseas service.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

4. Using SOURCES 3 and 4 as evidence, describe ways in which civilians helped the war effort while helping themselves to cope with wartime shortages.
2.9.3 The effects of the war on children

The war was a tough time for all family members, but it was particularly tough for children. It was confusing for them to deal with the fact that their father (and possibly one or more of their brothers) was, perhaps, many thousands of kilometres away fighting a war, and it would have been hard for them to see family members being constantly unhappy and worried. Some children had to cope with their pets being put down, rather than allowing them to starve to death because of the severe rationing. For Christmas 1942, wording such as ‘Christmas’, ‘yuletide’ and ‘festive season’ was forbidden in advertising, to discourage people from purchasing non-essential items such as toys, dolls, sporting goods and musical instruments.

SOURCE 5 John Spencer recalls his schooldays during the war.

Every child had to carry across his or her shoulder a small calico bag, usually made by the mother, in which had to be a set of ear-plugs, a clothes peg, a number of bandages and some dehydrated food, usually in Aspro-sized pellets. These bags were not to be opened except during the regular drills, which we had every day. A particular type of bell ring meant that everyone should evacuate the building. Each class would evacuate in order [to the air-raid trenches] … We used to practise this and it was considered deadly serious. What they didn’t do, of course, was put in a drainage system, so when we had the normal Sydney rain the trenches were about three feet deep in water. We just had to wait till it drained away before we could have air-raid drill again.


SOURCE 6 Children during these times had to do more than just schoolwork. They had to know how to move into the trenches dug on school grounds (in the event of an air raid). Some even dug trenches at home. Wastage of almost anything was severely frowned on. Children also helped the war effort by collecting small metal items (such as tins and saucepans) as scrap.

2.9.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Make a list of examples of ways in which the war was a tough time for children.
2. Which of these examples do you think would have been toughest to deal with as a child?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. Compare SOURCES 5 and 6. Describe the activities in these sources and explain why children might have seen such activities as adventures as well as hardships.
2.10 Australian women at war

2.10.1 The role of women at home

Most Australian women wanted to do whatever they could to help the war effort. When war was declared in September 1939, few people could have predicted its effects on the roles of women. In World War I traditional roles hardly changed at all in Australia. Some women had entered the paid workforce for the first time during World War I, but the activities of most women were confined to charity work and fund raising. In World War II many women demanded to be much more directly involved.

Women eagerly joined voluntary organisations in which they learned new skills that would be valuable if the war reached Australia. Some voluntary war work followed traditional patterns, but new organisations also trained women in air-raid precautions, first aid, military drill and skills such as shooting, signalling, driving and mechanical work.

Women in industry

A significant social change brought by World War II was the huge increase in the paid employment of women. In munitions and other war materials production, the number of men employed rose from 11,000 in 1939 to 459,000 in 1943. During the same period the number of women employed in such work jumped from 1,000 to 145,000.

Increasingly women were needed in traditionally male jobs because of increased wartime production and the need to replace men who had enlisted. Women worked in jobs as varied as aircraft maintenance, truck and bus driving and bread and postal deliveries. Yet, for doing the same work as men, women were paid much less. Despite this, women in cities were soon found in factories and steel mills. In rural areas they took on shearing, dairying, crop planting and harvesting.
Opposition

The Government began an intensive campaign from 1942 to encourage more women to join the workforce, but this change encountered hostility from some sections of society. At first, several newspapers ridiculed women who took on factory work. Sections of the Catholic Church warned against the consequences of such social change. Some trade unions feared that the employment of women would lead to a reduction in men's wages as women took on jobs that had traditionally been for men only.

SOURCE 2 Despite the crucial role women played during the war, they were sometimes ridiculed by newspaper cartoonists.

The Women's Land Army

An important part of the war effort was the creation of the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA). Early in the war, land armies operated in some Australian states. In 1942 the official Women's Land Army was formed under Australian government control. By December 1943 it had almost 3000 members doing the jobs of country men who had joined the services. Frequently these women were sent to work and live in bush camps in remote areas and many farmers developed a strong respect for their achievements. Yet when the war was over the Government neglected to provide Land Army members with any ex-service benefits.

SOURCE 3 Australian average weekly wages in shillings (s) and pence (d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>95s 3d</td>
<td>52s 8d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>98s 1d</td>
<td>54s 3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>104s 3d</td>
<td>58s 2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>115s 8d</td>
<td>64s 4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>119s 5d</td>
<td>68s 4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>119s 6d</td>
<td>71s 11d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>120s 4d</td>
<td>72s 0d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE 4 An artist’s depiction of women in the Australian Women’s Land Army taking a break from
farm work.

2.10.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Describe the new types of voluntary work and paid work undertaken by Australian women during
World War II.
2 Explain the reasons for the formation of the AWLA.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3 Explain what evidence SOURCES 1 and 4 provide for a study of women’s contributions to the
war effort.
4 Analyse SOURCE 2 using the following questions:
   a When was this cartoon created?
   b What was happening at the time?
   c Who would most likely be its intended audience?
   d What situation is depicted in the cartoon?
   e What is its intended message?
   f Why might some Australians have agreed with that message at the time?
   g Why might other Australians have been appalled by that message?
5 Using SOURCE 3 as your evidence, calculate what percentage of average male pay was paid to
women in 1939 and 1945.

2.10.2 Women’s war services
During World War I, nurses were the only women permitted to serve with the Australian armed
forces. During World War II, prejudice in Australia against women joining the armed services
was still strong. However, it was overcome by pressure from the voluntary organisations, the

Topic 2 The course and consequences of World War II  71
The scale of Australia's involvement in the war and the perceived threat of invasion, which forced both government and service chiefs to follow the example of Britain. Around 78 000 Australian women enlisted in the various services, including the AWLA. Almost 4000 of those women served overseas. Yet women were often admitted grudgingly, denied interesting jobs and rewarded with only half to two-thirds the pay of servicemen doing the same jobs.

