

Australia's involvement in WWI: The Western Front

Lesson Map: <http://esriaustralia.com.au/education/SpatialActivity73>

Engage

Historical context: From Gallipoli to the Western Front

- ➔ Click on the URL above to open the Story Map (with built-in interactive maps). A Story Map will open, displaying the title page. Scroll down to get started.
- ➔ Read through the first section titled *The Western Front*. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- Explore the map by investigating major battles along the Western Front. You can zoom in and click on individual pins to bring up details about major battles.
- ➔ Read through the remainder of the section below the map (3 paragraphs). Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.

Explore

Australia's involvement: Somme and Fromelles

- ➔ Scroll down to the next section titled *Somme*. Read the information. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- ? As you read through the information about the Somme campaign – including Pozieres – summarise the battle by completing the table below:

Information	Battle of Somme	Battle of Fromelles
Dates (start and end)	23 July 1916 – 18 Nov 1916	
Purpose of battle	Relieve French forces at Verdun; break through German resistance in region	
Noteworthy events in battle	After week of shelling Allied troops attempted to take enemy trenches; Germans able to make easy work of Allies; 60,000 casualties at end of first day of fighting	
Impact and outcome for	First involvement came at	

Download student worksheet [here](#).

Time

Approximately 2 x 45-minute lessons

Activity

Investigate Australian involvement on the Western Front

Learning Outcome

Students will be able to:

- Analyse the nature of warfare on the Western Front
- Examine the role of Australian forces on the Western Front
- Create a historical argument in response to a statement
- Examine and analyse sources
- Explore the spatial context of the Western Front through primary and contemporary maps

ACARA Curriculum Link

[Year 9 History: World War I \(1914-1918\)](#)

[ACDSEH021](#) | [ACDSEH095](#) | [ACDSEH097](#) | [ACHHS164](#) | [ACHHS165](#) | [ACHHS169](#) | [ACHHS170](#) | [ACHHS172](#)

Teacher Feedback:

To share your feedback on this, or any Spatial Activity, please contact education@esriaustralia.com.au

Australian forces	battle of Pozieres; AIF experienced 23,000 casualties in 6 weeks of fighting	
Outcome of battle	Over ½ a million casualties for both sides; Allied forces able to advance the line about 9.7km	
Other aspects of the fighting	Somme offensive criticised heavily by British PM	

- Explore the map by opening the Legend to see what the map symbols represent. Locate the Somme River and identify the location of Pozieres. Zoom out to obtain greater context.
- Read Prime Minister David Lloyd George’s perspective on the Somme campaign and answer the following questions:
- ? What is Prime Minister George’s perspective on the Somme campaign. Use evidence from the source to support your response. *[Prime Minister George appears to condemn the battle strategy and tactics employed by Haig in the Somme campaign. This condemnation is evident as he describes the campaign as a “bullheaded fight,” that led to, “the slaughter [of] our young officers.” He goes on to suggest that if Germany had not aggravated America into joining the war, then Britain would have not broken out of the stalemate of trench warfare.]*
- ? What does Prime Minister George identify as the reason the Somme campaign was able to come to an end. *[Prime Minister George identifies Germany’s “inexplicable stupidity...in provoking a quarrel with America” as the reason the Allies were able to gain the upper hand. In other words, the Prime Minister is saying that Germany unwisely decided to take on too many countries at once, stretching its resources too thin.]*
- Scroll down to the next section titled *Fromelles*. Read the information. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- ? As you read through the information about the Battle of Fromelles – including Pozieres – summarise the battle by completing the table you began earlier below:

Information	Battle of Somme	Battle of Fromelles
Dates (start and end)	23 July 1916 – 18 Nov 1916	19 – 20 July 1916
Purpose of battle	Relieve French forces at Verdun; break through German resistance in region	Diversionary attack at Fromelles to stop Germans from reinforcing units at Somme front
Noteworthy events in battle	After week of shelling Allied troops attempted to take	Complete disaster, Germans had clear view of

	enemy trenches; Germans able to make easy work of Allies; 60,000 casualties at end of first day of fighting	approaching Allied forces; able to decimate Allies with machine-gun fire
Impact and outcome for Australian forces	First involvement came at battle of Pozieres; AIF experienced 23,000 casualties in 6 weeks of fighting	Labelled worst 24 hours in Australian military history; 5,500 casualties, 2,000 deaths, which equates to combined losses in Boer, Korean and Vietnam Wars
Outcome of battle	Over ½ a million casualties for both sides; Allied forces able to advance the line about 9.7km	Complete withdrawal from Fromelles by Allies; Germans maintain position
Other aspects of the fighting	Somme offensive criticised heavily by British PM	Attack was commenced in broad daylight, most likely adding to casualty toll.

- Explore the map by opening the Legend to see what the map symbols represent.

Explain

A quick overview of other major battles on the Western Front

- Scroll down to the next section titled *A quick overview of other major battles on the Western Front*. This map tour briefly looks at battles that took place at *Bullecourt*, *Messines*, *Passchendaele*, *Villers-Bretonneux*, *Hamel*, *Amiens* and *Mont St Quentin*. Read the information. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- Each battle has a number of supporting visuals. You can click through the maps and images by pressing on the *Right Arrow* icon before scrolling to the next battle.

Extend

Australian actions on the Western Front cemented the Anzac Legend

- Scroll down to the next section titled *Australians on the Western Front*. Read the information. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- Read the **final statement**.

Australia's identity – as seen in the emergence of the Anzac legend – was first formed at Gallipoli. However, the actions of Australian soldiers on the Western Front truly cemented the Anzac Legend.

- ? Put forward a historical argument that responds directly to the statement. In your response, make specific reference to Australian actions at either Pozieres or Fromelles to shape your response. Basic paragraph structure has been included

below as a scaffold. *[Answers will vary. Model response below]*

Paragraph Structure	
Point Topic sentence	Present a topic sentence that directly responds to the task statement. Your topic sentence should indicate your position (agree, disagree, agree in part) and provide a clear reason as to why you have adopted your position.
Explanation	First explain how the Anzac legend was born at Gallipoli and what the Anzac Legend is. Then explain how the Anzac legend took on greater shape on the Western Front.
Evidence & Elaboration	Refer specifically to Pozieres or Fromelles to support your explanation.
Link	Link back to the topic sentence by restating your argument.

Although the Anzac Legend first emerged at Gallipoli in 1915, the actions of Australian soldiers on the Western Front further formed and defined what it meant to be an Anzac. When Australian and New Zealand soldiers fought in the Gallipoli campaign in 1915, they quickly gained a reputation as fierce and courageous fighters that looked out for their mates. This fierce and courageous spirit never wavered, despite the hardships and few strategic gains they made at Gallipoli. Although their experiences at Gallipoli were tough, Anzac soldiers experienced tougher and more horrific fighting on the Western Front; fighting was more brutal and the battles were fought on much larger scales, with many more troops. This tougher and more horrific experience is seen in events that occurred at Fromelles. The battle has been referred to as the worst 24 hours in Australian military history. In a single night, Australia experienced 5,500 casualties, where 2,000 soldiers died. Despite this huge death toll and casualty list, and despite being comprehensively defeated at Fromelles, Australian troops still boldly charged German lines, attempting to capture enemy trenches, whilst being completely exposed to German machine-gun fire on the open fields of no-man's-land. It is clear, through their unnerving sense of duty, and immense courage in charging towards likely death, that these soldiers were men of courage, resolve and loyalty to one another. This character was displayed time and time again on the Western Front, reinforcing the reputation of Anzac soldiers and further defining the Anzac Legend.

Next Steps:

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