Counting the Cost of Kokoda

Applicable for use in Australian Curriculum: History –
Year 10

Written By Bradley Wood.
This Unit has ten lessons taught over a four-week period.
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Curriculum Links

Year 10 History

Achievement Standards

- Explain the context for people’s actions in the past.
- Explain different interpretations of the past and recognise the evidence used to support these interpretations.
- Process, analyse and synthesise information from a range of primary and secondary sources and use it as evidence to answer inquiry questions.

Historical Knowledge and Understanding

- Experiences of Australians during World War II (such as Prisoners of War (POWs), the Battle of Britain, Kokoda, the Fall of Singapore) (ACDSEH108)
- The impact of World War II, with a particular emphasis on the Australian home front, including the changing roles of women and use of wartime government controls (conscription, manpower controls, rationing and censorship) (ACDSEH109)

Historical Skills

Chronology and terms and concepts

- Use historical terms and concepts (ACHHS183)

Analysis and use of sources

- Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources (ACHHS187)
- Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument (ACHHS188)
- Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources (ACHHS189)

Perspectives and interpretations

- Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past (ACHHS190)
- Identify and analyse different historical interpretations (including their own) (ACHHS191)

Explanation and communication

- Develop texts, particularly descriptions and discussions that use evidence from a range of sources that are referenced (ACHHS192)
Learning Objectives

In completing this unit, students will:

- Critically evaluate the reliability of primary sources as evidence in the construction of an historical argument. (See ACHHS188)
- Use historical evidence to develop interpretations of past events. (See ACHHS191)
- Use appropriate texts to communicate their interpretation. (See ACHHS192)
## Lessons

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<td>1 and 2</td>
<td>Lesson objective</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students will identify and discuss their prior knowledge of the Allied campaign in Papua against the Japanese, and the part it played in the Pacific War (part of the Second World War).</td>
<td>• Experiences of Australians during World War II (such as Prisoners of War (POWs), the Battle of Britain, Kokoda, the Fall of Singapore) (ACDSEH108)</td>
<td>• Worksheet 1: Think/Puzzle/Explore</td>
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<td>Identify prior knowledge</td>
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<td>Discuss with students what they know about the South-west Pacific theatre of the Pacific War.</td>
<td>• Explain the context for people’s actions in the past (Achievement Standard)</td>
<td>• Worksheet 2: Where is Kokoda?</td>
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<td>Brainstorm words and phrases they associate with 'Kokoda', to gauge the impressions they have gained to date.</td>
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<td>Discuss why the conditions of warfare in Papua would have differed from those in Europe.</td>
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<td>Complete Worksheet 1: Think/Puzzle/Explore.</td>
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<td>Consider new information</td>
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<td>Have students find the following places on a map: Coral Sea, Midway Island, Papua, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Burma (Myanmar), Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia.</td>
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<td>Complete Worksheet 2: Where is Kokoda?</td>
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<td>Have students find out more about the Kokoda campaign at <a href="https://www.awm.gov.au/military-event/E291/">https://www.awm.gov.au/military-event/E291/</a>.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Apply knowledge</td>
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<td>Students should discuss and note down the following:</td>
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| 1    | 3          | a) One key turning point in the Pacific War.  
  b) Two key battles from the South-west Pacific theatre of the Pacific War.  
  c) Three objectives of the Allies’ Papuan campaign.  
  d) The significance of key locations on the Kokoda Trail during WWII. | • Experiences of Australians during World War II (such as Prisoners of War (POWs), the Battle of Britain, Kokoda, the Fall of Singapore) (ACDSEH108)  
  • Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument (ACHHS188) | • Worksheet 3: What was the Kokoda Campaign?  
  • Worksheet 4: Fighting in the Jungle |

Lesson objective

• Students will gain an understanding of the location and nature of the Kokoda campaign.

Consider new information

• Read and complete Worksheet 3: What was the Kokoda Campaign?

As a class, discuss your responses to Worksheet 3.

Analyse evidence

• Complete Worksheet 4: Fighting in the Jungle, which includes a selection of primary sources.