**The AWAS, WAAAF and WRANS**

The largest of the women's services was the Australian Women’s Army Service (AWAS). It was not an auxiliary but was fully incorporated into the Army. It trained women to take over in transport, communications, maintenance and other areas. It also trained them for combat, in case Australia was invaded. The AWAS had a total enlistment during the war of 31 000.

Perhaps because it was the newest of the services and therefore less tied to tradition, the RAAF was the first of the Australian services to enlist women. By 1944 there were over 18 000 women in the Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF).

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In 1943, Ruby Boye was air-dropped a WRANS uniform by parachute and appointed an honorary third officer. This was so that she would not be executed as a spy if captured. However, she was also given a revolver to take her own life rather than be interrogated by the Japanese. She received several decorations but no payment for her lonely and heroic work.

The Naval Board fought against accepting women and, although as many as 3000 women enlisted in the Women’s Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS), none was allowed to go to sea. WRANS carried out essential work in dozens of areas including education, interpreting, signalling and code work. One of the most outstanding women to wear the WRANS uniform was an honorary WRAN, Ruby Boye, the only woman among the silent army of coastwatchers scattered behind Japanese lines through the islands of the Pacific. She lived in constant danger of capture, reporting enemy movements with her short-wave radio from the Solomon Islands.
2.10.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. What were the AWAS, WAAAF and WRANS?
2. Explain the probable reasons for the willingness of the RAAF to enlist women and the reluctance of the RAN to do the same.
3. Explain what was outstanding about the wartime service of Ruby Boye.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

4. Describe the scene in **SOURCE 5** and explain:
   a. The aim of the poster
   b. What the poster reveals about some types of work given to AWAS recruits and the likely effects on the types of work that could be undertaken by male soldiers.

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### 2.10.3 Women in medical and nursing services

Some 10,000 women served in the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS) after it was formed in December 1942. Many of its members had already served as members of the Voluntary Aid Detachments of the Red Cross (VADs). They carried out a vast range of jobs in Army hospitals. Another 3500 women served in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS). Nurses served in every theatre of war in which the Australian Army was involved. The Navy and Air Force also formed nursing services, but these were much smaller organisations.

**SOURCE 6** Extract from an account by Matron Kathleen Best of the 5th Army General Hospital, staffed by members of the AANS during the ill-fated campaigns in Greece and Crete in 1941. Her account describes the response of her nurses when the hospital had to be evacuated but 39 of the nurses were needed to stay with those of the wounded who could not be moved.

I told the Sisters... that those who volunteered would stay behind with the Hospital and that they would in all probability be captured [by the Germans]. I asked them to write, on a slip of paper, their names and either 'stay' or 'go' and hand them in to me... not one sister wrote 'go' on her paper. I then selected thirty-nine Sisters to remain. The task was an extremely difficult one... I suggested that if anyone wished to change her mind that both myself and everybody else would understand and that I would be in my room for about ten minutes if anyone wished to come and discuss the situation with me. No one came.

As the account by Matron Kathleen Best of the 5th Army General Hospital (**SOURCE 6**) shows, for nurses serving overseas, conditions could be as dangerous as for many servicemen. When the tiny ship *Vyner Brooke* fled Singapore early in February 1942, its passengers included sixty-five members of the AANS. Fifty-three managed to swim ashore when Japanese bombers sank the ship. Twenty-two were machine-gunned on the beach after surrendering to the Japanese. The remainder became POWs but only twenty-four survived the war.

**SOURCE 7** Memorial plaque in St Andrew's Cathedral, Singapore, for Australian nurses killed in and following the sinking of the *Vyner Brooke*
2.10.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Describe the roles undertaken by the Australian Army Medical Women’s Service (AAMWS), the Voluntary Aid Detachments of the Red Cross (VADs) and the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS).
2. Explain what the fate of the nurses on the Vyner Brooke shows about the dangers for nurses who served overseas.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. Study SOURCES 6 and 7.
   a. What is ‘the cause of humanity’ referred to in SOURCE 7?
   b. Explain what SOURCES 6 and 7 reveal about the sacrifice and dedication of the nurses.
   c. Write a letter from one of the nurses in SOURCE 6 to her parents explaining why she chose to stay behind.

2.10 Putting it all together

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1. Using all of the sources in this subtopic, explain why it was necessary to involve Australian women in World War II and in what ways the war changed women’s traditional roles.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
2. There were no plans to maintain women’s services permanently, and the Australian government intended to replace women workers with men as soon as they were available. Towards the end of the war, women were more frequently reminded of their traditional roles by churches and the press. How would women, who had proved what they could do, have felt about being expected to return to those roles, whether they wished to or not?

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
3. What do you consider were the short-term and long-term effects for Australian society of the involvement of women in World War II?

2.11 Australia’s relations with the US

2.11.1 The US alliance
Prime Minister Curtin’s call to America on 27 December 1941 is often seen as a turning point in Australia’s foreign relations. This was partly because Australia did not have an independent foreign policy until the Curtin Labor government asserted that right. It is also because Australia worked closely with the United States through most of the remainder of the war and because the US, rather than Britain, became Australia’s closest ally after the war. Many Australians believed the US had saved Australia from a Japanese invasion. However, Australia’s wartime relationship with the US was more complicated than that and it did not always run smoothly.

US forces needed a base from which to direct operations against the Japanese in the south-west Pacific. The Curtin government was grateful that Australia was to become that base because it assured Australia’s security at a time when Britain could not do so. When Britain agreed, in March 1942, that Allied operations against Japan should be under US direction, Curtin accepted US General Douglas McArthur as commander of all Allied troops in the south-west Pacific. However, the Australian government retained the right to decide where Australian troops could serve and to refuse to have them used in operations it regarded as unwise.

