



DISTANT LINES

Queensland voices of the First World War



LEARNING NOTES

SLQ Gallery, level 2

Guide script (all grades)

Inquiry Questions:

- What role did Queenslanders who served play during the war?
- How did the male experience of war differ from the female experience of war?
- Where did Queenslanders serve overseas?
- How did people communicate with home and the front during the war?
- How did distance from home (Australia) and from loved ones affect Queenslanders both at home and at the front?

WELCOME STUDENTS AND INTRODUCE TOUR

Welcome to the State Library of Queensland Gallery. In this gallery you will be exploring 25 Queenslanders who served in the First World War. You will investigate objects that belonged to them, the places they went, their roles and many other things. You will also look at how communication between home and the front was achieved and why a letter or postcard from home was so cherished by those serving. You will also investigate where Queenslanders served and how this distance from home impacted upon them.

By the end of this tour you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What role did Queenslanders who served play during the war?
- How did the male experience of war differ from the female experience of war?
- Where did Queenslanders serve overseas?
- How did people communicate with home and the front during the war?
- How did distance from home (Australia) and from loved ones affect Queenslanders both at home and at the front?

Let's have a look at some of the postcards now. All of them were sent from men serving overseas to family in Queensland, or from families at home to the front.

POSTCARD DISPLAY – Located outside SLQ Gallery

Sit or stand students in front of the postcard wall.

How do soldiers and other members of the military today communicate with home?

Today, soldiers on the front line in war zones such as Afghanistan use mostly email and video call to communicate with loved ones back home. In 1914 these technologies did not exist. While letters were used to communicate with home during the First World War, the most popular method of communication was the humble postcard.

Why do you think a postcard was popular?

Postcards were popular because they were cheap and were a quick way to let loved ones know you were alive and well.

For most Queenslanders the opportunity to travel and visit exotic locations such as Egypt or France and even England was only possible because of their war service. They would never have been able to afford to do so otherwise. Postcards afforded those serving an opportunity to send home photos of places where they were stationed or visiting during periods of rest or recuperation.

Postcards were also sent from home to the front and were vital factors in keeping up morale. Many contained images of landmarks from home while others contained a prayer sent to keep soldiers safe or a picture or a cartoon to remind the soldiers why they were fighting.

Like letters, postcard images and text sent home from the front line was subject to censorship.

Why do you think censorship was so important during the war? What were censorship officers looking for?

Almost any written material (including postcards and letters) coming from the front to home and vice-versa, was subject to censorship. Censorship officers used black pens to blot out anything they thought might give a secret away to the enemy. They also often censored letters and postcards which were too 'depressing' and told people at home the true story of war. The government needed people at home to support the war and to maintain enlistment. If people at home found out the truth, chances were they wouldn't support it.

Identify Postcards located outside the SLQ Gallery with Images of Locations Soldiers Visited

Let's see if we can work out where some of men and women served during the war by looking at these postcards. Who would like to look at this postcard (**point to French Cathedral at Amiens**).

What is it a picture of?

Which country was it sent from?

There is another postcard on the wall which was also sent from Amiens in France. Can you find that card?

What other places did our men and women who served visit? Who can find another postcard from another country?

Repeat this process until the Egyptian postcard and the London postcard have been located. Ask students to describe the images on each card.

Discuss Photographic Postcards

Often post cards contained images of men and women serving overseas. It was a quick way to show loved ones back home how you were going. People from home also did the same thing and sent photos of themselves to those serving at the front.

Which postcard displays a photograph of soldiers?

What do the words underneath say? Australia's Last Hopes

What do you think this means? Were these men really Australia's last hopes?

Identify Propaganda Postcard and discuss the symbolism contained within it

Sometimes, postcards contained images designed to remind those left at home and those serving what they were fighting for.

Secondary: introduce the term propaganda now.... Say... images such as this were typical of the type of propaganda of the day.

