

**Kokoda Track:
101 Days by Peter
Macinnis**

The Drum series

**Teacher Notes
prepared by Joy
Lawn, Children's
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Readership: Upper primary to
mid secondary

Class study – WWII, specifically
the battle around the Kokoda
Track; Australian history

Independent reading and
research

Genre: Factual text (novel-sized
format) with fictional sections
in italics

Australians love the underdog, the 'digger' and mateship.

These icons of Australian culture are all part of the Kokoka story.

The underdogs, the poorly trained and equipped Australian soldiers, were sent to Papua New Guinea, a tropical country just north of Australia, to stop the Japanese from coming further south and invading the capital, Port Moresby and then, supposedly, Australia.

The Japanese greatly outnumbered the Australians. They were far better trained and equipped. They were used to fighting in the jungle and their uniforms were camouflaged. The Australian militia, especially the 39th Battalion, surprised everyone by learning how to fight successfully in the jungle. They somehow held back the Japanese along the difficult terrain of the Kokoda Track.

They deserve the iconic label of 'diggers' for their courage, endurance and ingenuity, along with their sense of humour. And, of course, many of them symbolise the true values of 'mateship', as they learned to pull together as a team and look out for their mates, often by risking their own lives.

Themes / Issues

Australians at war

Australian underdog

Papua New Guinea topography



SOSE/HSIE

Papua New Guinea PNG is geographically very close to Australia and there have been close links between the two countries in the past and present. Research more about this country, focusing on links with Australia, politics, wealth and trade, and the current situation for Nationals and expatriates.

'Fighting the land' This description is used on page 44. Find out about the landform, vegetation, insects, heat and humidity in PNG from the book and other sources.

1. Write a factual description of this, acknowledging sources.
2. Then write a literary description. Use descriptive and figurative phrases to capture the atmosphere of the land as an enemy. (The literary description can be incorporated in English.)

Enemies Other enemies of the soldiers were lack of food and consequent weight loss, pages 34-35, and lack of communication. Brainstorm when these issues have been problems in other wars and battles. The Battle of Thermopylae is introduced on page 109, for example. Select one of these situations to research further. As well as describing how lack of food and communication impacted on the war or battle, include other features that could be seen as 'enemies' or extreme difficulties, such as topography. Present findings as a Power Point presentation.

Military, Media and Political and Players

1. Some of the people who had major roles in the battle around the Kokoda Track during World War II, could be described as rogues. Make a Rogues Gallery of these. Include dot-points as to why they qualify as rogues (use examples from the book).
2. Some of the other characters written about could be described as heroes. Make a 3-dimensional memorial out of thick cardboard for these. It could have 3 (eg. a triangular pyramid) or 4 sides. On each side list a hero and write an epigraph to show why they are remembered.
3. Write a summary of some of these 'players' and how their behaviour and action affected the war.

Japanese Perspective Research the Japanese perspective from the book and other sources. Include Japanese assets, liabilities, the attitude and orders of their leader, and their actions. If possible, also investigate the Japanese perspective now on these past events. ICT or surveys may be useful tools. Present findings from the past and present as a fact file.

Australia under threat In Chapter 1: 'World War II Begins', the section 'Australia at War' describes direct threats against Australia. After researching some of these threats and their impact on the Australian people and politics, create a montage using images and headlines to show the dramatic impact of these events



ENGLISH

Reading and writing

The digger, the underdog and mateship Write an explanation of what each of these Australian icons are. Include examples from Australian history and the present. Conclude with a summary of why these are important to Australians. Design an icon for each and attach to the summary.

'Fighting the Land' (see SOSE / HSIE above) Write a literary description of the land as an enemy.

Sense of humour Australians have a reputation for having a sense of humour. Read pages 31 and 104 for examples from the book. List other nicknames, including diminutives. Write a war-related narrative, featuring humour as a major incident or using humour to enrich a scene or characters.

Abbreviations

1. Find where some of the abbreviations listed at the start of the book are used in Kokoda Track.
2. List other war-related abbreviations from the book and, possibly, other sources. For example, AIF on page 15.
3. Find other abbreviations in general use, such as 'Mr'. Write a paragraph (or longer) using at least 10 (or more) abbreviations.

Speaking and listening

Discussion Lack of food was a major problem for soldiers on both sides. Cannibalism was resorted to, pages 103-4. Discuss when, if ever, cannibalism can be condoned.

