

KEY FEATURES OF **MODERN HISTORY** 1

5TH EDITION

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Bruce Dennett | Stephen Dixon | Bernie Howitt | Angela Wong

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KEY FEATURES OF
**MODERN
HISTORY** 1

5TH EDITION

YEAR 11

Bruce Dennett | Stephen Dixon | Bernie Howitt | Angela Wong

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USING KEY FEATURES OF MODERN HISTORY 1

New South Wales' most trusted modern history series has been updated for the new Stage 6 Modern History syllabus. The first of a two-volume series, Key Features of Modern History 1 offers complete support for Year 11 teachers and their students, providing unparalleled depth and coverage and a range of new chapter features that will give students of all abilities the best chance of achieving success in Modern History.

Key enhancements:

- > All content has been explicitly aligned to the new Modern History Stage 6 syllabus (Year 11).
- > Subject experts Bruce Dennett, Stephen Dixon, Bernie Howitt and Angela Wong have developed comprehensive, engaging and appropriately levelled content.
- > Unambiguous language is used throughout the book, with plenty of visuals to engage students and support learning.
- > ebook assess provides comprehensive student and teacher digital support including answers to every question in the book, class tests, videos and more.

'Focus questions', 'Key concepts and skills', and 'Learning goals' are clearly stated at the beginning of each chapter to guide teachers and students through the content.

Content includes up-to-date case studies, maps and rich visual and written source material

Margin glossary definitions help students to quickly and easily find the meaning of unfamiliar terms, to aid understanding

Many chapters feature a 'Profile' which allows for more in-depth learning about a historically significant person, event or phenomenon.

- 15.3 Understanding and using the sources
- 1 Analyse Source 6. What is it implying about King Leopold II's control of the Belgian Congo? Research the treatment of the indigenous peoples of the Congo under Belgian control and discuss whether the attitude shown in Source 6 is justified.
 - 2 Analyse Source 7 and explain what point it is making about the Age of Imperialism.
 - 3 Explain how steamships such as that shown in Source 8 could change international trade and increase the value of European colonies.
- 15.3 Check your learning
- 1 What percentage of the planet did European countries control by 1914?
 - 2 Create a flow chart that explains the two-way trade process that enriched imperialist countries in the nineteenth century.
 - 3 Identify a specific example of imperialism that benefitted the trade of an imperialist country. Research its impact on the population of the colonised country.
 - 4 Conduct research to identify which areas of the planet had not been colonised by Europeans by 1914.

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

Although the spreading of Christianity and 'civilised' Western ideals were used to justify imperialist expansion, these were not the core reasons behind colonisation. At the heart of imperialism was always the desire to secure profit for business owners and shareholders. Nowhere was this more evident than in the activities of the East India Company.

Known by a range of names during its years of operation, the East India Company was essentially an English private company formed to take advantage of new trading opportunities after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. In this conflict, England broke the monopoly (total control) Spain and Portugal had enjoyed in the East Indian spice trade.

Conflict with the Dutch in what was then called the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) saw the Company focus its attention in India in the early seventeenth century, while also pursuing interests in the Persian Gulf, South-East Asia and East Asia.

SOURCE 9 Tim Hollander as Cuthbert Boscawen, Chairman of the East India Trading Company in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006). The swarthy company in the film was based on the real East India Company, with the green representing freedom from imperialist powers.

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The major products the Company traded in were cotton, silk, spices, tea and opium. The latter was eventually brought into conflict with China in the Opium Wars. The Company, displaying its inherent 'logic' of nineteenth-century imperialism, demanded to be able to sell Indian opium in China in pay for the Chinese tea it was selling in England. Twice after China banned the sale of opium to its citizens, wars were fought to ensure the Company had the right to sell opium to the Chinese.

For around 150 years, from the 1620s, the Company transported slaves to support its economic enterprise.