Image and reality
MacArthur and Curtin respected each other. Unlike his own government and the British government, MacArthur shared Curtin’s view of the importance of defeating Japan before Germany. Publicly, the US–Australia relationship was warm. But there were underlying tensions: racism was strong in the US and its segregated army meant African Americans could not serve alongside white Americans. While this appalled some Australians, others were grateful for the
US policy of stationing black soldiers away from cities. Tensions between Australian and US troops led to several riots because American soldiers were boastful, had more money and attracted Australian girls.

**SOURCE 1** Prime Minister Curtin (far right) introducing US General Douglas MacArthur to Robert Menzies, the leader of the Opposition in federal parliament, at a dinner given in MacArthur's honour on 18 March 1943.

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**2.11.1 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Explain the reasons Australia and the US agreed that US troops should be based in Australia.
2. While agreeing to place Australian troops under US direction, what right did Australia retain regarding troop deployment?
3. Identify the priority that was shared by Curtin and MacArthur.
4. Describe the reasons for tensions between US troops and Australians.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

5. Look closely at **SOURCE 1**.
   - a. Describe what this photograph indicates about the relationship between Curtin and MacArthur.
   - b. Explain why the value of such photographs might be limited as historical evidence.

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**2.11.2 Growing tensions in the alliance**

Australian and American priorities were not always the same, and the Australian government soon found it had very little influence on MacArthur's decisions. Although Australian troops did most of the fighting in the Papua and New Guinea campaigns, MacArthur used his censorship powers to glorify his own achievements and to deny credit to Australian soldiers. MacArthur also excluded Australian troops from his campaign to free the Philippines. That was why the AIF and militia spent the war's closing stage fighting unnecessary battles in Borneo, New Guinea, New Britain and Bougainville. Curtin knew the US wanted to dominate the Pacific after the war, and from 1944 he was calling for closer relations between the countries of the British Commonwealth.
Curtin acted because Australia was at risk . . . Curtin turned increasingly to America to convince Australia’s newest ally [the US] that Australia must be preserved if the Japanese were to be driven back from territory already won . . . Australian priorities centred on Australia . . . therefore Australian and British priorities were in conflict.

From Michael McKernan, All In! Australia During the Second World War, 1983.

Curtin may have looked to America without inhibition, but there is no evidence that he did so with any enthusiasm . . . Twice in his final briefings, Curtin went out of his way to insist that Australia would not be pushed around by America in negotiations over a post-war civil aviation scheme . . . Clearly, Curtin resented the manner in which he had been made to sweat it out at the height of the war.

From Clem Lloyd and Richard Hall, Background Briefings, John Curtin’s War, National Library of Australia, 1997, pp. 32, 35.

Deepen and check your understanding of the topic with the following resources and auto-marked questions:

**world war ii in the Pacific**

2.11.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Explain why Australia would have had very little power to influence MacArthur’s decisions.
2. Identify three reasons for growing tensions between MacArthur and the Australian government.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

3. Analyse Sources 2 and 3, identifying:
   a. the main point of the historian’s argument
   b. the details used to support the argument.
4. Explain how these two arguments differ on Australia’s wartime relationship with the US.

2.11 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

1. Using all three sources in this subtopic, explain what factors strengthened the Australia–US alliance from 1942 to 1945 and what factors weakened it.

**ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT**

2. Discuss whether or not the Australia-US alliance would have been formed had it not been for Britain’s inability to help Australia when it was most at risk.

2.12 The end of the war

2.12.1 Victory in Europe

The last year of the war, in both Europe and the Pacific, saw some of the most desperate and vicious fighting of the entire conflict. For the first time both Germany and Japan were now fighting in the defence of their very homelands. Neither would capitulate easily.

Since mid 1943 the Axis powers had been steadily in retreat. Italy had surrendered, and the German army had been turned back at Stalingrad, in Russia.

The Allies realised that the key to success was to open a second front in western Europe, but invading Hitler’s ‘Fortress Europa’ would be no easy task. On 6 June 1944 the largest invasion fleet of all time set sail from the southern coast of England to land an invasion force on the coast of Normandy. Codenamed Operation Overlord, the ‘D-Day’ landings took place on five key beaches along the French coast — codenamed Gold, Juno, Sword, Omaha and Utah. Despite American losses at Omaha being heavy, the majority of troops from Britain, Canada and the United States managed to establish a foothold in Europe and began to drive the Germans back. Paris was liberated on 25 August and the Allied commanders were eager to maintain the momentum.

**Fortress Europa**the term used by Hitler to describe the defences along the coastline of Europe from Denmark to southern France

**Normandy**a region of France on the Atlantic coast

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Hoping to capitalise on the success of the D-Day landings, another massive operation was launched over the Netherlands, named Operation Market Garden. Unfortunately it did not meet with the same success as Operation Overlord, as there was fierce German resistance, particularly in the Dutch town of Arnhem. In December 1944 the Germans launched their last major offensive of the war through the Ardennes Forest in Belgium. The American soldiers were caught by such surprise that maps of the front line positions showed a massive bulge where the Germans had broken through. The ensuing battle became known as the Battle of the Bulge.