• Find two more primary sources about the experience of fighting along the Kokoda Trail or under jungle conditions.

Apply knowledge

• Compare the sources you found with those in Worksheet 4.

• As a class, discuss the evidence you have analysed. What new understandings do you have about the Kokoda campaign?
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<td>2</td>
<td>4, 5 and 6</td>
<td><strong>Learning objective</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Students study different sources of evidence on relative troop numbers at Kokoda and reach a decision about the accuracy of this evidence.&lt;br&gt;- Students examine contrasting evidence and interpretations to evaluate the reliability of the historical record.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Identify prior knowledge</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Ask students what they know about the strength of Australian troop numbers in the Second World War.&lt;br&gt;- Then discuss what they know about Australian relative to Japanese troop numbers on the Kokoda Trail.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Analyse evidence</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Read about casualties on the Kokoda Trail at <a href="http://kokoda.commemoration.gov.au/casualties/kokoda-milne-bay-bungona-casualty-lists.php">http://kokoda.commemoration.gov.au/casualties/kokoda-milne-bay-bungona-casualty-lists.php</a>.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Apply knowledge</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Complete Worksheet 5: Analysing Sources – Troop Numbers.&lt;br&gt;- Complete Assessment Task 1: Kokoda – Doing the Figures.</td>
<td>- Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources <em>(ACHHS187)</em>&lt;br&gt;- Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources <em>(ACHHS189)</em>&lt;br&gt;- Develop texts, particularly descriptions and discussions that use evidence from a range of sources that are referenced <em>(ACHHS192)</em></td>
<td>- Worksheet 5: Analysing Sources – Troop Numbers&lt;br&gt;- Assessment Task 1: Kokoda – Doing the Figures</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>7, 8 and 9</td>
<td><strong>Lesson objective</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Students evaluate historical interpretations of the Kokoda campaign, including an Australian feature film.</td>
<td>- Experiences of Australians during World War II (such as Prisoners of War)</td>
<td>- Assessment Task 2: Comparing Historical Interpretations</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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|      | 10        | *Identify prior knowledge*  
  - As a class, discuss student responses to Worksheet 5 and Assessment Task 1. (See above.)  
  - In particular, discuss the following questions:  
    - *How did the sources of evidence on troop numbers of Japanese and Australian soldiers at Kokoda vary? Why might this have been so?*  
    - *How reliable are military statistics?*  
    - *How important are they to historical interpretations (i.e. accounts by historians and authors after the event)?*  
    - *To what extent can we rely on one or two sources of evidence on what happened at Kokoda? How can we get as accurate a picture as possible about what occurred?*  
  - *Analyse evidence*  
    - *Watch the film Kokoda (2006):* Go to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kokoda_(film) or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4bIgSIbRoi&list=PL5mR0PxdNDZ7TLtgfr-9BGLtL5weGLAAa. [NB. The film is rated M, recommended for audiences of 15 years and over.]  
  - *Apply knowledge*  
    - *Complete Assessment Task 2: Comparing Historical Interpretations.* | (POWs), the Battle of Britain, Kokoda, the Fall of Singapore) (ACDSEH108)  
  - *Identify and analyse different historical interpretations (including their own)* (ACHHS191) |  
  - Paragraph: The Historical Significance of Kokoda for the Australian people |  