The Company effectively ruled India on behalf of the British crown from 1834. Resentment of the Company's imperialist actions in India eventually resulted in the Indian Mutiny of 1857. As a result of this conflict, the British Government took formal control of India in 1858, and ended the Company's Indian possessions, its administrative powers and its arms.

The Company lost all its power. It was finally dissolved in 1874, after over 300 years as a spearhead of English imperialism.

SOURCE 10 An artist's view of Company trading in a port.

SOURCE 11 A woman smokes an opium pipe in modern-day China.

15.3 PROFILE TASKS

- 1 Which event paved the way for the establishment of the East India Company?
- 2 Research the Indian Mutiny and outline why the East India Company would have been resented by Indians.
- 3 Analyse Source 10 and explain how it could be used as evidence to help a historian understand the relationship between the East India Company and the Indian population.

Whatever the final figure, 'Bloody Sunday' had a profound effect on the attitude of the people towards the Tsar. Instead of 'Little Father', he became 'Nicholas the Bloody'. The Nicholas himself liked to fast – was chastised forever.

SOURCE 14

Along the Necker Heights ... there are signs one of Friday and before found workers all dressed in their best clothes ... We had already reached the Alexander Gardens, on the corner site of which the Winter Palace stands, when we heard the sound of gunfire, the signal for the rally to change. The marchers came as thick ... as rain, on the right, was a detachment of police, but those they showed no sign of hostility, the phalanx began moving again. The second was aimed at the crowd ... The first volley was fired in the air, but the third, however, a discharge of deadly rifle fire ... The crowd stood and began moving in every direction ... It was quite clear that the soldiers had made a terrible mistake; they had hardly anticipated the possibility of this crowd ... the modern view, in the place without any real intent. They scarcely believed that when they got there they would have done and the Tsar would remain on their throne or at least appear on the balcony.

A. Kennedy, *The Army: Alexander Bismarck and History*, *Pushing History*, 2010.

SOURCE 15

I have heard the assembled crowd accused of rushing water that froze in the canyons, breaking the windows, and using language so blunt that will not bear repetition, although that 'case' it is well attested with known pieces of firing sticks and some even with wooden.

I do know that the commanding officer of the Infantry ... was warned three times, telling them if they did not disperse, he would be compelled to fire on them ... the officers, in fact, would go right in among the people and try to reason with them, treating to do everything in their power to persuade the people to disperse peacefully.

Robert McCormick, the US Ambassador in St Petersburg, in *Michael Bismarck and Great Russia*, *Wiley-Blackwell*, 1987.

9.2a Understanding and using the sources

Read the accounts by A. Kennedy and Robert McCormick of the Bloody Sunday march. In what ways do these accounts differ? How do you account for these differences?

9.2a Check your learning

- 1 Research the living and working conditions of industrial workers in Russia, around 1900.
 - a Use a mind map or other graphic organizer to summarise your findings.
 - b Explain the main grievances of the industrial working class.
- 2 Research the system of agriculture in Russia, around 1900.
 - a Explain the main grievances of Russia's peasants.
 - b Refer to Source 12, and find two further sources of evidence about farming methods in Russia, around 1900. Analyse these sources for their reliability.

'Understanding and using the sources' questions throughout each chapter enhance student understanding of how to use and critically analyse historical sources

'Check your learning' questions are given for each topic

obook assess

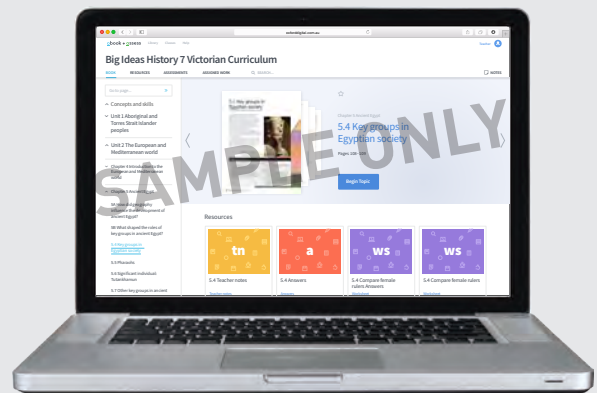
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The drama *12 Years a Slave* (2013) is based on the real life story of Solomon Northup, an African-American man who was kidnapped and sold as a slave to various plantations in the American South in the mid-1800s.