The year 1945 saw the Allies regain the initiative; they crossed the border into Germany and began the advance on Berlin. With the Soviets advancing from the east it was only a matter of time before the capital would fall, and fall it did, with Soviet troops capturing the Reichstag on 30 April 1945, the same day that Hitler committed suicide in his underground bunker. One week later, on 7 May, Germany signed an unconditional surrender. After six years of bloody conflict, the war in Europe was over.
2.12.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Describe the role played by the D-Day landings in ending the war in Europe.
2 Describe the role played by the Soviet advance on the eastern front in ending the war in Europe.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3 Study SOURCES 1 and 2.
   a Describe the scene in SOURCE 1 and explain why soldiers in such a landing would suffer very high casualties.
   b Explain why the D-Day landings had to involve several beach landings as well as airborne divisions landing behind German lines.
4 The Soviet forces had turned retreat into attack from the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942–43. Evaluate the importance of the scene in SOURCE 3 in ending Germany’s will to continue fighting.

2.12.2 Victory in the Pacific

From late 1943 the US adopted a two-pronged strategy in the Pacific. While MacArthur’s forces advanced to the Philippines, Admiral Nimitz’s forces fought their way towards Japan in an ‘island-hopping’ campaign. Isolated Japanese garrisons that were unable to contribute to resisting the Allied advance were bypassed. However, on islands that had to be captured, such as Saipan, Iwo Jima and Okinawa, most Japanese troops fought to the death and US Marines paid a high price for each victory. The island-hopping campaigns gave the US island bases from which it could bomb Japan. From October 1944 the Japanese adopted a last desperate tactic as kamikaze pilots sacrificed their own lives to crash their planes into US warships.

Between November 1944 and August 1945 the Allies flew over 30 000 bombing raids on Japan, causing more than 660 000 civilian deaths. Japan’s government opposed acceptance of the Allies’ demand for Japan’s unconditional surrender. US forces suffered very heavy losses capturing Okinawa and it was clear that enormous casualties would be suffered in any invasion of Japan. However, there was another option to force the Japanese to surrender.

Nuclear bombs

In the top secret ‘Manhattan Project’, scientists in the US had been racing to develop a nuclear weapon, fearing that Nazi Germany might beat them to it. The first US test of a nuclear weapon on 16 July 1945 marked the beginning of the nuclear age. Several US scientists and political and military leaders recommended that the power of nuclear bombs be demonstrated to Japan rather than used on people without warning. However, the US government decided that its two remaining nuclear bombs would be used. On 6 August the first atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima and the US warned Japan of ‘ruin from the air’ if it did not surrender. On 9 August the second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Japan accepted unconditional surrender on 14 August and signed the formal surrender on 2 September. Close to 115 000 Japanese were killed by the initial blasts of the two bombs, and many years later many more were still dying from radiation sickness. Other victims included children who were born with
terrible deformities because their parents had been exposed to radiation.

There is little doubt that the Allies would have suffered enormous casualties in an invasion of Japan or that in such an invasion Japan's losses would have been greater than those in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, many historians argue that the use of nuclear bombs was unnecessary because the Japanese were already seeking ways to negotiate for peace, and a demonstration of the power of nuclear bombs would have convinced them to surrender. In any case, the Japanese were given little time to reach a decision before the second bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki.

But using the bomb also served another purpose. World War II changed the old balance of world power. Just two great powers emerged from the conflict: the United States and the Soviet Union. World War II had made them temporary allies, but even before its end tensions were rising over which power would be the dominant influence. Bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki was one way of demonstrating US power to the Soviets, at least until they too acquired nuclear weapons.

2.12.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Describe the two-pronged strategy used by the US in the Pacific.
2. Explain possible reasons for the US decision to use atomic bombs in Japan.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. Look closely at SOURCE 4. Explain why US forces paid a high price for their victories in the islands of the Pacific.
4. Study SOURCES 5 and 6 and explain how the destruction shown in SOURCE 5 contributed to the Japanese surrender in SOURCE 6.

2.12 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1. Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter writing an article in 1945. Choose two of the photographs in this subtopic and write captions and a short news article to accompany your chosen images.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
2. Hold a class discussion on the significance of the use of atomic bombs in 1945 in ending World War II and ushering in the nuclear age.

2.13 War crimes and retribution

2.13.1 Japanese war crimes

In almost every armed conflict throughout history, terrible things have been done. There have been times in most wars when soldiers on both sides killed enemy troops when they could have taken prisoners. Civilians have always been among war’s victims. But from the late nineteenth century attempts were made to reduce suffering by putting legal limits on what could be done during wars. The Geneva Conventions of 1864, 1906 and 1929 attempted to frame rules to protect civilians and prisoners of war. Despite this, during World War II many atrocities were committed. The overwhelming majority and the most cruel and horrific of these were the deliberate work of the Japanese military and the German Nazis. The Geneva
Conventions made it possible for at least some of the perpetrators to be tried and punished for war crimes.

In earlier subtopics you learned about horrific Japanese atrocities in China and the brutal Japanese treatment of POWs, including many Australians. Throughout occupied China and in South-East Asia, the Japanese military killed millions of civilians. Millions more died as a result of exhausting slave labour or starvation as their food was confiscated to supply the Japanese. Most victims were Chinese. Among the vast numbers of Chinese whom the Japanese killed, many were executed, tortured to death or deliberately infected with diseases.

The Allies determined that those responsible for Japanese war crimes would be punished. The trials were overseen by the newly formed International Military Tribunal for the Far East. They were conducted in Japan and throughout South-East Asia and the Pacific. Of 25 Japanese wartime leaders who were tried and found guilty, seven were condemned to death and executed. Approximately 5700 Japanese, including many military officers, were tried for committing atrocities against civilians and POWs. Nine hundred were convicted. Many were executed and the others received prison sentences.

**SOURCE 1** At Rabaul, New Britain, on 15 November 1945, Japanese POWs were paraded to enable victims to identify suspected war criminals.

2.13.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**
1. Describe the nature of Japanese war crimes.
2. What was the role of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
3. Imagine you are one of the POWs called on to identify the suspected Japanese war criminal in **SOURCE 1**.
   a. Describe how you would feel if you recognised the suspect.
   b. Describe how the suspect would be feeling.

