How did Australians respond to war in 1914?

An evidence-based classroom activity about Australia and the outbreak of World War 1

This unit uses evidence to explore five investigations to help you answer the title question:

INVESTIGATION 1  Why did a world war start in 1914?
INVESTIGATION 2  How did the Australian Government react? Why?
INVESTIGATION 3  How did the Australian people react? Why?
INVESTIGATION 4  Why did men and women volunteer to fight?
INVESTIGATION 5  Was Australia involved in ‘other people’s war’?

THE VIDEO INTRODUCTION COVERS THE FOLLOWING:

In 2014 we will be commemorating the 100th anniversary of Australia’s entry into and experience of the First World War.

One of the key areas of this commemoration will be an exploration of the Australian military experience, and the creation of the Anzac Spirit as part of Australian nationalism.

There will be many units of work that we will produce in association with the Returned and Services’ League (RSL) to explore this tradition (see the box for an explanation of the RSL program).

At Year 9 the key curriculum focus is The Making of the Modern World: This unit can be used to explore Compulsory Depth Study 3: World War 1 (1914-1918)

The curriculum specifies this Knowledge and Understanding: An overview of the causes of World War 1 and the reasons why men enlisted to fight in the war.

In the previous unit in this series we looked at the nature of Australian society in 1914, and came up with some ideas about whether this society would go to war.

In this unit we look at what actually happened. Yes, we know that in 1914 the Australian Government committed the young nation to participate in a world war, but why did it do so? What caused that war? And how did people respond to being involved?

RSL COMMEMORATIVE PROGRAM – SERVING AUSTRALIA

2014 is the centenary of Australian participation in the First World War, starting with a naval and military campaign in New Guinea, followed by the attack at Gallipoli in 1915. The following years are the centenary of other Australian involvement in the Great War: on the Western Front, in Palestine, on the seas and in the air, and on the home front.

This unit is part of an educational program about the centenary of Australian involvement in World War 1.

It is sponsored as a civic and educational contribution to the young people of Australia by the Returned and Services League (RSL) and addresses the requirements of the Australian Curriculum History at Years 9 and 11/12.

Some of the main elements of this program include:

- Three curriculum units per year in eStudies for use at Years 6 and 9 to 12
- A new website, Serving Australia, that will contain video, interactive modules, timelines, Centenary updates and information about youth and community programs.
Where there is a conviction among a group of like-minded people with similar culture and interests that they are different from their neighbours, that they occupy or lay claim to a definable area, and have a right to be united as a group in control of that area.

Where one nation controlled other nations and exploited the resources of the controlled nations for their own benefit.

Where countries are increasing their arms and weapons to gain or maintain an ability to fight other nations.

Where two nations agree to help each other for their mutual interest and security.

Where two nations both claim the same resource or area.

Where one race or ethnic group believes it is superior to others.

Where action is done because it is moral or just, or preventing an injustice.

Where people have an unrealistic attitude to the reality of war, and this influences their expectation.

Where diplomats and leaders failed to make compromises or reach solutions that would avoid conflict.

**Why did a world war start in 1914?**

On 4 August 1914 the great European nations went to war. Why?

Historians usually suggest a number of possible underlying causes. Your tasks in this investigation are:

- to understand these possible causes
- to look at a set of 10 key steps towards war and identify where these causes can be found
- to look at some supplementary evidence to decide how you would explain causation and the war.

1.1 Here are the causes, but the definitions do not match. Draw a line to the correct definition.

- **Alliances**
  - Where there is a conviction among a group of like-minded people with similar culture and interests that they are different from their neighbours, that they occupy or lay claim to a definable area, and have a right to be united as a group in control of that area.

- **Attitudes to war**
  - Where one nation controlled other nations and exploited the resources of the controlled nations for their own benefit.

- **Imperialism**
  - Where countries are increasing their arms and weapons to gain or maintain an ability to fight other nations.

- **Nationalism**
  - Where two nations agree to help each other for their mutual interest and security.

- **Ethnic separatism**
  - Where two nations both claim the same resource or area.

- **Resource disputes**
  - Where one race or ethnic group believes it is superior to others.

- **Military Rivalry**
  - Where action is done because it is moral or just, or preventing an injustice.