Viewing

Cover images View the cover layout. What is happening in the photos, including the background? Why do you think these photos have been selected? What do they show about the soldiers? Which iconic symbol/s are shown? Explain why you think these colours have been used? (Consider the other books about war in The Drum series – Red Haze and Scarecrow Army) Which war might be written about next in this series?

Maps There are 3 maps on one page at the start of the book, and 2 more before page 1. This implies that maps are an important tool in explaining what happened at the Kokoda Track. Write an explanation of the purpose of each of these maps. Compare and contrast their effectiveness.



Model of the Kokoda Track Use the maps in the book, as well as the photos and written descriptions, to make a model of the Kokoda Track (it's not actually a single track). The track is also drawn as a leitmotif (a repeated symbol) above the break-out boxes / information panels throughout the book. What is the impact of this? In the model include the 'Golden Stairs', see photo on page 92, and replicas of boot prints of both the Japanese soldiers with their two toes, page 73, and the Australian boot prints.

Uniform

1. View the photos of the uniforms. How was the Australian uniform ineffectual? How was it dangerous? (Also see Visual Arts at end of these notes)
2. The slouch hats are shown but not mentioned in writing. Why might this be?

Book Features and Format

Kokoda Track: 101 Days has many features that are important in factual texts:

1. Table of Contents
2. Index
3. Glossary

Additional features that improve the usability of this book are the:

1. Timeline
2. List of key people
3. List of abbreviations
4. Additional, specialised information on grey backgrounds eg. page 28.
5. Imagine sections, usually at chapter ends (in italics)
6. References and photos / illustration credits
7. Break out boxes / Information panels

Select one or more of these features and write an analysis of their effectiveness. Show pros and cons.

Compare the chart on page 29 with the written explanation on page 28. Which is clearer? Why?



MEDIA

MacArthur was able to control the press, page 139. He, consequently, controlled the information that the Australian politicians and public received.

Find contemporary examples or examples from the recent past when the media has given a one-sided or biased view. Use television, newspapers, radio or access ICT. Present your findings to the class by showing or reading the primary source where possible. For example, read from the newspaper or show a recorded version from TV.

Stupid bravery versus common sense The imagined soldier on page 134 says, 'We knew the difference between stupid bravery and common sense.' page 134. Mindmap these differences. Explore examples from the book, and from school and contemporary personal and actual experiences.

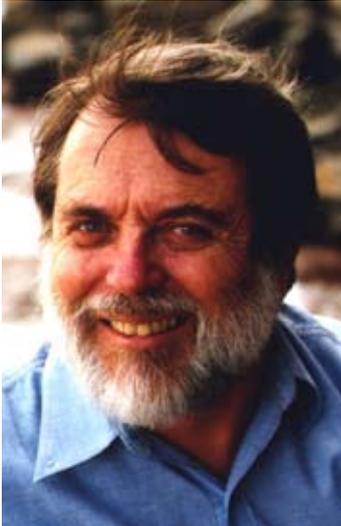
Enrichment In small groups create roleplays based on some of these experiences. Debrief by discussing appropriate actions for each scenario.

VISUAL ARTS

Camouflage Camouflage, and uniforms that blended into the jungle, helped the Japanese and hindered the Australians, pages 96-7, 103. Create jungle scenes using collage then design uniforms that will be camouflaged against these backgrounds. Attach the uniforms to the jungle backgrounds. (Also see 'Uniform' in Viewing above)



AUTHOR



Peter Macinnis is a science writer who lives in Sydney. His wife is a science teacher, their daughter has a PhD in environmental biology, one son is doing his PhD on beer yeasts and their genetics, the other son is a lawyer. They are still trying to work out where they went wrong.

Peter got his start in writing with text books, and also wrote rude letters for a Minister for Education who liked to give rude replies to rude letters. This gave him the chance to be rude while somebody else took the blame. He also did some journalism along the way. He began writing science talks for radio in 1985 and has been at it ever since, but his main job for more than thirty years was as an educator, either as a teacher, or as a bureaucrat, or in one of two museums that he worked in, and most recently, writing science content for an online encyclopaedia.

He has now officially “retired from teaching” and works full-time as a writer, in between travelling as much as he can. Most of his work is written for adult readers and looks at the curious stories behind things, and recent titles have covered sugar, rockets, and most recently, poisons and poisoners. That book has been published (in translation) in Slovakia and Poland, and Russian and Korean editions are on the way.