2.13.2 Nazi and other fascist war crimes

During the war’s closing stages, the Allied leaders agreed to replace the failed League of Nations with a new world body, the United Nations (UN), to settle disputes between countries and to work towards the kind of freedom and prosperity that might prevent future wars. In 1945 the UN Charter asserted its determination ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war’. The UN supported the Allies’ decision in August 1945 to put leading Nazis and others on trial for war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes against peace, and conspiracy to commit these crimes.

How the Germans and their European fascist allies treated conquered peoples and POWs was largely determined by Nazi ideas about race. In most cases, western European, British and American POWs were treated reasonably well, unless they tried to escape. However, racism always played a role. When France surrendered, the Germans shot North African troops serving in the French military. In western Europe, acts of resistance also brought savage reprisals. For example, if even one German soldier was killed by partisans, ten or more civilians would be executed.
German forces were completely ruthless towards the peoples of eastern Europe, who were described in Nazi ideology as ‘racial inferiors’. When the Axis invaded the Soviet Union, Hitler demanded total brutality towards the Slavic ‘sub-humans’ and their ‘Jewish-Bolshevik’ leaders. Special SS task forces called *Einsatzgruppen* were ordered to kill all Jews, communists and partisans. Around 9 million Soviet soldiers and twice as many Soviet civilians died during the war, and many of these were killed deliberately. Of the 5.7 million Soviet POWs in Nazi hands, almost two-thirds were murdered, starved or worked to death in concentration camps. Where Soviet or other Slavic civilians resisted, the populations of entire towns and villages were massacred.

**The Holocaust**

The Holocaust was the most systematic of all Nazi war crimes. It was an act of genocide intended to wipe out European Jews. Nazi persecution of Jews intensified after the outbreak of the war and the mass murder of Jews began in 1941. When the Nazis invaded Poland and the Soviet Union they killed anyone who might resist, but all Jews were singled out for destruction. Poland’s Jews were forced into enclosed ghettos where survival was a struggle. During the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Germans carried out mass shootings of communists and Jews. In Latvia in 1941, 327,000 Jewish men, women and children were murdered in two mass shootings. The SS also conducted experimental gassings of Jews and Soviet POWs in specially converted vans.

In 1941 Hitler decided that the ‘final solution to the Jewish problem’ would be mass extermination in SS-run concentration camps. Auschwitz concentration camp was ordered to prepare for mass gassings. On 20 January 1942 an SS document called *Final Solution to the European Jewish Question* stated that healthy Jews would be exterminated through slave labour. Throughout the remainder of the war, Jews from all over Nazi-controlled Europe were transported to death camps. The sick, young children and elderly people were immediately forced into gas chambers disguised as showers. There they were gassed to death and their bodies were then incinerated in gas ovens. Others who were fit were selected for slave labour and killed later when they became too weak to work. In the largest camps thousands of prisoners could be gassed in a day. Altogether, around six million Jews were murdered.

**SOURCE 2** Members of a British Parliamentary delegation view piles of bodies at Buchenwald concentration camp, near Weimar, in Germany, in July 1945.
This carriage is a replica of one used by prisoners to haul stone at Buchenwald concentration camp. The surrounding ground marks the site of demolished prisoners’ barracks. Buchenwald was established in 1937. Over the next eight years it held over 250,000 inmates, including communists and socialists, Jews, Jehovah’s Witnesses, mentally ill people, homosexuals, gypsies, and Polish and Soviet POWs. From 1958 much of the site was preserved as a memorial to remind people of the horrors of Nazism.

These gas ovens at Buchenwald were used to burn bodies. Buchenwald was not a planned extermination camp like Auschwitz. Its prisoners were used as slave labour in the camp and surrounding armaments factories. Nevertheless, there were mass killings of prisoners, especially Soviet and Polish POWs. Many inmates died during Nazi medical experiments and others were sent on from Buchenwald to be killed at Auschwitz.

To access videos, interactivities, discussion widgets, image galleries, weblinks and more, go to www.jacplus.com.au
The Nuremberg war crimes trials

At the war’s end, the Allies put the leading Nazis and concentration camp commandants on trial. To conduct trials of the surviving Nazi leaders, the International Military Tribunal was formed with judges from Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union. Hitler and several other Nazi leaders had already committed suicide. Among leading Nazis who received death sentences were: Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler’s Foreign Minister; Alfred Rosenberg, Minister for Occupied Territories; and Hermann Goering, Luftwaffe Commander-in-Chief from 1936 and Economics Minister from 1937. Goering committed suicide the day before he was to be hanged.

A significant number of Nazi war criminals, along with many Nazi collaborators who committed war crimes in occupied countries and in Axis satellite states such as Croatia, managed to avoid arrest. Some adopted new identities and escaped from Europe. Martin Bormann, Hitler’s secretary and the second most powerful person in Nazi Germany, vanished; he was tried in absentia and sentenced to death. Adolf Eichmann, who played a leading role in the Holocaust, was captured by Israeli agents in Argentina in 1960, tried in Israel and hanged in 1962.
A twisted pile of corpses lies in a burial pit at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. When British troops liberated the camp on 15 April 1945 they found 10 000 dead inmates, mainly Jews, who needed to be buried quickly to stop the spread of typhus and other deadly diseases. The camp’s former SS guards were forced to bury them. This photograph was taken by Alan Moore, an official Australian war artist.