- **Failure of diplomacy**
  - Where people have an unrealistic attitude to the reality of war, and this influences their expectation.

- **Justice**
  - Where diplomats and leaders failed to make compromises or reach solutions that would avoid conflict.

1.2 Causes need to be explored in a context. Read this background information about the main nations involved and use it to create dot point annotations about each main nation on this map.

For example, your annotation dot points for Britain might include:

- Naval power,
- Rivalry with Germany.
Germany had only been a nation since 1871. By 1914 it was a powerful nation and wanted to expand. It had several colonies, a strong army, and an increasingly strong navy that would allow it to challenge the superiority of the traditional naval power, Britain. It was traditionally an enemy of France. As recently as 1871 they had been at war over possession of the territories and resources of Alsace-Lorraine. Both France and Germany claimed this border area. The German victory had humiliated the French and wounded their national pride in 1871 with the triumph of the German nation state over France in a war. Germany was also concerned that Russia was a potential enemy, and that areas of Austria-Hungary might be vulnerable to Russian expansionism, increasing Germany’s own vulnerability at its borders.

Austria-Hungary was a declining empire. It included in its borders many nations whose inhabitants did not feel ethnically part of the empire, and who wanted to break away. Some of these, such as Bosnia, looked to Serbia and Russia as ethnically compatible nations.

Serbia bordered the Austro-Hungarian empire. It wanted to expand its power by adding ethnically-compatible areas such as Bosnia, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to its own sphere of influence.

Russia was a huge nation, but not a modern one, although it was starting to industrialise. In 1904–5 it was defeated by Japan.

France was hostile towards Germany, and believed that Germany controlled border areas that were rightfully French. The Alsace-Lorraine area on the border between Germany and France had been occupied by Germany after its defeat of France in 1871.

Britain was the world’s leading nation, through its colonies, and its sea power. Britain was secure from the land-based threat the European powers represented to each other, but was worried about the possibility of a naval threat in the North Sea. Belgium and Holland both had ports opposite the English coast, and when Germany commenced its naval expansion in 1908 and widened the Kiel Canal in 1914 to allow the largest warships afloat quick access from the Baltic to the North Sea, Britain was very conscious of the potential threat to its sea-based security.
Here is a chronology of the events that led to war. They are the immediate causes, but they also reveal the underlying causes. Look at these 10 events and identify in them the possible underlying causes you have listed earlier. One example has been done to help you. You should also refer to the annotated map of Europe you created to help you identify each nation’s position in relation to others.

### 10 STEPS TO WAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Underlying causes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>On 28 June 1914 Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to throne of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire, was assassinated by Bosnian nationalists while he was in Sarajevo. Sarajevo was the capital city of the Balkans region of Bosnia. Bosnia had been added to the Empire by force in 1911. The group of seven assassins (of whom 19-year-old student Gavrilo Princip actually shot the Archduke and his wife) were helped by the neighbouring country of Serbia. Serbia wanted Bosnia to break away from Austria-Hungary and become part of a Slav empire. Austria-Hungary saw this as a chance to attack Serbia and stop its stirring up of ethnic separatism in the Empire.</td>
<td>Nationalism, Ethnic separatism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To do this Austria-Hungary needed the support of its ally, Germany. Germany wanted to retain Austria-Hungary as a valuable ally, and promised to support it against Serbia. On 23 July the Austro-Hungarian Government now made a series of unrealistic demands on Serbia, hoping that they would refuse, and give Austria-Hungary an excuse to invade.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>On 25 July Serbia was prepared to give in to 9 of the 10 demands, but knew that it was facing destruction. It began the process of calling up its troops, equipping them and moving them to its borders against Austria-Hungary in case of attack. It called on Russia for help. Russia promised to support its fellow Slavs in Serbia, seeing also the possibility of expanding its influence and empire.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Despite Serbia’s concessions to the demands made, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28 July. On 30 July Russia started mobilising its forces to help Serbia. The Russians were worried that if Germany and Austria-Hungary dominated the Balkans, they could get to Constantinople, blocking off Russia’s only way out of the Black Sea for trade and defence. Russia only wanted to mobilise against Austria-Hungary, but all battle plans had been designed on the assumption that in any conflict against Austria-Hungary, Germany would also be involved. Therefore mobilisation plans had to include massing troops on the German border as well as against Austria-Hungary. Germany saw this as a threat and on 31 July demanded that Russia demobilise its troops on the German border. Russia could not do that. Troop movements required detailed and precise railway timetables, and these could not be changed without creating chaos and paralysing all troop movement within Russia to its borders.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Germany believed that conflict with Russia was inevitable. On 1 August Germany declared war against Russia and began to mobilise its troops — not against Russia, but against France!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>This was because Germany expected that a conflict with Russia would draw in Russia’s military ally, France. So it would have to fight both. It would be best, therefore, not to fight both at once, but to defeat one before taking on the other. Russia had a larger army than France, but the Russians would take longer to be ready to fight — so the German war plan involved defeating France quickly in the west, then moving east to meet and defeat the Russians. But France has strongly fortified borders with Germany; so the plan was to move through unfortified Luxembourg and Belgium, and then into France, strike fast in the west, seize Paris, force the French to surrender, and then focus the majority of German troops against Russia in the east. This was the Schlieffen Plan.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
France was prepared to support Russia because it was determined to win back areas lost to Germany in a humiliating defeat in 1871. France knew that it was not strong enough to defeat Germany alone, but could hope to do so with Russia as an ally. France now mobilised against Germany.

