

TEACHING NOTES

PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE MUD

Dianne Wolfer

Illustrations by Brian Harrison-Lever

Themes: World War II (the Kokoda Trail), family, violence, death, the futility of war

Year level: Y4 to 9

ABOUT THE BOOK

Photographs in the Mud is a beautifully illustrated and moving story of events on the Kokoda Track during World War II (WWII) from the point of view of two soldiers – one Australian, the other Japanese. It tells a compassionate story about the personal human tragedy of war, for both the combatants and their loved ones at home.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dianne Wolfer is the award-winning author of fourteen books for teenagers and younger readers. She enjoys combining her love of history with writing fiction. Her picture book *Photographs in the Mud* (a recommended History Curriculum text) was inspired by a research trip along the Kokoda Track. It is also published in Japanese and is used as a reference for international workshops promoting peaceful 'discourse analysis'. Dianne is an active member of writing groups, including the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, and served for six years as their WA Advisor. Dianne loves travelling and has spent much of her life overseas. She lives on the south coast of WA.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

With a career that started in television and film, Brian Harrison-Lever later lectured in design and drawing at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. His first picture book, *In Flanders Fields*, won the Children's Book Council of Australia Picture Book of the Year Award in 2003 and was shortlisted for other awards. Two follow-up books, *The Call of the Osprey* and *Photographs in the Mud*, have attracted critical acclaim. His most recent book, *Three Kings*, was Brian's first attempt at the challenging dual role of author and illustrator.

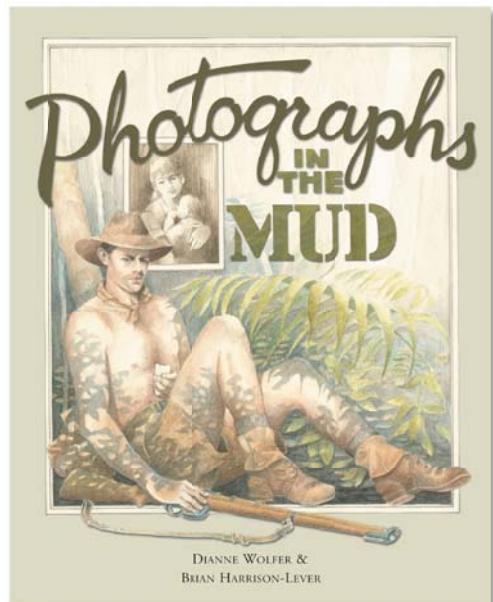
STUDY NOTES

LITERACY: COMPREHENDING TEXTS THROUGH LISTENING, READING AND VIEWING

(A) Before Reading

Considering the context of the book

1. Discuss the history of World War II:
 - a. How and when did the war break out?
 - b. Which countries were involved? (Cross-curricular link – Geography: have students locate different nations on the world map)
 - c. How long did the conflict last?
 - d. What was Australia's role in this war?
 - e. Locate Japan on the world map.
 - f. Research the history and culture of this nation.
 - g. Research military alliances in WWII – create a list of the countries allied with Germany and the countries allied with Britain.
 - h. Create a timeline of the major events of WWII.



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Visit the Australian War Memorial website with your class to explore this information and view some photographs from the time period: www.awm.gov.au/atwar/ww2. Alternatively, you may like to have older students research these questions and compile a written report using the above points as subheadings. Older readers may also like to research the technologies/weaponry involved, the particular challenges of warfare in the jungle, and statistics surrounding casualties (while for younger readers this is not yet appropriate).

Remembrance Day

Have students discuss the following as a class:

2. What is Remembrance Day?
3. Why is this day special to Australians?
4. How does Australia remember its fallen soldiers? (National Remembrance Day Ceremony including formal wreath laying, poppies etc.)
5. Allow students to pair-share memories of how they have previously commemorated Remembrance Day with their families or schools.
6. Do you have any children in the class whose parents or grandparents serve/have served in the armed forces?

Visit the Australian War Memorial website with your class to access information about Remembrance Day traditions: www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/remembrance

Incursion

7. Invite a war veteran or current member of the Australian Defence Force to talk to your class about Remembrance Day and share some memories of military service.

Considering the title

8. Why would photographs be lying in the mud? What does this title make students imagine? What events might it foreshadow?

Considering the blurb

9. As students where Papua New Guinea (PNG) is on the world map. Label it as a class.
 - a. Research the history and culture of this nation.
 - b. Locate the Kokoda Track and Port Moresby on a map of PNG.
 - c. View a map of 'the line' Jack and the Australian Army were fighting to hold in the book.
 - d. Research the context of the historical situation in PNG in which the book is set. Why were Australian and Japanese forces brought into this country?