Source 6

Moore, Alan, SS guards burying dead, Belsen (1947)
Oil on canvas, 46.2 x 61.4 cm, Australian War Memorial ART27621

To access videos, interactivities, discussion widgets, image galleries, weblinks and more, go to www.jacplus.com.au
2.13.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Explain how Nazi racism influenced the way that the German military and SS treated different groups of POWs and civilians.
2. Describe the consequences of Nazi policies for Soviet POWs and Soviet and other Slavic civilians.
3. Describe Nazi policies towards Jews and explain the consequences of the Holocaust.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4. Examine SOURCE 5.
   a. List, in descending order, the countries that had the most concentration camps.
   b. Explain why Auschwitz was the most notorious of all concentration camps.
5. Frame at least three questions you would ask about each of SOURCES 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 in an investigation of Nazi atrocities.

2.13 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
1. Many people regard the war crimes trials at the end of World War II as inadequate because many fascist war criminals escaped justice and only totally defeated powers could be held to account for war crimes. Conduct research to find out what steps have been taken since World War II to punish war crimes and how successful such measures have been.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
2. Evaluate the significance of the war crimes trials following World War II as a turning point in attitudes to wartime atrocities.

2.14 Changing international relations

2.14.1 Australia and the United Nations
The end of World War II was not to bring lasting peace. Instead it ushered in the era of the Cold War, which was to last until the late 1980s. This was an age of tensions and sometimes of confrontation between blocs of countries led by the Soviet Union (USSR) and the USA, the two world powers that had contributed most to winning World War II. It was also an age of wars in Third World countries, in which opposing sides were backed by the communist and anti-communist blocs. How would Australia shape its international relationships in this new and hazardous world?

Because of the horrors of World War II, the United Nations Organization (UN) was formed in 1945 to replace the failed League of Nations in the quest for world peace, freedom and prosperity. Australia’s Labor government strongly supported the UN. As leader of Australia’s delegation to the San Francisco Conference in April–June 1945, Dr H. V. Evatt, known to his friends as ‘Doc Evatt’, gave Australia its first progressive voice in world affairs (see SOURCE 1). Evatt clashed with the big powers when he spoke on behalf of the world’s small nations, the poor and the oppressed. He played a leading role in shaping the Charter of the United Nations. The charter was endorsed by the UN’s original 51 member states in October.

The UN had (and still has) three main organisations: the Secretariat, which handles its administration; the Security Council, which acts to preserve international peace and security; and the General Assembly, in which all member states vote. Evatt was elected President of the General Assembly in 1948 and in that year he presided over the UN’s adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Evatt’s influence is evident in the opening
statement of the Declaration, which states that recognition of equal and inalienable human rights is ‘the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world’.

2.14.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**
1. Explain why the United Nations was formed.
2. Describe Australia’s role in the formation of the United Nations.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
3. Explain what evidence SOURCE 1 provides for Dr H. V. Evatt’s leading role and influence in shaping the United Nations.

2.14.2 Australia and Asia

Australia’s relations with Asian countries were influenced by the emergence of Asian movements for independence from colonial rule. When World War II ended, European colonial powers tried to resume ruling their Asian colonies as if nothing had been changed by the war. Such attempts conflicted with the hopes of Asian independence movements. In Singapore, where Britain’s Asian subjects had witnessed the humiliating spectacle of a huge British army surrendering to a smaller force of Japanese, the British assumed that they could return and rule as before the war. While some Asian leaders had collaborated with the Japanese, others, particularly those led by communists, had helped the Allies by waging guerrilla warfare behind Japanese lines. In Vietnam, for example, communist guerrillas had fought the Japanese. But, when the war ended, the French returned, and Britain supported their return. This caused the Indochina War, which ended with French defeat in 1954.

**Australia and Indonesia**

In the Australian labour movement there was strong support for Asian independence and for the Australian Labor government’s independent foreign policy. On 17 August 1945, in the Japanese-occupied Dutch East Indies, Indonesian nationalists clashed with the Japanese and declared their country’s independence. From late 1945, after Japan’s surrender, Indonesians resisted Dutch attempts to regain their former colony. The Australian government supported Indonesian independence and recognised the newly proclaimed Republic of Indonesia on 9 July 1947. But on 20 July the Dutch launched a major offensive so Australia called on the UN Security Council, which ordered a cease-fire. Australia served on the UN committee that worked for a negotiated peace. Despite further clashes, Indonesian independence was granted in August 1949. Australia appointed its first ambassador to Indonesia and sponsored Indonesian membership of the UN in 1950.

**SOURCE 2** An Indonesian family crowds into the one remaining room of their bullet-riddled home in 1945.

**SOURCE 3** Australia’s Ambassador J. Hood handing his credentials to Indonesian President Sukarno on 19 February 1950.
2.14.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Compare and contrast the differing attitudes of the Australian post-war Labor government and the colonial powers (Britain, France and the Netherlands) to Asian independence movements.
2. Identify crucial steps in Australia’s support for Indonesian independence.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. Explain what evidence SOURCE 2 provides for hardships experienced by ordinary Indonesians in their struggle for independence.
4. Describe SOURCE 3 and explain what it reveals about Australian–Indonesian relations in 1950.

2.14.3 Relations with Britain and the United States

Australians had fought in Britain’s colonial wars and in World War I out of loyalty and because they believed that if they defended the Empire, then Britain would always protect Australia from any invasion from Asia. However, when the Japanese swept south in 1942, Britain was struggling for its own survival. As you learned in earlier subtopics of this topic, Australia turned to the US and this has often been seen as a turning point in Australia’s foreign relations.

Although Japan did not have plans to invade Australia and after May 1942 it lacked the capacity to invade, a majority of Australians believed that the US had saved Australia from invasion and so they came to believe that Australia must give the same loyalty to its new powerful friend as it had previously given to Britain. Thus, along with a short-term legacy of hatred towards Japan, the war left a longer legacy of trust in the United States.