On 2 August Germany began to implement its Schlieffen Plan. It invaded Luxembourg to enable it to strike at France through undefended borders, and prepared to move into Belgium.

On 3 August Germany declared war on France. Britain now got involved. It warned Germany not to invade Belgium to get to France. Britain had an old treaty with Belgium,

On 4 August Germany invaded Belgium. Britain declared war on Germany. The great nations of Europe were now at war.

You have now identified many contributing causes to the outbreak of war in 1914. Look at this additional information and use it to help you construct your final explanation of why the great nations of Europe went to war in 1914. For each additional source ask the question: How does this evidence help me understand the causes of war in 1914?

**SOURCE 1**  
Statistical information on the nations 1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population (millions)</th>
<th>Additional population in Empire (millions)</th>
<th>Iron and Steel (million tonnes per annum)</th>
<th>Size of Army</th>
<th>War ships</th>
<th>Military Spending (Millions £ per year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>711,000</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>£60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>£67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1,250,000</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>£40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria-Hungary</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>810,000</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>£2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>£10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE 2**  
Number of Dreadnoughts

The Dreadnought was the class of warship developed by Britain in 1906 that made all other warships obsolete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
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</table>

**SOURCE 3**  
Spending on armaments ($ per Head of Population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1914</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>7.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>8.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>12.60</td>
<td>7.29</td>
<td>8.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE 4**  
Major European Alliances at the Outbreak of War in 1914 and when they were created
SOURCE 5  A portion of the report by Colonel E.M. House.

House was chief advisor to President Woodrow Wilson. He was sent by the President in the Spring of 1914 to evaluate the situation in Europe.

The situation is extraordinary. It is militarism run stark mad. Unless someone acting for you can bring about a different understanding, there is some day to be an awful cataclysm. No one in Europe can do it. There is too much hatred, too many jealousies. Whenever England consents, France and Russia will close in on Germany and Austria. England does not want Germany wholly crushed, for she would then have to reckon alone with her ancient enemy, Russia; but if Germany insists upon an ever increasing navy, then England will have no choice. The best chance for peace is an understanding between England and Germany in regard to naval armaments and yet there is some disadvantage to us by these two getting too close.

http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Colonel_House%27s_Report_to_President_Wilson

SOURCE 6  Attitudes to the war


1.5  Putting all this information and evidence together now explain why the great nations of Europe went to war in 1914:

The great nations of Europe went to war in 1914 because:

CREATING YOUR OWN CARTOON

1.6  Here are two cartoons about alliances as the cause of war. Create your own cartoon showing how you would explain it.
Focus question 2

How did the Australian Government react? Why?

What would Australia do once war was declared? Why?

Australia was involved in a Commonwealth election while war was developing. How did the main political leaders react to the threat? Look at the following evidence to decide.