Predicting

10. Create a whole-class prediction chart detailing what students think may happen in the story.
 - a. Consider the cover image: what does it depict?
 - b. What clues about the plot can students deduce?

Note: It is often interesting to keep this chart to look over at the end – have the class count how many predictions were true/false.

Expanding vocabulary: clarifying unfamiliar terminology before reading

Younger readers may be unfamiliar with some of the words in the story (e.g. battalion). Before you commence reading, go through the following list with your students and explain each term. Alternatively, have students work in pairs to use the dictionary to locate definitions. Students who are already familiar with a word can explain it to others.

First Mention	Word	Meaning
p. 4	emperor	
p. 5	comrades	
p. 6	battalion	
p. 8	ulcers	
p. 9	empire	

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p. 10	reinforcements	
p. 15	lull	
p. 16	sniper	
p. 17	shrapnel	
p. 18	bayonet	

(B) During Reading

Comprehension strategies

Photographs in the Mud can be used for several different reading sessions including:

- Modelled reading as a whole class
- Shared reading in student pairs
- Guided reading in small groups
- Independent reading

Comprehension strategies to practise:

- Slowing reading rate for comprehension
- Self-monitoring for understanding
- Inferring
- Summarising
- Identifying key ideas/themes
- Drawing conclusions

Visual art as a storytelling medium

11. Point out to students that in picture books, illustrations are equally as important as the written word in communicating the story.
 - a. Compare and contrast *Photographs in the Mud* with a novel or biography about WWII. What do the children notice? What makes a picture book different to a novel?
 - b. List some conventions of the picture book genre as a class.
12. Have the children read a transcript of the book without images – does the story lose some of its impact? Why/why not?
13. Have the children look at the succession of images without the writing below – does the story lose some of its impact? Why/why not?
14. In groups of four, have students examine the illustrations in detail.
 - a. What style has the illustrator used to draw the characters – realistic, cartoon, artistic, fantasy?
 - b. What medium has he used – collage, black and white, watercolour etc.? What effect does this create?
 - c. What colours have been used?
 - d. What shapes can students see?
 - e. Where has the illustrator positioned objects on the page and what effect does this create?
 - f. Can students identify any patterns?
 - g. What recurring artistic devices do the children notice?
 - h. Why has the illustrator used a dull brown and grey palette in the pictures of the jungle setting, and a brighter range of colours when depicting memories of home?
 - i. What impact does the vivid red blood have? Does this colouring change the mood of the story?
 - j. What is the impact of adding drawings of photographs throughout the book? Why do you think the artist chose to do this?

Discussion questions

15. What do students think Hoshi means on page 5 when he describes how *war had hardened* the men in his army?
16. How are Hoshi and Jack similar? How are they different?

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17. The captain tells the Australian soldiers: *to stop them [the Japanese Army] reaching Port Moresby, we have to march over steep mountains along the Kokoda Track. It's ninety-six kilometres, but we must hold the line.* (p. 7)
 - a. Is ninety-six kilometres a long distance? Find two points in the state where you live that are about ninety-six kilometres apart.
 - b. How long might it take for Jack and the soldiers to cover this distance?
18. What are some of the obstacles Jack and Hoshi encounter that are unique to war in the jungle environment? (e.g. leeches, tropical ulcers – p. 8).
19. *Reinforcements were on the way. If his luck held out, he would make it home as he'd promised.* (p. 10)
 - a. What does the term 'reinforcements' mean?
 - b. Roughly how long did a soldier like Jack spend on a tour before he was entitled to visit his family?
20. *Hoshi looked around. The other soldiers trusted him. Asking them to run to their death was the hardest thing he could imagine. But it was now his duty.* (p. 17)
 - a. In the midst of so many challenges, why was *this* the hardest thing for Hoshi to do?
 - b. Do you agree that it was his duty? Why/why not?
21. Jack claims, *War's a mug's game, hey* (p. 25). Do you agree? Why/why not?
22. How would you have reacted if you were Jack watching Hoshi looking at the photograph of Hana, or Hoshi watching Jack looking at the photo of his wife and son?
23. *Two photographs lay in the mud. The soldier tried to separate them, but he couldn't. They were stuck together.* (p. 30). What is the significance of this? What might the photos symbolise?
24. *This man's still breathing!* (p. 31)
 - a. Which soldier do you think lives, Jack or Hoshi? Why do you think so?
 - b. Does it matter which of the soldiers survives?
 - c. Why did the author choose to make the ending ambiguous in this way? Refer to Dianne Wolfer's 'Author motivation' explanation at the end of these teaching notes.
25. What is parallelism? How is this technique applied to the structure of this story? What effect does it create?
26. Consider the inscription on the book's final page.
 - a. How does it make you feel?
 - b. Why do you think the author decided to include an inscription that can be found on a plaque on the Kokoda Track?
27. As a class, discuss:
 - a. What are some of the ways we can promote peace as a community?
 - b. What can you do personally?