Some, like the postcard with the bulldogs, were a bit like a secret code which the public had to decipher in order to understand the meaning. They did this by knowing what the different images in the picture represented. First we're going to discuss what the different symbols in this postcard represent and then I want you to think about what the postcard means. First, let's identify some of the symbols.

When we talk about symbols on this postcard we are talking about the individual images, such as the dog, the flags etc.

Discuss symbols below one at a time.

Symbols and meanings

This symbol or image was often used to represent Britain.	Large British bulldog
This symbol was often used to represent Germany.	Black Eagle. Notice the missing feathers. It looks like it has already been in a fight but is still aggressive.

Great, now that we know about two of the major symbols on the postcard, let's see if we can work out what the small bulldogs represent.

Small British bulldogs On this card they represent some of the countries which make up the British Empire.
Notice the maps on their backs.

Look at the words on the page. At the top are the words, 'For Honour'. At the bottom are the words, 'A Scrap of Paper' and the torn piece of paper the dog has its foot on has the word 'TREATY' written on it.

The word 'honour' was often used at this time as a reason to fight. You will see it a lot during the exhibition.

The 'scrap of paper' in the title refers to a treaty (the 1839 Treaty of London), or in other words, a promise that Britain, France, Russia, Austria and Germany made and signed in 1839 promising to recognise Belgium as a country and a neutral territory.

Show map of Belgium.

Where is Belgium? Near France and Germany

In the late 1800s, early 1900s Germany and France were both trying to expand their empires and Belgium was right next door to both, so it was in a rather dangerous place. By declaring itself neutral, Belgium promised that it would not fight in any wars being waged around it. This should have protected Belgium from invasion, however the Germans broke the treaty and invaded Belgium at the start of the First World War. In response Britain, which had promised to defend Belgium, declared war on Germany stating the treaty or piece of paper as the reason for this action. So in other words, the paper the treaty was written on might as well have been any old scrap of paper because in the end it meant nothing. Hence the treaty is represented as a torn piece of paper under Britain's feet.

Let's look at what other images are on the card.

Flags of different countries	Belgium, French, Russia, British and Japanese war flags (These countries were all allies in the First World War)
Water and war ships	The water represents the English Channel (show on map) and the war ships represent the soldiers leaving England by boat, crossing the English Channel to fight on the Western Front, which ran from the Channel, through Belgium and France to the top of Switzerland.

Look for these symbols as you move through the exhibition.

Discuss Final Two Postcards

Auld Lang Syne is a Scottish tune which translates to 'times gone by'. It is often sung on New Year's Eve. Essentially it means remember your friends and don't let them be forgotten. The person who received this card would know that they were not forgotten.

The final card has a poem written on it. It is a blessing and would have been sent to let loved ones to let them know you care about them.

Before we enter the main gallery I'm going to introduce you to some of our soldiers, doctors, nurses and chaplains who served during the First World War.

MOVE STUDENTS TO THE SLQ GALLERY

DISCUSS ENTRY ROOM

Have a look around you. **What can you see?**

These are photos of some of the Queenslanders who served during the war. All of these people enlisted voluntarily. Some were killed at Gallipoli, some were killed in France, while others returned home injured and wounded. Few returned the way they left.

The people on this wall came from all over Queensland; from as far north as Cairns to as far west as Mitchell. Queensland was a very different place in the early 1900s. Without the fast planes and fast cars we have today, travelling to Brisbane would have been a big, rare and exciting trip for many of these faces. Enlisting meant travelling to Europe.

How do you think they might have felt about that? Take some student answers.

DISCUSS PORTRAITS

Have a look at the people in the photographs. What can you tell me about them?

Age: Mostly young. . . .late teens – mid thirties, some older

Gender: Mostly male, women served mostly as nurses

Hats: They are wearing different hats. Soldiers were issued with both slouch hats and service caps.

