

The Kokoda Campaign

Lesson Map: <http://esriaustralia.com.au/education/SpatialActivity60>

Engage

Why did the Japanese want control of Port Moresby? (Historical context)

- Click on the URL above to open the Story Map (with built-in interactive maps). A Map journal will open and provide a summary of the map. Scroll down to get started.
- Read through the first section titled *Japanese Expansion by 1942*. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- Explore the map by viewing the Legend, zooming in and out and clicking on countries.
- Scroll down to *Japan plans to take Port Moresby by sea*. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary. Explore the map by clicking on the icons, lines and colours.
- Scroll down to *The Battle of the Coral Sea*. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.

Explore

Australia prepares to defend Port Moresby against Japanese land operations

- Scroll down to the heading *Sourcework: A message from Prime Minister John Curtin*. Read the source and answer the questions below:
- ? What is Prime Minister Curtin's likely purpose/s in delivering this message to the Australian public? Use evidence from the source to support your response.
[Prime Minister Curtin's likely purpose in delivering this message to the Australian public is to convey a sense of urgency in order rally up support for the war effort. The sense of urgency can be seen where he states, "we are in imminent and deadly peril," and his call for support of the war effort is evident when he states, "we are now a nation compelled to fight, to organise every resource...to the total war effort."]
- ? Are there any examples of exaggeration in this excerpt? If so, identify the example and explain why it may have been included in his message. *[Curtin's*

Download student worksheet [here](#).

Time
60 minutes

Activity

Investigate the challenges Australian and Japanese forces faced during the Kokoda campaign.

Learning Outcome

Students will be able to:

- Understand the significance of Port Moresby to both Australia and Japan in WWII
- Identify and explain the challenges that Australians faced on the Kokoda trail
- Understand the difficulty of terrain from a geospatial perspective
- Examine and analyse sources

ACARA Curriculum Link

Year 10 History: World War II (1939-45)

[ACDSEH107](#) | [ACDSEH108](#) |
[ACDSEH109](#) | [ACDSEH110](#) |
[ACHHS182](#) | [ACHHS187](#) |
[ACHHS190](#) | [ACHHS192](#)

Teacher Feedback:

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claim that, "Australia faces the darkest hour in her history," could be considered an example of exaggeration and was likely included to drum up a sense of urgency so that Australians on the Homefront would contribute more directly to the war effort.]

- ?

 Consider the map you saw earlier of Japan's expansion by 1942. Explain if any validity exists in Prime Minister Curtin's statements regarding the threat of the Japanese. *[Although exaggeration clearly exists in Curtin's statements, they do contain a level of validity. His statement, "The spearhead of the Japanese hordes reaches south – always south," corroborates with Japan's patterns of expansion during the time. The map clearly shows that Japan had expanded south through China, South-East Asia and Indonesia, towards Australia.]*
- ?

 Assess the reliability and usefulness of this source. *[This source can be considered reliable as it is a primary source – speech – delivered by the Australian Prime Minister at the time of the events unfolding. Although exaggeration and emotive language exists in his statements – included for the purpose of creating a sense of urgency – it can be considered reliable as he is the highest authority in Australia at the time. The source can also be considered useful as it provides a clear insight into not only the Prime Minister's perspective, but also the perspectives of Australians on the Homefront; it is clear that the Japanese threat had created a clear fear and worry at home and shows the government's attempts to drum up further support for the war effort.]*
- Scroll down to the heading *The Japanese look to take Port Moresby by land* and read the information. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- Explore the map further by zooming in on the airfield to see why Kokoda was strategically important.
- Scroll down to the heading *Japan takes Kokoda* and read the information. Explore the map as necessary. Optionally, you can choose to read more about the engagement and the retreat to Deniki by clicking on the hyperlinks.

Explain

What challenges did the Australian forces face that led to their retreat along the Kokoda trail?

- Scroll down to the heading *Japan continues to push forward* and read the information. Take notes if required. Discuss as necessary.
- As you read the information, click on the various pins on the map to see the

different locations along the track that the Australians retreated to.

- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *Challenges of terrain* and read the information. Follow the instructions on this section to see the elevation of the Kokoda trail from a cross-section profile.
- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *Sourcework: First-hand Australian experiences* and read the sources. Answer the questions that follow.
- ? Describe the characteristics of the Kokoda trail's terrain. Use direct evidence from at least one source to support your response? *[The terrain on the trail was characterized by mountains and dense jungle, which was made more difficult by heavy rainfall that turned the trail to mud and slush. Source 1 clearly shows this where Hamlyn-Harris states that they climbed, "more razor backs, still greater heights, still deeper gulfs, and still more impenetrable jungle."]*
- ? Other than issues of terrain, what challenges did the Australian soldiers also face? Use direct evidence from both sources to support your response. *[Other than the terrain, Source 1 states that they had to traverse these difficulties in, "heavy rainfall," with, "rain-sodden packs on our backs," all the while being wary of, "snipers at this stage of the journey." Source 2 mentions that soldiers also had to deal with disease as, "Men were so rotten with dysentery that they walked clad only in their shirts..."]*
- ? Go beyond the sources. Are there any additional challenges you can identify that Australian soldiers may have had to respond to? Briefly explain them. *[Australian soldiers would have also needed to transport artillery, ammunition, medical supplies and food up and down the mountainous terrain, not to mention wounded comrades. Furthermore, due to the nature of jungle warfare, they would need to constantly be alert to the possibility of enemy ambushes at all times of the day and night.]*

Extend

Why was Australia eventually victorious on the Kokoda campaign?

- ➔ Scroll to the heading titled *Australia gains the upper hand*. Take notes if necessary. Discuss as required.
- ➔ Scroll to the heading titled *Australians victorious*. Take notes if necessary. Discuss as required. Explore the map for greater insights.
- ➔ Scroll to the heading titled *Sourcework: Responding to the Generals' points of view*. Read the source and answer the following question.

- ? Explain why the two generals may have had different views. In your response consider the different times at which each statement was made and what was happening in the Kokoda campaign at that point in time. *[US General MacArthur likely saw the Australians as incompetent as the Japanese were able to continue to push them back along the Kokoda trail in the early stages of the campaign. British General Slim made his comment after Australian forces were able to hold their ground at Imita Ridge, halting Japanese progress south along the trail.]*

Next Steps:

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