PART A

Investigating Modern History – The Nature of Modern History

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The Investigation of Historic Sites and Sources – the Trenches of the First World War and the Archaeology of Fromelles

War graves at the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, France

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the nature, range and importance of archives to researchers of modern history?
- 2 How valid are reconstructions of historic sites as a source of historical understanding?
- 3 How have archaeological and scientific techniques, historic sites and oral testimony contributed to our understanding of modern history?

KEY CONCEPTS AND SKILLS

Analysis and use of sources

Trench warfare was a major component of the First World War. There are a wide variety of sources that can be analysed to develop an understanding of the nature and impact of trench warfare in this war. These include written sources from participants in the war, such as letters, diaries and poems; visual sources such as photographs and drawings; and even the trenches themselves.

Historical interpretation

When you investigate a topic as large as the trenches of the First World War, you will be exposed to a variety of interpretations, as well as developing your own. Assess each interpretation for accuracy and validity by examining the sources it relies upon, and by looking at what has been excluded from the investigation.

Historical investigation and research

When you visit a museum or reconstructed historical site, you have to consider carefully the role it can play in a historical investigation. It may be a useful stimulus for developing valid historical questions, but you must always consider the validity of any museum exhibits or reconstructions as sources.

Explanation and communication

You may consider whether you could create models or reconstructions that can effectively communicate your own historical understanding.

LEARNING GOALS

- > Understand the wide range of different sources that support the study of modern history.
- > Develop an appreciation of the role of archaeology and science in the study of modern history.
- > Investigate the range of sources available to assist understanding of the nature of trench warfare in the First World War.