- Slouch hat: often worn by Infantry soldiers
- Slouch hat with an emu feather sticking out of it: usually worn by Light Horseman
- Flat service cap: These look like British hats but were distinguished as Australian by the Rising Sun Badge. Most often worn by officers.
- Nurses: Nurses wore a white, linen veil.

The photographs situated next to a hanging light bulb are lighter. These are the faces of the 25 people whose stories are told in the next room.

Have students locate them.

READ THE POEM ON THE BACK WALL

Why would people in Australia in 1914 want to enlist to fight a war on the other side of the world? Some enlisted because they felt that it was their duty to Britain and the King. Some enlisted because they felt pressured to, others thought it would be a great adventure. Have a look at this poem. This poem is called *The Recruit*. It gives another reason why men and women volunteered for service.

Who would like to read it to us? Pick a student to read the poem to the group.

What reason does this poem give for enlisting? To defend Australia.

This poem talks about a young man who enlisted because he wants to defend Australia. He doesn't want Australia to change and he thinks that if he doesn't fight, it might.

But the war was a long way away. How would it change Australia if Great Britain lost? Take a few answers.

In 1914 Australia was only a young country and it was still greatly dependent upon Great Britain. Many Australians still had family living there. Politically, Australia still looked to Great Britain for leadership. In fact, Australians were still considered British citizens until 1948. Economically Australia's greatest trading partner at the time was Britain, so Australia made a lot of money from the British. Australia had a lot to lose if Britain fell. So perhaps this is what this young man was referring to when he talks about wanting Australia to always lie warm within the Austral hand.

Let's move into the gallery now and look at what is on the other side of this wall.

Move students into the main gallery. Have them face the wall with the map on it.

EXAMINE MAP WALL

Welcome to the main part of the exhibition. In a minute I'm going to give you a list of questions which I would like you to answer. You will do this by examining the objects, images and texts you see in this room. But before I let you go, I want to point out a few things to you. First, let's have a look at this wall.

Point to the map wall.

What information does this wall provide us with?

This wall contains facts and figures about the war.

Who can tell me how many men enlisted in 1914? 52,516

What was the population of Australia in 1914? Approx 4 million

Out of curiosity, who knows the population today? Approx 21 million

Point to word 'embarked'.

What is this word and what does it mean? Left Australia

How many nurses embarked Australia? 2,139

How many horses? 27,000

Besides facts and figures what else can you see on this wall? Diary entries

During the First World War a lot of people who served overseas wrote their thoughts, feelings and experiences of war in diaries. Unlike letters that were sent home, these diary entries were not censored. This means that their authors were able to write down how they truly felt about the war. As you view this exhibition today you will see a lot of diaries. It is through these diaries, as well as letters and postcards that we have learnt a lot of the stories you will read about today. Diaries, letters and postcards are what historians call a primary source of evidence.

Have a look at this wall. What did John (Jack) Moncrieff write on 4 April 1915?

"The weather was very hot when we got near the equator and several of the horses died." This is only a small entry but we can actually learn a lot from it. First look at the date it was written.

Where do you think Jack was going? It was early in the war before Gallipoli, so he was probably with the first troops to leave Australia. When these first troops embarked, they journeyed to Egypt for further training. From there, many went onto Gallipoli then France. Others stayed in the Middle East to defend the Suez Canal from the Ottomans (Turks), and to conquer the Sinai Peninsula.

Which Regiment do you think Jack might have been with? The 5th Light Horse.

What were conditions on board the ships possibly like? If horses died crossing the equator, it was no doubt very hot and possibly crowded. There probably wasn't much room for the horses to move around the ships.

Jack is one of the Queenslanders featured in this exhibition. Hopefully he made it home. You'll find the answer when you read his biography.

EXAMINE DISPLAY CASE IN FRONT OF WALL

Scattered around the room you will find display boxes like this.

Point to the long display case in front of the map wall.

In the boxes you will find a number of objects and either in the box or near it you will find some text labels, which will describe what the objects are.

For example there is a small tank in this display case. **Can you see it?**

Who can find the description of this object on the text labels behind the display case?

