



Exploring the topic Anzacs 4: The Coloured Digger



Fourth in a series of six integrated English and Society and the Environment lessons that explore the topic 'Anzacs', poetry, and from an Aboriginal perspective.

- Exploring the topic Anzacs 1: introduction
- Exploring the topic Anzacs 2: *In Flanders Fields*
- Exploring the topic Anzacs 3: *Black Anzac*
- **Exploring the topic Anzacs 4: *The Coloured Digger***
- Exploring the topic Anzacs 5: *Black Anzac* and *The Coloured Digger*
- Exploring the topic Anzacs 6: researching Aboriginal servicemen

CURRICULUM INFORMATION

PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT

Early Childhood	Middle Childhood	Early Adolescence	Late Adolescence
		✓	✓

MAJOR LEARNING AREAS

The Arts	English	H & PE	LOTE	Mathematics	Science	S & E	T & E
	✓					✓ ✓	

VALUES

Pursuit of knowledge & commitment to achievement of potential	Self acceptance & respect of self	Respect & concern for others & their rights	Social & civic responsibility	Environmental responsibility
X		X	X	

TOPIC INFORMATION

PURPOSE

- To provide students with opportunities to share and broaden what they know about Anzacs.
- To provide students with opportunities to read poetry about Anzacs.
- To provide students with opportunities to read poetry written about Anzacs from an Aboriginal perspective.
- To provide students with opportunities to research information and report on Aboriginal servicemen.

STUDENT OUTCOMES FROM THIS LESSON

- Students identify and discuss their knowledge and understandings of Anzacs.
- Students recognize and discuss their understandings and interpretations of Anzacs that shape their actions and values.
- Students identify stories of people and events that are woven into the history of Anzacs.
- Students identify print texts that people have constructed to represent real or imaginary experiences.
- Students gather and record, from more than one source, relevant information about Anzacs.
- Students identify language structure and conventions characteristic of poetry.
- Students make meaning using language structure and conventions characteristic of poetry.





KEY BACKGROUND POINTS

If you need to refresh your memory, information about Anzacs from a non-Aboriginal perspective is available from many sources: book, film and internet ...

What is not widely acknowledged is that Aboriginal servicemen have been part of the Australian armed forces since the Boer War in South Africa between 1899 and 1902. Subsequently, many enlisted to fight for this country in the First World War, 1914 – 1918, and in the Second World War, 1939 – 1945. This was at a time when Aboriginal people were not allowed to become Australian citizens. Many Aboriginal diggers also fought in later wars like the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

In this series of lessons we look at three poems: the well-known *In Flanders Fields*, and two lesser-known poems, *Black Anzac*, and *The Coloured Digger*.

In Flanders Fields was written by a Canadian officer, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae (1872 – 1918), a serviceman who served in World War One. John McCrae was a professor of medicine before the war. He served as a gunner in the Boer War and in World War One he served as a medical officer with the First Canadian contingent. He wrote this poem in 1915 following the second battle of Ypres in France. John McCrae was wounded in May 1918 and died three days later.

The Coloured Digger was written after World War 2 by Bert Beros, a non-Aboriginal soldier, about an Aboriginal soldier named Private West. Sapper Beros wrote many poems about his experiences in WW2, a large percentage of these were about the Kokoda Trail in New Guinea.

Black Anzac was written by an Aboriginal soldier who joined the services when he was only 18. This poem is about his experiences in the Korean War.

In nineteenth century English literature, poppies symbolised rest or sleep. John McCrae used this symbolism in his poem *In Flanders Fields*, and over time poppies have come to symbolise remembrance, sacrifice and bravery. The red poppies he refers to are still found growing wild in much of Western Europe. Soldiers often said the poppies were red from the blood of soldiers killed in World War 1. These poppies were the first plants to grow amongst the bomb craters in the battle fields of Flanders, in France, during and after the war.

Key historical facts

The world's oldest known cremation was of an Australian Aboriginal woman and took place at Lake Mungo in New South Wales around thirty five thousand years ago.

1770 When Captain James Cook raised the Union Jack on Possession Island off Cape York in Queensland, he claimed the land for the United Kingdom under a notion of terra nullius (meaning, 'land belonging to no-one'). Although Captain Cook previously had seen Aboriginal people living in Australia, he believed they did not own the land as he could see no signs of European-style occupation.

1992 It wasn't until 1992 that the High Court of Australia ruled that Australia was never terra nullius before British settlement. This decision, now referred to as the Mabo Case, gave traditional land owners the opportunity to pursue claims to their traditional lands.

Some key dates in Aboriginal people's struggle to gain citizen's rights

1960 Social service benefits were first paid to Australia's Aboriginal people.

1961 Aboriginal people became eligible to enroll and vote in Western Australia.

1963 It became compulsory for Aboriginal people to attend school.

1967 After a Commonwealth Referendum gave power to the Commonwealth over Aboriginal people's welfare, they were finally given the right to equal wages and working conditions, and to enter public places such as hotels.

1971 The first Australian Aboriginal senator, Neville Bonner, was elected for the Liberal Party to Federal Parliament.

1987 On December 17th, the Federal Government announced legislation to proclaim Australian Aboriginal people as the first owners of Australia.