SOURCE 1
Speech by current Prime Minister Cook during the election campaign

Whatever happens, Australia is a part of the Empire right to the full. Remember that when the Empire is at war, so is Australia at war . . . I want to make it quite clear that all our resources in Australia are in the Empire and for the Empire, and the preservation and security of the Empire.

Argus, Melbourne, 3 August 1914

SOURCE 2
Speech by Opposition Labor leader (and soon to be Prime Minister) Andrew Fisher during the election campaign

We are strongly opposed to the present Government in our Australian politics; but, as I have stated frequently in Parliament, in a time of emergency there are no parties at all. We stand united against the common foe, . . . our last man and our last shilling will be offered and supplied to the mother country in maintaining her honour and our honour, if we should happen to come into the conflict.

Argus, Melbourne, 1 August 1914

SOURCE 3
An historian on Australia’s entry into war

On 3 August a federal cabinet meeting in Melbourne decided to make two offers to the British Government: to place the Australian fleet under [British] control, and to dispatch an expeditionary force [of 20,000 men] overseas. Two days later news reached the Governor-General’s office . . . that Britain’s ultimatum over the invasion of Belgium had expired and the British Empire was automatically at war with Germany. In Australia’s . . . automatic, almost blithe acceptance of war, parliament was irrelevant . . . the right to choose between war and neutrality was generally considered to be beyond its power . . . the authority of the British Government and parliament in such matters was generally accepted in Australia, and no one had suggested that the Commonwealth’s external affairs power could extend to declaring war and peace. In 1914 the choice was felt to lie with the Sovereign as head of the Empire, and he, or rather his British advisers, had chosen war.


WILL THIS SOCIETY GO TO WAR?

An evidence-based classroom activity on Australia and the outbreak of World War 1

In 2014 we will be commemorating the 100th anniversary of Australia’s entry into and experience of the First World War.

One of the key areas of this commemoration will be an exploration of the Australian military experience, and the creation of the Anzac Spirit as part of Australian nationalism.

There will be many units of work that we will produce in association with the Returned and Services’ League (RSL) to explore this tradition (see the box for an explanation of the RSL program). But to understand how Australian military involvement in the war influenced national identity we need to understand the society in which the war’s events occurred.

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How did the Australian people respond? Why?

The Australian Government immediately proclaimed that Australia was at war. How did ordinary people react? Were they enthusiastic about the war?

In 1914 the Australian Governor-General claimed:

There is indescribable enthusiasm and entire unanimity throughout Australia in support of all that tends to provide for the security of the Empire in war.

Ernest Scott, Official History of Australia in the War vol XI page 12

Is this true? We cannot know how every person reacted. We can, however, look at the evidence of the reactions of a variety of significant groups in Australian society. They should be a good guide to the reactions of their members, the people of Australia.

Look at the following evidence and decide how you think Australians reacted.

SOURCE 1  The attitude of churches to the war — an Anglican bishop’s response

Never before had such great issues been at stake. While he was speaking, things of enormous moment to the peace, freedom and stability of the Empire might be happening ... They realized that honour had dictated this course. And honour had compelled us to stand by our friends in the present crisis, and every dictate of nationalism appealed to us to try and uphold the nationalism of Denmark, Holland and Belgium. If we stood outside, there would be the greatest danger that those three countries, each of whom stood for certain principles in national freedom and life very dear to them, would be mopped up in a great teutonic [German] Empire ... Amid loud applause, Dr Long said we were not going to add anything to the Empire by our present action, but we were going to preserve the peace of the world, and the best way and the nearer way to do that ... was for the Empire to declare war.

Bathurst National Advocate, 6 August 1914

SOURCE 2  The attitude of churches to the war — a Catholic bishop’s response

[When a just war, nobly waged, is crowned with victory, then our nation wins imperishable glory. Our present duty is ... we should stand shoulder to shoulder with our responsible rulers and leaders, in word and action, trusting one another.]... What glory is there in today’s warfare? None, whatever; it is only slaughter and carnage.