Pick a student and ask them to read the text label.

The text label tells us that this tank is actually a cigarette lighter made by a Queensland soldier called Robert Finnicks. It is an example of trench art which he made while fighting in the trenches in France. He designed it to look like one of the British tanks that were being used at the time, the Mark IV.

Quickly review some of the other objects in the case remembering that students can analyse them in more detail later.

EXAMINE ROOM LAYOUT

It is now almost time to hand you your investigation questions. Before I do though, let's have a look at how the room is laid out.

As I said before this room tells the stories of 25 Queenslanders through text panels and objects. Let's have a look at one of these Queenslanders. Let's meet Gilbert Leonard Holcomb.

Move students to Gilbert's display. It is the first on the right as you face the back wall of the exhibition.

This is Gilbert Leonard Holcomb. **Point to Gilbert's photograph.**

Each of the 25 Queenslanders has a text panel like this one. **Point to the red panel.**

Each text panel is set out the same way. First let's look for where Gilbert served.

At the top is a map of Europe which shows this.

Where did Gilbert serve? Look for the shaded area shaded white on the map. Gallipoli

Next let's have a look at the column to the left. This column states where the Queenslanders were from, what their rank was, which unit they belonged to and finally what happened to them.

Where was Gilbert from? Gatton

What was his rank? Private

Which unit did he belong to? 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance

What happened to him? Invalided back to Australia 1916

What does invalided mean? It means he was injured or contracted an illness which meant he could no longer fight.

Let's have a look at the red section of the text panel. At the top of the red section, each text panel will have a quote or diary entry that the Queenslanders wrote. It is written in italics.

Who would like to read what Gilbert wrote? Pick a student to read quote.

The rest of the red section tells us about Gilbert and what happened to him.

Look at the objects

Near the text panel you will find certain items associated with the Queenslanders. He or she might have owned these items, or they might have been given to their families after their death. Each item, like the items we just looked at, is described on the text label near it.

So just to refresh, each of the 25 Queenslanders has a red text panel as well as images and objects which tell their story.

Discuss the trench.

In the middle of the room is a stylised trench. Trenches of course were used in the Middle East, in Gallipoli and in France. They were where soldiers fought, slept and spent time when there was a lull in the fighting. Real trenches of course were different in height, were long, had corners and had dug outs (holes dug into the walls where soldiers slept or took shelter during bombing raids). As they were open to the elements, at different times they were cold, hot, muddy and wet. All the trenches were dug by hand. Perhaps this is why another name for an Australian soldier is a digger, because they had to dig them out. Of course Australians weren't the only ones who dug trenches. Allies and enemies alike did so and when one side invaded and took over an enemy trench, one of the first things they did was investigate how the trench had been built, looking for ways to improve their own designs and of course looking to see if the enemy had left anything behind.

Why is one side angled?

This was the side that faced the enemy. Soldiers would have lent against it when firing from guns placed on the top and this is the side they would have scaled when beginning a charge towards the enemy.

Explain what the activity is in the trench.

Throughout the life of this exhibition, different activities will be held in the trench. If you finish your investigation questions you can visit the trench yourself and have a go at completing the activities on offer.

STUDENTS BEGIN INVESTIGATION BOOKLETS

Time for me to finish talking and for you to do some work. When I hand you a booklet you need to find a Queenslander to start from. Don't all start at the same one. Complete the questions in this book in the order that they appear. If you do this, you will find that you will not have to run all over the room looking for the answers or the next person. You need to move from Queenslander to Queenslander in an anti – clockwise direction.

Explain by showing direction.

Hand out booklets, give students a time limit and let them begin.

CONCLUDE

Gather students and discuss what they have discovered.

- Postcards were the main method of communication and served many purposes (kept morale up, quick way of letting family know you're alive, propaganda to remind people of why they were serving, blessings, tourist cards).

Ask:

- What did you find interesting?
- What did you learn that you didn't know before?

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