*Lesson objective*
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<td>• Review the unit of work and reflect on the historical significance for Australia of the Kokoda campaign.</td>
<td>particular emphasis on the Australian home front, including the changing roles of women and use of wartime government controls (conscription, manpower controls, rationing and censorship) (ACDSEH109)</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td><strong>Identify prior knowledge</strong></td>
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<td>• As a class, discuss student responses to Assessment Task 2.</td>
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<td>• In particular, brainstorm the ‘facts’ and ‘fictions’ about the Kokoda campaign.</td>
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<td><strong>Consider new information</strong></td>
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<td>• As a class, read former Prime Minister Paul Keating’s famous speech about Kokoda, in which he said, ‘These were the heroic days of Australia’s history’: <a href="http://www.keating.org.au/shop/item/anzac-day---25-april-1992">http://www.keating.org.au/shop/item/anzac-day---25-april-1992</a>.</td>
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<td><strong>Apply knowledge</strong></td>
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<td>• As a class, discuss Keating’s speech, focusing on the following questions:</td>
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<td>What does Keating mean by the phrase, ‘Legends bind nations together. They define us to ourselves. But they should not stifle us.’ What does Keating seem to think is ‘stifling’ about the traditional Anzac Legend?</td>
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<td>Discuss the following excerpt from the speech: ‘On the Kokoda Trail it was ... the young and inexperienced militia men ... who fought gallantly - and eventually won. When it seemed that Papua New Guinea would fall, when it seemed it would be another Singapore, another Rabaul, these troops gallantly held out and finally drove the enemy back to the sea.’</td>
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<td>Why might Keating have argued for a stronger emphasis on Australians’ experiences in Papua New Guinea? Do you think they have been neglected on Anzac Day and in the public imagination? If so, why might that be?</td>
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<td>• Have students compose a paragraph on the following topic:</td>
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<td><em>What was the historical significance for Australia of the Kokoda conflict? What did the conflict mean for Australia at the time, and what ongoing consequences has it had?</em></td>
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## Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<th>Resources</th>
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</table>
| 1    | 1 and 2| - Worksheet 1: Think/Puzzle/Explore.  
      |        | - Worksheet 2: Where is Kokoda? |
      |        | - Worksheet 5: Analysing Sources – Troop Numbers  
      |        | - Assessment Task 1: Kokoda – Doing the Figures |
      |        | - Assessment Task 2: Comparing Historical Interpretations |
Worksheet 1: Think, Puzzle, Explore

This activity helps students connect to prior knowledge, stimulates curiosity and lays the groundwork for independent inquiry. Give students a few quiet moments to consider the topic at hand. Then, work as a whole class or in small groups to brainstorm responses to the three questions below. Allow time between each question for students to think.

1. What do you **think** you know about the Kokoda campaign in the Second World War?

2. What **puzzles** you about Kokoda?

3. How can you **explore** this topic?
Worksheet 2: Where is Kokoda?

Map 1

This map shows Japanese advances in the Pacific 1942. The Kokoda Trail cuts across the eastern end of New Guinea from north to south. Kokoda village is roughly central in the track.

Japanese advances in the Pacific, 1942.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pacific_War_Japanese_Advances.jpg
This map shows the Kokoda Trail. The Japanese initially advance from Buna in a southerly direction along the Kokoda Trail towards Port Moresby until they have to retrace their steps in a fighting withdrawal after the battle at Ioribaiwa.

**TASK**

Mark on the Map 2:

1. The direction of the advance by the Japanese.
2. The direction of the advance of the Australian and American forces.
3. These important strategic locations:
   - Kokoda
   - Gona
   - Buna
   - Isurava
   - Efogi
   - Brigade Hill
   - Ioribaiwa
   - Imita Ridge
   - Oivi/Gorari.

Source of map: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kokoda_trail.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kokoda_trail.svg)
Worksheet 3: What was the Kokoda Campaign?


How did Japan get involved in the Second World War?
On 7 December 1941, more than two years after the start of the Second World War, Japan entered the conflict on the side of Germany by attacking the Malayan Peninsula and the American Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, without warning. Having inflicted a heavy defeat on the USA the Japanese were able to rapidly capture the Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, the Netherlands East Indies (now largely Indonesia), Dutch and Portuguese Timor, the Solomon Islands and Rabaul.
Why were the Japanese in New Guinea?
The key to Japan holding its conquests across this vast area against the Allies was for it to establish a defensive perimeter of airfields, ports and bases that would prevent the Americans from successfully counterattacking.

One obvious place from which the USA could make a counterattack was Australia. Therefore, the Japanese decided to invade the island of New Guinea and take control of Port Moresby, whose strategic location on New Guinea’s south-eastern coast would enable Japan to launch air raids against the east coast of Australia and threaten airfields or ports and industrial centres. This area of New Guinea was known as Papua and had been officially administered by Australia since 1906.