LITERACY: COMPOSING TEXTS THROUGH SPEAKING, WRITING AND CREATING

(C) After Reading

This book can be used as a springboard for many different aspects of literacy study, depending on the needs and interests of your class. For example:

Letter writing

28. Imagine you are Jack or Hoshi.
 - a. Write a letter home to your family from Papua New Guinea.
 - b. Proofreading for spelling and punctuation – have students swap their letter with a partner and correct mistakes in red pen.

Report writing

Cross-curricular links: Technologies (ICT) research and referencing; Mathematics (statistics); Geography (mapping)

29. Have students research and write a report on World War I under the following subheadings:
 - a. How and when did war break out?
 - b. Which countries were involved?
 - c. How long did this conflict last?

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- d. What was Australia's role in the war?
- e. How did the war conclude?

Teaching focus:

- Linking words to do with time, e.g. later, after, before
- Paragraphs structure in time order sequence
- Action verbs
- Simple past tense

Debate

30. Debate the validity of each of the following claims in teams of four. Research and provide historical evidence/statistics to back up your claims.
 - a. 'War can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun.' –Mao Zedong
 - b. 'The absence of war is not peace.' –Harry S Truman

Diary writing

31. Imagine you are Jack or Hoshi. Write a diary entry about your experiences on the Kokoda Track. Try to use new adjectives to evoke imagery for your reader, and appeal to the five senses, not merely the visual. Consider incorporating some of the words used by the author:
 - dense (p. 8)
 - foul-smelling (p. 8)
 - oozing (p. 8)
 - humid (p. 10)
 - dusky (p. 18)
 - vicious (p. 23)
 - scalding (p. 24)
32. Explore the use of metaphor and its impact on the reader.
 - f. Create a class definition for this term.
 - g. Find examples of metaphor in the book e.g. *a storm of bullets* (p. 17).
 - h. Incorporate the use of metaphor in your diary entry.
33. Imagine you are the surviving soldier – Jack or Hoshi. Write a diary entry explaining your feelings about the war, and the death of your new friend.

Symbolism

34. Create a class definition for the term 'symbolism'.
35. Find two examples of symbolism in the book and explain what you think they may represent, e.g. the photographs.

Parallelism

36. Create a class definition for the term 'parallelism'.
37. Collect examples of how parallelism is used in the structure of the story to compare Hoshi and Jack. These can be put into a table. For example:

Jack	Hoshi
<i>His dreams were filled with images of Peggy. How he longed to hold his newborn son.</i> (p. 12)	<i>At night Hoshi dreamed of home, of lying in the garden, telling Hana stories ... How he longed for the war to end.</i> (p. 13)

- a. How are these sentences similar?
 - b. What are the effects of this structural choice?
 - c. Why do you think the author chose to construct the story this way?
38. Write your own short story about WWII using parallelism to structure your plot.

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CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

History and Geography

Please refer to questions 1–6 of these teaching notes. You may also like to have students:

39. Conduct a research project on Japan exploring the history and modern culture of the country.
 - a. Where is Japan located on the map?
 - b. What is the capital city? What are some of the major cities?
 - c. What is the population?
 - d. What are the national foods?
 - e. What are some popular hobbies for Japanese school children?
 - f. What is the climate like?
 - g. What language/s are used?
 - h. What religions are prevalent?
40. Have your students engage in a penpal cultural exchange with a Japanese class, either via email or post.
41. Have students learn some words in Japanese, such as basic greetings and counting.

History/Technologies (iCT) inquiry based-learning

Below is a list of suggested questions for research and report writing exercises.