Daily Telegraph, Sydney, 8 August 1914

SOURCE 3  The attitude of the Labor movement (1) — The Worker

[Australia is as much part of the British Empire as England is ... where is the man who would say to Australians: “It is no affair of yours to protect from aggression the motherland that was always ready to defend you?” Shall we be content to be branded as a people willing to take the hand of a mother in our time of need, and afterwards see her in trouble and not go out to help her? Australian Labor has shown the world many object lessons in the way of standing shoulder to shoulder in time of trouble. And now that war has been proclaimed, Australian Labor will stand shoulder to shoulder with old England in this her hour of storm and stress.]...

The Worker, 6 August 1914

SOURCE 4  The attitude of the Labor movement (2) — Labor Call

[On the other side[of the world], war is in the atmosphere. This is not political warfare, but manslaying. It is unthinkable to believe that because an archduke and his missus were slain by a fanatic the whole of Europe should become a seething battlefield, and deplorable misery brought upon the people ... What glory is there in today’s warfare? None, whatever; it is only slaughter and carnage.]...

Labor Call, 6 August 1914

3.1 What do both church leaders have in common in their attitude to involvement in the war?

3.2 Do you think church leaders’ opinions are likely to be a good indicator of many people’s attitudes? Explain your views.

3.3 How do these two sources differ in their attitude to the war?

3.4 How do you explain the contradictory views of two representatives of the Labor movement?

3.5 Do you think Labor movement newspapers are likely to be a good indicator of many people’s attitudes? Explain your views.
SOURCE 5 The attitude of the IWW — Direct Action

Direct Action was the newspaper of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a radical group dedicated to overthrowing capitalist society to create a world union of workers.

SOURCE 6 Attitudes to war

[A] Extract from a poem by Tom Skeyhill, The Call.
Young and old, brave and bold, hark to the clarion call.
Over the rolling seas it comes,
With threat of death and muffled drums,
From fields afar, where shrapnel numbs,
War, War, War!

Big and small, short and tall, hark to the clarion call.
Stay not where the crown hurrahs,
Speed ye straight to the field of Mars,
Where red blood flows beneath the stars,
War, War, War!

Mother rare, sweetheart fair, hark to the clarion call.
Slain out there is the peaceful dove,
Give to the flag the men you love,
War, War, War!

[B] Memories of Brian Lewis, Our War.
‘My ideas of war came from the Boys’ Own Paper where a young officer, pathetically but not mortally wounded, was propped with his back against a tree with a bandage around his head and one arm in a sling — for war wounds were confined to gashes on the head and holes in the arm — whilst he was touchingly comforted by one of his faithful men. Those wounds, suffered for the glory of his country, seemed a small price to pay for being transformed into an interesting hero.’

SOURCE 7 Public reactions to the war on learning that war had been declared

A seething crowd broke through the cordon at the [newspaper office] door and rushed the counter where the papers were being sold . . . In an incredibly short time . . . everyone in the street seemed to have heard the news of the declaration of war. Some were enthusiastic, some evidently gratified; some seemed overwhelmed by the import of the news, some were openly pessimistic, but the general feeling was one of relief that the terrible waiting and uncertainty of the last few days was over, and that, whatever the issue might be, Great Britain had made her voice known in the quarrel of the nations.

SOURCE 8 An Irish organisation in Australia

The spokesman of the Melbourne Celtic Club, an Irish Nationalist organisation, on August 5th said that, while the members of the club had been keen participants in the Home Rule struggle, their sectional feelings were set aside during the present crisis; they felt that they were all Britons, and desired to stand by the Empire in its hour of need.

3.6 Who do the three figures on the left represent?
What happens to these figures?
Who are the figures in the circle?
What is the message of this cartoon?
Do you think this might have been a popular idea at the time? Explain why or why not.

3.11 How are these attitudes similar?
How are they different?
Do you think people at the time had a realistic attitude to the realities of war? Explain why or why not.

3.14 Is this document good evidence of popular support for the war and Australia’s involvement in it? Explain your views.

3.15 Is this a significant piece of evidence to support the Governor-General’s assessment of public reaction to the war? Explain your reasons.
We have not heard the voice of women in any of these documents. How would you expect women to react to the outbreak of war? Is it likely to be different?

Look at the following evidence from the war involving women.

**SOURCE 9 Some women’s war efforts**

The declaration of war brought an immediate surge of volunteers among trained nurses keen to become military nurses. Thousands of Red Cross volunteers worked for the war effort. Women organised fund-raising activities to support the soldiers, and the victims of war.