The Japanese plan of attack
The Japanese decided on a direct amphibious attack on Port Moresby, which was lightly defended by three inexperienced Australian militia battalions (the 39th, 49th and 53rd which comprised the 30th Brigade) that had been dispatched there in January 1942. However, the naval Battle of the Coral Sea on 7-8 May 1942, though inconclusive, prevented the passage of a Japanese troop convoy that had already embarked for the invasion. The Japanese were forced to abandon their seaborne attempt on Port Moresby and redrew their plans.

Meanwhile, Australian troops and American engineers had landed at Milne Bay, another strategic location on the south-eastern tip of Papua, on 24 June 1942. It was considered a perfect spot for an Allied airfield from which air raids could be launched against Japanese supply lines.

The strategic importance of Kokoda
On 21-22 July 1942 the Japanese landed at Gona and Buna on the north-eastern coast of Papua New Guinea. Since they could not make a direct landing at Port Moresby the Japanese would instead march to Port Moresby over the mountainous Owen Stanley Ranges on a mostly narrow foot-track known as the Kokoda Trail.

The role of the Australian Militia
The first Australian units sent to confront the Japanese advance were from the 39th Battalion, a militia formation, based in Port Moresby. They were joined by soldiers from the Papuan Infantry Battalion. Their goal was to delay the Japanese until reinforcements could arrive and deny the Japanese the Kokoda airfield. However, they were unsuccessful and so began a gradual retreat during which a series of fierce rearguard actions were fought by the Australians, who were now receiving reinforcements. The major battles in this part of the campaign were fought at Isurava, Efogi, Brigade Hill and Ioribaiwa. The Australian withdrawal continued until they reached Imita Ridge, only 60 kilometres from Port Moresby, on 16 September 1942.

The beginning of the end
The Japanese had already decided to abandon their attack on Port Moresby, but this was not known by the Australians as they continued their retreat to Imita Ridge. In August, facing increasing American pressure on the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons, and having been defeated at Milne Bay at the end of the month, the Japanese had to withdraw back along the Kokoda Track.
When the Australians went on the offensive again on 22 September 1942, they found the Japanese had abandoned Ioribaiwa. The Australians rapidly gained the initiative, steadily advancing against the retreating Japanese. This culminated in the recapture of the Kokoda airfield by the Australians and the last major engagement on the Kokoda Trail at Oivi Gorari. After this, the Japanese dug in on their coastal positions at Buna, Gona and Sanananda.

**Glossary**

**Amphibious**

An amphibious attack is when ships land troops on a beach to attack a nearby objective on the land. The most famous amphibious attack of the Second World War (and the largest) were the Allied D-Day landings on the French coast in June 1944, but the Japanese were also well practised in this type of attack. However, an amphibious force is vulnerable to air attack, meaning that an amphibious assault should only be attempted when the invading force has control of the skies over the landing beaches.

**Militia**

Prior to the Second World War, Australia had a small Permanent Military Force of about 2,800 officers and men and a Citizen Military Force (CMF). The CMF were also known as the ‘militia’ and were part-time voluntary soldiers who, by law, were only to serve in Australia and its territories, such as Papua, and not overseas. At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) (the original AIF fought in the First World War) was formed and comprised volunteers who could serve at home or abroad. During the war’s early years they were the only Australian troops engaged in combat and because of their experience they were considered superior to the militia. Because the militia was not as well-trained or equipped as the AIF, they were considered to lack fighting spirit. They became known by the nickname ‘chockos’ (chocolate soldiers) as it was thought they would ‘melt’ in the heat of combat.

**Battalion**

A battalion is a military unit. In Australia in 1942, a battalion, like the 39th militia battalion, contained about 900 men, which included command, service and support personnel. These 900 men are mostly divided up into companies, the companies are divided up into platoons and the platoons in turn are divided up into the smallest military unit – the section. The battalion is NOT the largest military unit. Three battalions make a brigade and three brigades make a division. Divisions themselves could be designated part of a corps, which in turn was part of an Army.