Cold War tensions increased after China’s communists won power in 1949. Under the conservative governments that ruled Australia from December 1949, Australia recognised that Britain’s power was declining. Despite this, Australia retained ties, sending troops to Malaya from 1955 to 1958 to help the British suppress a communist uprising. Increasingly, however, Australia looked to the US as its new protector.

SOURCE 4 From the late 1950s, Australian–Indonesian relations deteriorated and from 1963 to 1965 Australia sent troops to Borneo to help stop a small-scale Indonesian invasion of Malayan territory. In this 1964 photograph, Australian troops are holding weapons captured from Indonesians.
Fears and treaties
Although it had made some moves towards close relations with Asia under the Labor government, Australia retained the White Australia policy, which excluded Asians from migrating to Australia. If anything the wartime experience had increased fears of Asia in the minds of many Australians. During the 1950s, fear of the ‘Yellow peril’ would merge with fear of communism, the ‘Red peril’. Such thinking would lead Australia into the ANZUS pact in 1951 (a military alliance of Australia, New Zealand and the United States) and into the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1954. Despite its title, SEATO’s only Asian members were dictatorial governments in Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines. Both treaties were anti-communist, not pro-democratic. Tragically, such fear also led Australia into the Vietnam War in the 1960s. Until the 1970s, only a small minority warned that fighting America’s wars in return for protection could be just as misguided as the much older faith in the British Empire.

2.14.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Identify reasons why trust in the United States was a legacy of World War II for many Australians.
2 Explain why Cold War tensions increased from 1949.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3 Explain what evidence SOURCE 3 provides for roles of Australian troops in Malayan Borneo in 1964.

2.14 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 Using SOURCES 1, 2 and 3 as supporting evidence, explain how events changed Australia’s relationship with Indonesia between 1945 and 1964.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
2 Explain Australia’s changing relationships with Britain and the USA during and after World War II.

2.15 Commemoration and contested debates

2.15.1 Commemorating World War II
On 14 August 1945, Japan accepted US terms for unconditional surrender. The following day was called VP Day (Victory in the Pacific). On that day, 15 August, Australians celebrated wildly. The fear of a future under tyranny was now just a memory and so, they hoped, were the long years of hardship. But almost 40,000 Australians had given their lives in this brutal conflict and, as in World War I, Australians were determined that their sacrifice would not be forgotten. Historians were also determined to understand what had happened. How have Australians commemorated World War II and what aspects of the war have been the subject of contested debates?

During World War I, Anzac Day had quickly been adopted as the national day for remembrance of those who served and, particularly, those who died in the Great War. Rather than have a separate day of remembrance, Anzac Day also became the day for remembering those who fought and died in World War II. Veterans marched with their World War II units each Anzac Day in Australian cities and towns, and Anzac Day speeches paid tribute to them along with Great War veterans. As the numbers of surviving World War I veterans dwindled over the later decades of the twentieth century, Anzac Day marchers were then mostly from World War II until their ranks too were thinned by age and death.

After World War II, new memorials were not constructed in Australian cities and towns as they had been after World War I. Rather, new sections were added to existing memorials with
the names of local people who had lost their lives in World War II. The Australian War Memorial in Canberra developed a new section dedicated to World War II. It commemorates the sacrifices of all branches of World War II services. As the casualty rate in the RAAF was the highest of the three services, it is fitting that the Australian War Memorial has paid a special tribute to the RAAF in its displays (see SOURCE 1).

SOURCE 1 Avro Lancaster Mk I bomber ‘G-for George’, 460 Squadron, RAAF on display at the Australian War Memorial. This plane flew 90 operations over occupied Europe with 27 crews, mostly Australians, between December 1940 and April 1944. During these operations, the aircraft was damaged by enemy fire more than 20 times.

Battle for Australia Day
It was not until the 1990s that any significant movement began for a specific day to commemorate Australia’s role in World War II. In 2008 the RSL finally achieved success in a decade-long campaign to commemorate the ‘Battle for Australia’, a series of separate battles in 1942 that included the Battle of the Coral Sea, the Battle of Milne Bay and the Kokoda Track. The Australian government proclaimed in 2008 that ‘Battle for Australia Day’ would be observed each year on the first Wednesday in September. However, several historians were critical of the idea that there ever was a battle for Australia. They argued that these were separate battles and there was no co-ordinated Japanese campaign to invade Australia.

2.15.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Identify the main day of the year on which Australians who served in World War II are remembered.
2 Describe other ways in which Australians commemorate World War II.
3 Explain why the idea of ‘Battle for Australia Day’ has been controversial.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4 Explain why ‘G-for George’ is considered a fitting memorial for World War II.

DID YOU KNOW?
The Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942 marked the first time US and Australian forces halted the Japanese advance in the Pacific.
2.15.2 Contested debates on World War II

Many aspects of World War II have been the subject of ongoing debates between historians. As you have seen, historians have given conflicting interpretations of the meaning and significance of Prime Minister John Curtin’s ‘call to America’, and the concept of a ‘Battle for Australia’ has also been contested.

Historical debate over the European theatre of the war

Controversy has surrounded several aspects of the war in Europe including the reasons for early Axis successes, the collapse of the French Republic in 1940, the significance of various battles and the decision making that shaped the course of the war. Some historians have argued that the conflict did not become a world war until Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941 and Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941. There has also been debate about the responsibility of different factors in the European war — the Treaty of Versailles; fascism; appeasement; and the extent to which the war was caused by Nazi plans for conquest or by miscalculation.

Controversy over the Holocaust

There is probably no modern historical issue that has created more controversy than the Holocaust. Issues include how far most of the German people supported Nazi policies and to what extent ordinary Germans knew what went on in the concentration camps and death camps. Most historians distinguish between Nazis who supported the crimes committed during the Holocaust, including those who actually took part in them, and the great majority of Germans who took no part in such atrocities or were not aware that they were taking place.