**SOURCE 10 Images of women and war**

[A] Four questions to women

[B] Red Cross members in a Queensland town

[C] Commonwealth Rifle Club members

[D] Crowds watching a farewell march by the AIF

[E] Recruiting poster

[F] Recruiting poster

3.16 Which of these documents, if any, do you think show a woman’s, and not a man’s attitude to war?

3.17 Which, if any, uses women but without actually representing a woman’s point of view?

3.18 In what ways might women’s attitudes and reactions to the war be expected to be different to those of men?

3.19 In what ways might they be expected to be similar?

3.20 Would you expect women to have similar views, or might there be a variety of attitudes and reactions to the war among women?

3.21 Why might it be so hard to actually find documents from the war which show women’s points of views and reactions?

3.22 How certain can you be? Some historians have pointed out that while there was enthusiasm, opposition might have been quiet and not seen. How could you test that?

**SOURCE 11 Two propaganda images**

3.23 What do these images tell us about how the war was presented to Australians?

**SOURCE 10 Drawing by May Gibbs, creator of the popular nationalistic children’s stories about the Gumnut Babies**

3.24 What does this popular image tell us about how Australians saw the war?

3.25 Taking all this evidence into account, do you think the Governor-General was accurate in his description of how Australians responded to the outbreak of war? Justify your conclusion.
Focus question

Why did men and women volunteer to join the war?

4.1 Why do you think people would have volunteered in 1914 to join the war? Brainstorm to suggest possible reasons or motivations for enlistment.

We cannot know why every person volunteered. We can look at a selection of recorded motives and start to see the range of reasons.

4.2 Look at the following quotations letters and diaries of men (and one woman) who enlisted, and complete this table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>MOTIVES OR REASONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antill</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ellsworth</td>
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<tr>
<td>McSparrow</td>
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<td>FC Mulvey</td>
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4.3 Are there any motives here that surprise you?

4.4 Do you think there may have been other motives for enlistment that may not have been mentioned in these extracts?

4.5 Historians have pointed out that while 56 000 men rushed to enlist, far more did not. Suggest why not. Does the fact that a minority rushed suggest that the war was not popular with Australians? Explain your views.
SOURCE 1

Some reasons for enlistment
[Note that spelling and punctuation in these extracts are as in the original]

[A] RE Antill

[If we go to war and they call for men here I will make one quick and lively. I think I know what it is to rough it now and if it is my lot well here goes I am itching to get a dig at a few Germans ... we have all got the war fever ... its not bad money here 5/- a day and clothes and food that’s nearly as good as Cabinet Making and not half so hard. You may thint it funny me turning up such a good job but it was like this Philpott had only about 3 days work left for us and things are so bad out here for there is a drought on we haven’t had any rain for months so I thorrt I would join the army.

[B] G Ellsworth

[If I had stayed at home I would never have been able to hold my head up & look any decent girl in the face ... Surely everyone must realize that the Empire is going thro a Crisis it has never gone thro’ before and that every one is expected to do his duty now.

[C] AJ McSparrow

I have [enlisted] ... and I don’t regret it in the very least. I believe it is every young fellow’s duty. There are far better men than any of us have already gone ... besides every paper one lifts it has something to say about young fellows being so slow in coming forward ... we are the sort of young men who should go.

[D] FC Mulvey

I have enrolled as a volunteer ... one [son] can be spared for the defence of Australia and Australia’s fate is going to be decided on the continent and not out here ... being suited in physique and occupation and being prompted by a sense of duty and spirit of adventure I can hardly do anything else but volunteer.

[E] EH Chinner

[I am] very keen to get to grips with those inhuman brutes ... to do something to help wipe out such an infamous nation. The Parson this morning preached on this text—‘What can a man give in exchange for his soul?’ But he altered ‘man’ to ‘nation’. I am sure that God will take a great man for heroics but ... there are some things worth more than life. I curse the systems of government ... which permits this dreadful walter of blood and suffering to have enveloped the world ... I go ... believing that the only hope for the salvation of the world is a speedy victory for the Allies.