**Kokoda Trail**

The Kokoda Trail is sometimes known as the Kokoda Track. Both names were in use by servicepeople and reporters at the time. Some people consider ‘Trail’ to be an American version and therefore unsuitable for Australian histories. However, Australian units that fought bravely in this theatre of war received the Battle Honour of ‘Kokoda Trail’ to attach to their colours. In the end it is probably a matter of individual preference.
TASK
After reading about Kokoda above, write a paragraph below summarising the campaign in your own words. (Approx. 150 words)

End of worksheet
Worksheet 4: Fighting in the Jungle

TASK
Examine the sources of evidence below about fighting conditions at Kokoda and complete the questions that follow.

Source A

Source B

*It was seldom that anyone got a glimpse of the enemy. Most of the wounded were very indignant about it. I must have heard the remark ‘You can’t see the bastards!’ hundreds of times in the course of a day. Some of the men said it with tears in their eyes and clenched fists. They were humiliated beyond endurance by the fact that they had been put out of action before even seeing a Japanese [soldier].*


Source C


Questions

1. What do **Sources A, B and C** tell you about the ability of soldiers, both Australian and Japanese, to see the enemy in the jungle conditions of the Kokoda Trail?
2. What impact would the terrain and jungle conditions have had on the accurate reporting enemy movement and numbers on both sides during the campaign?
Worksheet 5: Analysing Sources – Troop Numbers

Soldiers of the Australian 39th Battalion, September 1942.

Why numbers count

In military history, numbers matter. Usually, they help tell the story and are used to explain the outcome of a battle or campaign. The numbers of servicepeople, the amount of training they have had, the industrial capacity of the country from which they come, and the weapons they use affect the total military strength they can bring to bear on an enemy force. The numbers of wounded and killed tend to influence the morale of units and their resilience, or capacity to recover from defeats. The amount of food, ammunition and the availability of reinforcements also help to determine the outcome of military actions. Sometimes, however, the impression
one side has about the enemy’s numerical strength can be as important as the reality. In the histories written about the Kokoda Trail, the Australians have usually been described as being ‘outnumbered’ significantly by the Japanese, as shown by the sources below.

**TASK**

Complete Part A and Part B below, using the sources of evidence provided.

**PART A**

**Source A**

[Brigadier Arnold Potts estimated] that the Japanese outnumbered his men by five or six to one. Despite this, Maroubra Force, by his reckoning, had killed four times more than the Japanese.


**Source B**

By now practically the entire available force of Australians had been thrown in, and one by one their main positions were overwhelmed by the enemy. I don’t think that the Japanese were much superior numerically, but they contrived to be superior numerically wherever it counted.

Osmar White, *Green Armour* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson Ltd, 1945), 171.

**Source C**

*Australian Militia soldiers delayed an attacking force of 6000 experienced jungle troops ...*. The Australian soldiers were outnumbered by a force, sometimes six to ten times their size.

Questions

1. a) According to author Roland Perry (Source A), what was the estimate of the ratio of Japanese to Australian soldiers given by Brigadier Arnold Potts? (NB. Brigadier Potts was a commander of Australian troops in New Guinea.)

b) What are some of the difficulties Perry would have encountered when trying to gather accurate information about troop numbers in the campaign? (Hint: jungle conditions, communications).

2. a) Osmar White (Source B) was a journalist who was on the Kokoda Trail with Australian soldiers during the New Guinea campaign. White interviewed both frontline soldiers and their commanders. According to White, what was the ratio of Japanese to Australian soldiers?

b) What are some of the difficulties White would have encountered when trying to report events at the time of the war?
3. a) According to historian Peter Macinnis (Source C), how many Japanese soldiers did the Australians face in the New Guinea jungle? What is Macinnis’ estimate of the ratio of Japanese to Australian soldiers?

b) What are some of the difficulties Macinnis would have encountered when trying to gather information for his book on Kokoda?