Two days on which, annually, Australians remember fallen soldiers

11 November – Remembrance Day

World War one ended at 11.00 am on 11.11.1918 (eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month). We wear red poppies, the flower of remembrance, on this day and people lay wreaths during services in honour of those killed fighting for their country.

25 April – Anzac Day

The initials ANZAC stand for: Australian New Zealand Army Corps. On this day Australians hold commemorative marches and services to reflect and give thanks for our freedom.





CULTURAL & PROTOCOL CONSIDERATIONS

Consult local AIEOs or Aboriginal Education staff at your DEO to check protocols in your area about mentioning names of dead Aboriginal soldiers.

RESOURCES

Medium	Author, producer, developer etc	Title	Source
book	Rigby Heinemann	<i>First Steps Reading Resource Book</i> , Second Edition, Addressing Current Literacy Challenges.	educational booksellers

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

TEACHING RESOURCES

- student copies of **Learning Guide 1: *The Coloured Digger***
- highlighter pens
- writing materials
- student copies of **Learning Guide 2: 66 Words**

LESSON STEPS

Preparation

- **Read** 'Key Background Information' section above. You may also like to research further information, and the three poems and their writers, using the internet or other reference sources.
- **Read** lesson steps and research any additional information you need.
- **Familiarise** yourself with the poem for this lesson, *The Coloured Digger*.
- **Make** student copies of **Learning Guides 1 and 2**.

Implementation

Whole class

- **Distribute** student copies of **Learning Guide 1: *The Coloured Digger***, and ask students to keep them for future use (perhaps paste them in a book).
- **Read** *The Coloured Digger* by Sapper Bert Beros.
- **Explain** that this poem was written following World War Two.
- **Ask**: Who is 'he' in the poem?
- **Ask** students to describe the feelings, or images, they have after reading the poem.
- **Remind** students that this is the third poem they have read **and ask** if they think that affects their interpretation of this poem.
- **Discuss** information known about the poet – and look up his name on the internet, if possible.
- **Compare** the information you've found about the three poets. Ask questions like: Is the same amount available for all three? Which ones had more/less? Why do you think that is? What does this indicate about Australians' views of Aboriginal people?
- **Ask** students to highlight any words in the poem the meanings of which they are unsure.
- **Discuss** meanings of highlighted words.
- **Point out** that *The Coloured Digger* may be considered in two parts, **and ask** where the first part would finish (after line 12).
- **Ask** what the first part describes (the war and the soldier's attitude and response to Australia's involvement in war).
- **Ask** what the second part refers to (the Australian Government and society's attitude towards Aboriginal people).





Working independently

- **Distribute** student copies of **Learning Guide 2: 66 Words**.
- **Talk** students through the activity in which they record key themes of the poem. (Source: p168 *First Steps Reading Resource Book*. Second Edition, Addressing Current Literacy Challenges.)
- **Explain** how to create a summary in 66 words or less. Focus: succinct text containing the key ideas. Provide assistance with writing form, as needed (e. g. provide framework, and talk through it).
- **Complete** individual summary (no more than 66 words) in sentences, using framework from *First Steps Reading Resource Book*.

Whole class

- Collect completed **Learning Guide 2: Word sort**.

ASSESSMENT

- **Observe** student participation in class and group discussions.
- **Evaluate** how each student completed their 66 word summary (collect copies if required for work samples).
- **Note that Learning Guide 2: 66 Words** may be used with other prose or poetry texts.

Sample answer only. Students are likely to complete the Learning guide differently. Provide opportunities for students to justify and discuss their answers, and accept appropriate answers.

Learning Guide 2: 66 Words

The	Coloured	Digger	is	a	poem	about	an
Aboriginal	Serviceman	who	volunteers	to	fight	in	the
Australian	Infantry	Forces.	He	endures	many	hardships	but
never	complains	although	he	is	resentful	of	how
the	Aboriginal	People	are	treated	in	Australia.	He
knows	there	aren't	any	Aboriginal	Members	of	Parliament
but	lives	in	hope	that	things	will	improve
after	the	war	ends	and	he	joins	the
League.							

Acknowledgements / Thanks to contributors.

Kerry Rowe (writer),
Alwyn Evans (editor)
Produced by DUIT Multimedia for the Aboriginal Perspectives across the Curriculum program.





LEARNING GUIDE 1: *The Coloured Digger*

The Coloured Digger

by Sapper Bert Beros

He came and joined the colours, when the War God's anvil rang,
He took up modern weapons to replace the boomerang,
He waited for no call-up, he didn't need a push,
He came in from the stations, and the townships of the bush.
He helped when help was wanting, just because he wasn't deaf;
He is right amongst the columns of the fighting A.I.F.
He is always there when wanted, with his Owen gun or Bren,
He is in the forward area, the place where men are men.
He proved he's still a warrior, in action not afraid,
He faced the blasting red hot fire from mortar and grenade;
He didn't mind when food was low, or we were getting thin,
He didn't growl or worry then, he'd cheer us with his grin.
He'd heard us talk democracy – they preach it to his face –
Yet knows that in our Federal House there's no one of his race.
He feels we push his kinsmen out, where cities do not reach,
And Parliament has yet to hear the Abo's maiden speech.
One day he'll leave the Army, then join the League he shall,
And he hopes we'll give a better deal to the Aboriginal.