[F] RW Betts

[The outlook of the war is getting worse ... it is just ... 12 long weeks of awful bloodshed, property smashing, killing and crippling of men to, today and may it all

soon be over, but I am afraid its not to be and we people of the British Empire will all feel the strain of it ... before the so called civilized and cultured nation of Germany is crushed underfoot.

[G] AC Youdale

I thought that [the war] ... was too colossal to last long and that Christmas 1914 would see it all over. But ... I then realized that it was going to be a long struggle, and that it was time I got a wriggle on ... [By January] I felt very fit for a big fat greasy German.

[H] Sir 6 de L Rylie

I don’t think they will take married [militia] officers of my age, but after thinking for years over it I feel I must offer my services. I know that you would not have it said ... that although I talked a lot about loyalty and defence of the Empire &c, that I didn’t offer to go myself. I am worried to death about it. I would do almost anything in the World to avoid leaving you ... but I feel I couldn’t look men in the face again ... I must offer [to enlist].

[I] W Harney

Another volunteer had been sacked after punching his boss; Bill Harney volunteered from the Queensland Gulf country partly because his horses were poor; one or two men, their enthusiasm no doubt quickened by alternative offers of a prison sentence, accepted magistrates’ suggestions to enlist. Men offered because they had friends in Europe, or mates enlisted, or because everyone else in the district had gone and they could not bear the abuse of elderly women. The list was almost infinite.

[J] DG Armstrong

I am going to have a try for the war ... I think I ought to go, they want all they can get and ... I think it is the greatest opportunity for a chap to make a man of himself, those that come back from this war will be the right sort that anybody would be proud of.

[K] BW Champion

When the news of the Anzac Landing came through to Sydney, and the huge A.I.F. casualty list which soon followed, my Dad at last unwillingly gave his permission for me to enlist.

[L] J Gibbons

Things are now looking so serous, and the Russians and Allies are getting so many knock backs, that after a long talk with the manager I have decided to [enlist] ... the time has come for every able bodied man without ties to go and help.

[M] CH Alexander

I enlisted on last Sunday week ... but whether I shall see any fighting or not, I sincerely hope not ... but ... I think the time has undoubtedly arrived when everything else ... should be laid aside until this truly awful bugbear has been gotten rid of. Up to a few weeks ago the Government here seemed to be getting as many volunteers as they could or wished to handle, and as fighting is entirely out of ‘my line’, I did not feel called on to offer myself. However, they are now prepared to enroll as many as will come forward, and ... I must not hold back any longer.

[N] JA Raws

The reduction of the standard has enabled me to get through ... I was ... [never] a great man for heroics but ... there are some things worth more than life. I curse the systems of government ... which permits this dreadful walter of blood and suffering to have enveloped the world ... I go ... believing that the only hope for the salvation of the world is a speedy victory for the Allies.

[O] RD Mulvey

[Thousands should go before me—men who are more physically fit and men who have made no sacrifice ... But ... in this struggle which will determine whether spiritual principles or a military despotism will control this world of ours, I feel ... ‘tware better to die in fighting for such a cause than to live in life long self-abasement for having failed to respond to ‘the Call’. Should we be defeated life would be intolerable.

[P] Evelyn Davies

I feel that now I have the opportunity, I ought to go. Nurses are badly needed, goodness knows, and someone must do it ... I want to do the right thing.

Some historians claim that Australia’s involvement in World War 1 was not in its own national interest, but was fighting in a war that did not concern it.

In his recent documentary entitled *Other People’s Wars*, filmmaker John Pilger described how Australians have ‘a special relationship with war. ‘We fight’, he contends ‘mostly against people with whom we have no quarrel and who offer us no threat of invasion’, and Australians have thus ‘paid a unique blood sacrifice in order to appease a great protector’. In other words, Australia has largely fought other people’s wars that have been as unnecessary as they have been costly. It has done so either out of unthinking fidelity to great power protectors (either Britain or more recently the United States) or as a consequence of being duped or otherwise manipulated by these ‘big brother’ allies.