4. a) Having read the three sources, what do you think is the likely ratio of Japanese to Australian soldiers in the Kokoda campaign? Explain your answer with reference to one or more of the sources.

b) Which source, A, B or C, do you think is the most reliable on the question of relative troop numbers? Or are they equally reliable? Explain your reasoning.
c) To what extent might writing about a war at the time, or writing about it later, affect the reliability or accuracy of information gathered?

d) To what extent might a writer’s proximity to the action affect the reliability or accuracy of information gathered? Do you have to have been there to know what truly happened?

e) To what extent might evidence and interpretations of war experiences change over time? Why might recent figures differ from figures collected at the time of Kokoda?

PART B

NB. Source D and E refer to a specific battle at Kokoda, that of 28 July 1942.

Source D

*Back at Kokoda (on 28 July 1942), Colonel Owen decided he just had to make the best of what he had and prepared to defend the village with his eighty men good and true.*

Peter Fitzsimons, *Kokoda* (Hodder Headline Australia, 2004), 205.
Source E

A methodical officer of the 3rd (Kuwada) Battalion 144th Regiment, Lieutenant Hidetaka Noda ... quotes a report received at Rabaul: ‘In the Kokoda area (on 28-29 July 1942), our Advance Force has been engaged in battle with 1,200 Australians, and has suffered unexpectedly heavy casualties.’


Questions

1. What is Peter Fitzsimons’ (Source D) estimate of the Australian numbers at the battle?

2. According to the Japanese at the time (as cited in Source E), how many Australian soldiers fought in the battle of 28 July 1942?

3. What might account for the difference in estimates?

4. If you had to write a history of the Kokoda battle of 28 July 1942, what figure would you use, and why?
5. Based on the evidence you have examined, how would you describe the historical interpretations (i.e. accounts by historians and authors) of Australia’s involvement in the Kokoda conflict, and in the New Guinea campaign more broadly? Are the interpretations generally positive or negative about Australia’s performance in the conflict? Explain your answer.

*End of worksheet*
Assessment Task 1: Kokoda – Doing the Figures

TASK

Create a graph or infographic presenting key statistics on the Kokoda campaign. Then present it in an attractive and accessible manner in the form of a poster or slideshow.

Your graph or infographic should refer to one or more of the following statistics:

- Troop numbers
- Army casualties
- Navy casualties
- Kokoda casualties relative to other Second World War conflicts
- Weaponry used
- Other statistics.

NB. Your statistics should refer to both Australian and non-Australian combatants at Kokoda.

Sources of information:

- Worksheets in this unit of work
- http://www.ibiblio.org/ hyperwar/ USA/USA-P-Papua/index.html

Creating graphs and infographics:

- http://www .wikihow.com/Add-a-Graph-to-Microsoft-Word
- http://blog .hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-build-excel-graph#sm.0001d7uog0uhqekbqt82qaqr6xvl8
Assessment criteria:

You will be assessed on the following criteria.

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<td><strong>Evidence of research</strong>&lt;br&gt;Cite a range of reliable sources of information.</td>
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<td><strong>Visual and written communication</strong>&lt;br&gt;Communicate complex information to a student audience in a concise, clearly-expressed and visually attractive manner.</td>
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*End of assessment task*
Assessment Task 2: Comparing Historical Interpretations

TASK

After completing Worksheets 1–5 and Assessment Task 1, watch the film *Kokoda* (Palace Films, 2006, rated M). Then complete the tasks below.

1. *Kokoda* is a feature film with a documentary-style introduction. How effective was this combination?

2. Is a documentary necessarily more historically accurate than a feature film? Explain your answer.

3. To what extent is the film a complete and accurate source of evidence on the Kokoda conflict? Explain your answer.
4. Whose perspective(s) are represented, and not represented, in the film?

5. Compare the film portrayal of Kokoda with the other sources of evidence you have examined in this unit. What did you learn from the film that you didn’t learn from the written and visual sources, and vice versa?
Assessment criteria:

You will be assessed on the following criteria.

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*End of assessment task*