1.1

Introduction

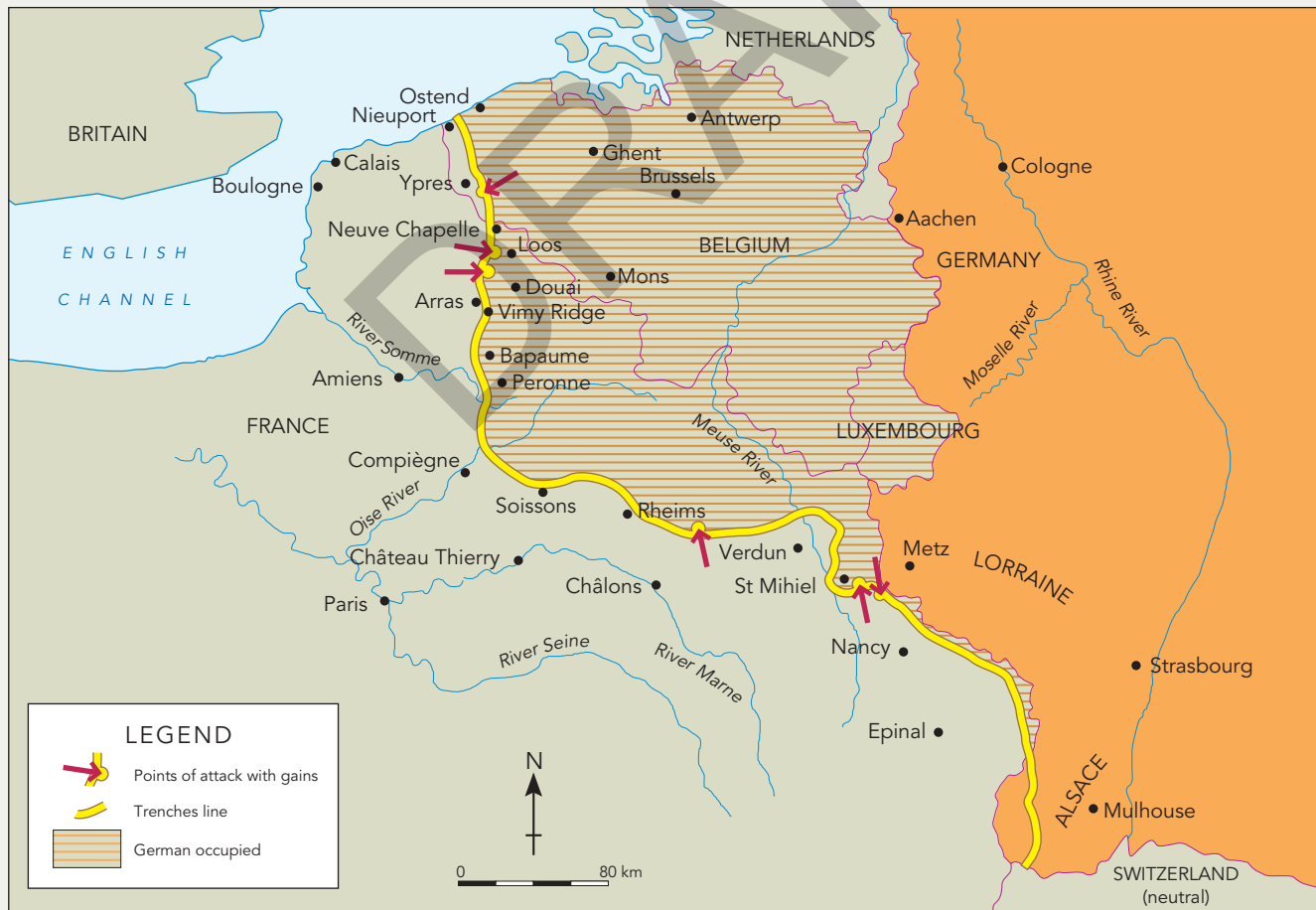
This chapter focuses on the investigation of historic sites and sources related to the trenches of the First World War (1914–18). The principal location of these trenches is known as the Western Front. The Western Front is not, however, a single site; rather, it is a series of different sites in France and Belgium. Here, the armies of France, the United States and the British Empire – which included Australia – fought bloody battles along a line of trenches that stretched from the Belgian coast to Switzerland.

The Western Front is unusual as a historic site, both because of its geographical size and because of the impact of the events that took place there.



SOURCE 1 A Muslim grave with French and Algerian flags at the National Necropolis and Ossuary in Douaumont, France. The site is a tribute to French and Algerian soldiers who died on the Verdun battlefield during the First World War.

THE WESTERN FRONT, 1915



SOURCE 2 This map of the Western Front in 1915 shows the extent of the trenches line, which stretched from the Belgian coast to Switzerland.

One hundred years after the end of the war, the scars are still visible on parts of the landscape. The trenches, war memorials, museums and military cemeteries – where row upon row of headstones stretch across the countryside – offer different versions of the story of the Great War. All the countries and all the families whose loved ones were involved in the war have their own special sites and their own special memories. Each country devotes special care to its own significant sites from the Western Front.

For the French, the Western Front was the site of the blood and sacrifice of a generation who fought to defend their home soil. For the British, it was the graveyard of the best of a generation. For many Germans in the 1920s and 30s, it was the birthplace of their mythical ‘Front Generation’ – maimed (both mentally and physically) by war and unable to adjust to civilian life.

More than being sites of remembrance, reconstructions of sites along the Western Front seek to provide visitors with an authentic experience of the war. Throughout this chapter, you should consider how authentic a reconstruction of such a place can be.



SOURCE 3 A recreation of a First World War dressing station (first aid post) at the Romagne '14-'18 Museum in Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, Lorraine, France

1.1 Check your learning

- 1 Which countries were involved on the Western Front?
- 2 List some of the visible remains of the First World War that are still accessible.