Pilger is certainly not alone in this view. Rather, he represents a continuing and pervasive perception of Australia’s military past that runs through not only the popular media, but in wider social and scholarly circles as well. On 26 April 1992, for example, Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating made a speech about the Kokoda Trail in which he claimed: ‘Even though we fought in many conflicts where we felt pangs of loyalty to what was then known as the ‘Mother Country’, to Britain and to the Empire, and we fought at Gallipoli with heroism and in Belgium, in Flanders, in France and in other places, this was the first and only time we’ve fought against an enemy to prevent the invasion of Australia, to secure the way of life we had built for ourselves’. The inference is clear. According to Keating, all other wars before 1942 and after 1945 were consequences of misplaced loyalty and sentiment.

Similarly, in an academic anthology published only last year entitled *What’s Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History*, Professors Henry Reynolds and Marilyn Lake make similar arguments: ‘Engagement in foreign wars has been one of the most distinctive features of Australia’s twentieth century history. Many of them have been wars that are not commonly called wars of choice rather than wars of necessity.’ Again the implication is that Australia ought to have kept its nose well out of conflicts that did not concern it. Many other authors and commentators over time have chosen specific wars and sought to demonstrate Australia’s mistaken choice to become involved, decisions they see as often having been made for the wrong reasons, with an incomplete knowledge of circumstances, or even under external coercion.

SOURCE 1  A statement of the case that Australia did have a national interest in joining World War 1

How, if we had not contributed, would we Australians have lived with ourselves? It is one thing not to be capable of full self-reliance, quite another to make no effort at all, to be content with being bludgers, and still retain a decent self-regard.

Those who contend that Australia’s [participation in World War 1] was not truly in our interests but only in other people’s are really saying that Australia had no interest in the outcome of that war, or anyway insufficient interest to justify Australia’s participation.

If Germany had won the Great War, the suggestion is, beating Britain in the process, many Australians would have been sad for kith-and-kin and other basically sentimental reasons, such as attachment to Empire; but Australia as a country, so peripheral and so unattractive as not to be under any real threat of German invasion during the war, would have had no substantive reason to care who won and so, the conclusion is, should have stayed out.

At the base of such thinking are two assumptions: first, that only invasion matters, that the only proper use of Australian armed force in war is against a for engaged in invading us, or anyway clearly intent on invasion; and second, on the related assumption that distance governs, that what happens close by is our concern while what happens far off is not. Both assumptions are quite unjustified.

For one thing, security and defence, though almost universally used synonymously, are in truth not coincident, though they are connected. Second, threats of invasion are not the only threats to our security, or even to our defence. And third, changes to our security circumstances can be adverse not only if they threaten our territorial integrity but also if they threaten our political independence.

Central to those three points is the distinction I draw between security and defence. Defence invokes the protection of a country’s territorial integrity against armed attack, whether that attack involves, at one extreme, invasion with the object of occupation or, at the other extreme, low-level harassment and landing parties or lodgement, or whether that attack falls between those extremes by involving such things as missile blows, air raids, and naval shelling.

So defence is concerned with others’ military capabilities, their range and application.

Security, on the other hand, is a broader concept that involves consideration of the whole range of a country’s national interests, including maintenance of political independence, or freedom from foreign constraints on independent national decisions. So security is concerned with changes in the shape of the world that seriously affect a nation’s ends and means— including things military, but far from confined to things military.

Thus if Germany had won the Great War, becoming thereby the master of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, and resuming possession of its former colonies and acquiring new ones all over the place, the whole world in which Australia lived and had its independent being would have been gravely damaged. And that deep change in a fundamental of our security circumstances would have been of fateful importance for Australia, even though in itself not involving invasion of Australia.

Australia, and everybody else if Germany had won the war, would have been looking upwards from the bottom of an impossibly steep power gradient, confronting a stark choice — a choice neatly underlining the relationship between defence and security. That choice would have been between two unappealing alternatives, each leading to the loss in large or even total measure of Australia’s political independence. The first alternative would have been to adjust our policies to the new realities — what might be called pre-emptive capitulationism. The second alternative would have been to have Germany change our policies for us by force.

So it was in Australia’s own interests to go to battle in that war.

Michael Cook, Why Australia fights other people’s wars, Quadrant September 2013

5.3 Was Australia justified in fighting in World War 1? Research further and support your decision.

CONCLUSION

You should now be able to answer the key focus question asked at the start of this unit:

- How did Australians respond to war in 1914?
- Why did they respond in these ways?