Historians have pointed out that major death camps like Auschwitz were outside Germany, while others have stressed that, due to the involvement of police, soldiers, guards, railway staff and bureaucrats, there had to be widespread knowledge of atrocities.

Debates on the Pacific theatre of the war

There has been ongoing historical debate about many aspects of the Pacific war. Controversial topics include the quality of military leaders, especially MacArthur; the decisions of political leaders, including Churchill, Curtin, Roosevelt and his successor Truman; the conduct of specific campaigns and battles, and many other aspects of the war. Here we will look at two debates that are ongoing or current.

The debate on whether Australian troops were outnumbered on the Kokoda Track

Until very recently, Australian historians and Australians generally believed that the men of the 39th Battalion and the Papuan infantry were vastly outnumbered by Japanese troops along the Kokoda Track from July to September 1942. However, in 2012 that assumption was challenged when the book *The Kokoda Campaign 1942 Myth and Reality*, by Peter Williams, was published following extensive research using Japanese sources. Williams conducted extensive research in the records of the Japanese units of the *Nankai Shitai* (South Seas Detachment). What he found was that the Australian forces were never outnumbered by as much as they believed and from mid-September the Australians outnumbered the Japanese.

**SOURCE 2** From Inside History Magazine blog: Author Q&A: The Kokoda Campaign 1942 by Peter Williams

IHM. Q. What resources did you come across when researching your book that have not been widely used by others?
Peter: I went to Tokyo and spent a month in their military archives looking at Imperial Japanese Army documents from 1942. I don’t know of any other Kokoda author who has done that, which is possibly why other books on Kokoda have got much of the story wrong.

Debates over the use of atomic bombs to force Japan’s surrender

Probably no issue has been more controversial than the use of atomic bombs to force Japan’s surrender. Here are three examples of historians arguing that it was not necessary to use those horrific weapons to end the war.
In *Japan’s Decision to Surrender* (1954), the US historian Robert J. Butow argued the US made it impossible for Japan to surrender without losing face. He argues that the Japanese would have been much more willing to surrender if the Allied terms had been transmitted to them without publicity.

In *Brighter than a Thousand Suns* (1965), Robert Jungk pointed out that the Japanese were attempting to have the Soviet Union help them in negotiating peace. Jungk argued that, as it had captured all vital islands near the Japanese home islands, the US could have maintained the blockade of Japan and used diplomatic pressure to end the war without the need for more casualties.

In *A History of Modern Japan* (1976), the British historian Richard Storry argued that the Japanese leaders could have been persuaded to surrender had the US demonstrated its power by dropping the bomb on open country. Storry argues that the US knew that the Japanese were trying to seek peace and that the entry of the Soviet Union into the Asia-Pacific war with an attack on Japan on 8 August was just as important a factor in leading to the Japanese surrender as was the atomic bomb.

Other historians have argued that any alternative to the atomic bombs would have caused even more suffering (see *SOURCE 4*).


The advent of the reality of nuclear weapons will continue to focus the attention of later generations on the end of the Asia-Pacific War. Yet . . . With the evidence now available, the nightmare recognised at the time — that an invasion of the Japanese home islands would produce stupendous casualties on both sides — is more than validated.
2.15.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Identify two aspects of the war in Europe that have been the subject of historical debates.
2. Describe two opposing arguments in debates on the war in Europe.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. Explain how *The Kokoda Campaign 1942 Myth and Reality* by Peter Williams has challenged long-accepted interpretations of the Kokoda campaign.

4. Read SOURCE 2 and explain what new evidence Peter Williams used in his analysis of the Kokoda campaign.
5. Look closely at SOURCE 3 and identify features of this sculpture that express the horrors inflicted by the atomic bombs.
6. Explain the main arguments used by Butow, Jungk and Storry against the idea that the use of atomic bombs was necessary to force Japan to surrender.
7. Read SOURCE 4 and identify the main point of Richard Frank’s argument.

2.15 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1. Using sources in this subtopic identify one example where a contested debate has sprung from research that has produced new evidence and another example where a contested debate is based on conflicting interpretations of the same evidence.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
2. Hold a class discussion on the question of why Battle for Australia Day has failed to capture the public imagination in anything like the way that Anzac Day has done.
3. Research the battle of Isurava, its course and its outcome. Consider why it has been described by some commentators as ‘Australia’s Thermopylae’ as well as the statement by some veterans of the battle that its importance was second only to Gallipoli in 1915 in Australian military history. Evaluate the validity of such claims.

2.16 SkillBuilder: Analysing political cartoons and propaganda posters

What are Political cartoons and propaganda posters and why are they valuable historical sources?

Political cartoons are drawings made by cartoonists to comment on the political issues of the time. They use a range of techniques including humour to make serious points about these issues. Propaganda posters use images and text with the aim of influencing people’s attitudes or behaviour. What is presented may be true or false, according to the poster’s target audience and its purpose.

Go to your learnON course to access:
- An explanation of the skill (Tell me)
- A step-by-step process to develop the skill, with an example (Show me)
- An activity to allow you to practise the skill (Let me do it)
- Questions to test your application of the skill (Applying skills)
2.17 Review

This final subtopic provides a range of opportunities for you to review and respond through:

i revising and checking your historical knowledge

ii demonstrating your ability to apply historical concepts and skills.

Go to your learnON course to access:

- A key chronology of events relevant to the topic
- A summary of the key knowledge presented in the topic
- A ‘Big Questions’ activity
- A multiple choice topic test
- Short answer or extended writing responses

On Resources

Interactivity
The course and consequences of World War II timeline
Use this interactivity to create a visual timeline of the key events in the course and consequences of World War II
int-2970