42. The Kokoda Track is a 96-kilometre trail that cuts across the Owen Stanley Range in Papua New Guinea. Research the track's war history.
43. Find out about the people living in the villages along the track today.
44. Why was the village of Kokoda strategically important in WWII?
45. Who were the 'fuzzy wuzzy angels'? What did they do? (Note regarding usage, based on the Macquarie Dictionary: Although in this context the name 'fuzzy wuzzy angels' was used with affection and respect, students should be aware that the term 'fuzzy wuzzy' is generally derogatory and racist.)
46. What is bushido? Why was it important for Japanese soldiers?
47. What was the difference between the AIF and militia soldiers?
48. Why were the Australian militia called 'chocos'? Who gave them that name? How did this image change after the battles for Kokoda and Isurava?
49. Find out about the Australian 39th Battalion and its role in WWII.
50. Who was Private Bruce Kingsbury? How did his actions help change the course of the war in PNG?
51. Research one of the following and write a biography detailing their role and involvement in WWII:
 - a. Emperor Hirohito
 - b. Major General Tomitaro Horii
 - c. General Sir Thomas Blamey
 - d. Captain Geoffrey Vernon
 - e. Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner
 - f. Major General Arthur 'Tubby' Allen
 - g. Major General George Vasey
 - h. Major Chaplain Albert Moore (Salvation Army)
 - i. Damien Parer (photographer)
52. Give a short talk in class relating the war experiences of one of the people listed above (option – present this talk from their perspective).
53. Find out about other battle sites where Australians have fought using the Australian War Memorial website: www.awm.gov.au

Art

54. Have students create a Remembrance Day artwork in the style of the illustrations in *Photographs in the Mud*.
55. Make either an Anti-War poster or a poster recruiting soldiers into the Australian Armed Forces.
56. Research the history of photography.
 - a. When was the first camera created?
 - b. When was colour photography available?
 - c. When did digital cameras become available?
 - d. Research different kinds of cameras that can be used to create different effects.

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- e. Have students work on a photography project around the theme 'remembrance'. Allow students to edit photographs on the computer, applying a sepia or black-and-white finish to make them look like they were taken during the 1940s.
- f. Allow students to present their project as a digital slideshow, or to print their images and create a collage.

Science

- 57. Have students explore the 'jungle' ecosystem of Papua New Guinea.
 - a. What are the minimum/maximum temperatures?
 - b. What kinds of plant life are present?
 - c. What kinds of insect life are present?
 - d. What kinds of animal life are present?
 - e. Where else in the world can jungle habitats be found? Create a map.
 - f. Are there any tropical jungle regions in Australia? Have any students visited them? How were they different to where you live?
- 58. Have students write a report on their favourite jungle animal or insect using the following subheadings:
 - a. Name
 - b. Diet
 - c. Habitat
 - d. Reproductive cycle/lifespan
 - e. Conservation status (to learn more, visit the Australian Museum website: australianmuseum.net.au/Conservation-Status-what-does-it-mean)
 - f. Predators
 - g. Physical descriptors

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Author motivation: Dianne Wolfer's inspiration for creating *Photographs in the Mud*

In 2002 I walked the Kokoda Track as research for a young adult novel. During the trek I heard many stories about the hand-to-hand fighting that occurred in PNG and the terrible conditions suffered by soldiers from both armies. It was hard enough to walk, crawl and scramble over the Owen Stanleys with just a daypack. Trying to imagine exhausted soldiers sick with malaria and other diseases struggling through mud as they carried a rifle and fifty pounds of gear seemed impossible. As I hiked, many ideas for stories came to mind. The story for *Photographs in the Mud* is one that persisted.

The dense terrain along Kokoda meant that battles were often fought on a 'one-man-front'. Rain, mist and jungle foliage hid enemy soldiers until they were almost upon you. The killing was therefore strangely intimate. Many years after the war, veterans from both sides spoke of the eyes of soldiers they had killed. Those eyes still haunted their dreams.

The war memories of one soldier, Kokichi Nishimura, from the Japanese 144th Regiment, made a particular impression on me. Kokichi spoke of tumbling down a steep slope into a ditch with an Australian soldier. Both soldiers were badly wounded. They were so close they could look into each other's eyes. The night passed. In the morning Kokichi was still alive. The Australian wasn't.

In my story it is unclear which soldier survives and I like this ambiguity. During drafts, my daughter and her friend keep asking, 'But which one lives?' They couldn't believe that I really didn't know. But I don't. For me, the point of the story is that, beneath the uniforms and propaganda, soldiers from all armies share a common humanity. Men from both sides have family and loved ones waiting at home, praying and hoping that they will return.

In an earlier draft both soldiers died. Originally I felt this would be the most honest ending. Prisoners were rarely taken along the Kokoda Track and many of the wounded didn't survive. Following much thought, and discussions with editor Ray Coffey, I came to see that allowing one man to live was a better ending. It was essential however that the reader, like me, does not know which man survives. I wondered how Brian would

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manage to portray this in his illustrations and was amazed and impressed by his clever 'blocking' of the soldiers on page.

I also loved the way Brian extended my feelings of the soldiers' common humanity by including snapshots of the families waiting at home. I think this is particularly powerful on the double spread on (pages 14–15). This interweaving of text and illustrations, and working collaboratively with another person, has been a wonderful experience for me as a writer.