1.1 Understanding and using the sources

- 1 Identify artefacts in Source 3 that could be from the First World War. What would a historian do to assess their authenticity?
 - 2 What historical understanding can you draw from Source 2?
 - 3 As a student of modern history, how could the grave shown in Source 1 and the reconstruction in Source 3 help you understand what happened on the Western Front?
-

1.2

The nature and importance of archives to historians

Archives are places where public records and other historical documents are kept. Your school may have its own archive, celebrating the school and past student achievements. Most countries have a national archive, housing a wide range of sources that outline the history of the country through official records. Museums, such as the Australian War Memorial, have archives relating to their area of research.



SOURCE 4 'Chateau Wood' by Frank Hurley, 1917

oral history

the collection and study of historical information using sound recordings of interviews with people who remember past events

Archives are a valuable source of information for historians and, as technology has developed, archives have become increasingly digitised and made available on museum websites. Researchers and the general public have more ready access to archival material than ever before. Historians investigating the First World War spend much of their time in archives, looking at letters, diaries, maps, official reports, plans and orders. Many archives also include recorded interviews with eyewitnesses and those who served in the war. These **oral histories** were often recorded after the war ended and were later transcribed, to become part of the written record.

Photography was well established as a means of recording events by the First World War and photographs have become important evidence in the process of reconstructing sites on the Western Front. Australian Frank Hurley became known as 'the mad photographer' for the risks he often took while photographing battles, such as Passchendaele in Belgium. Many of his photographs have become part of the Australian War Memorial's archive.

SOURCE 5

Wednesday: Rain, rain, more rain – it just poured and the mud is appalling – we slop around in gumboots with about 14 lbs [6.3 kg] of mud and straw and stuff attached to our boots ... several flashes of lightning – very bright indeed – and such heavy rain.

Staff Nurse Christine Erica Strom, Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS), taken from her diary, which is located in the Australian War Memorial's archives, Canberra

1.2 Understanding and using the sources

- 1 Explain how Sources 5 and 6 can help you understand the role of archives in historical research.
- 2 How would Source 5 help a history student who had been asked to use primary sources in explaining what it was like to serve in the First World War?

One of the most comprehensive archives for First World War studies is the Liddle Collection at Leeds University in the UK, founded in the 1970s by British historian Peter Liddle. Liddle had collected oral histories from First World War veterans from both the UK and Australia, including Australians who had served at Gallipoli and on the Western Front. Liddle's interest in these stories stemmed from a desire to preserve stories for future generations that, if not recorded, could be lost forever.

In 1978, British historian Denis Winter published *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War*, which was based on diaries and private letters from soldiers. Winter felt that 'both during and after the war the individual voices of the soldiers were lost in the collective picture'. He believed that there had been a neglect of the perspective of the individual soldier. Winter acknowledged one of the most important but often neglected truths of producing history: it is the vast variety of experiences that make up any story. From his interviews, Winter wrote what might be called a history from the 'bottom up'. Aside from a brief period just after the war, this perspective had been largely neglected, despite there being an abundance of materials that gave accounts of trench warfare from the first days of the war in 1914, until after the **armistice** in 1918.

The contribution of oral testimony to an understanding of life in the past

Many historical accounts rely heavily on oral testimony. In fact, the Liddle Collection at Leeds University is almost entirely based on oral testimony, and the Australian War Memorial's oral testimony collection is vast. These testimonies have provided historians with important insights into the times, emotions and perceptions of those with firsthand experience of life in the trenches.

Like all historical sources, however, such testimonies cannot be taken at face value. They need to be considered critically and approached first in terms of their context. This means considering who produced them, and when and why they were produced; and only then considering the content of what is being said. In other words, the key to using oral testimony is the same as using any historical source. First look at the context, and then look at the content.

The best way to understand the power and significance of oral history in understanding life in the past is to listen to recordings. The Australian War Memorial's collection is an ideal place to start. Its archives hold recordings of firsthand accounts of fighting at Gallipoli, as well as on the Western Front. These testimonies allow you to establish a sense of empathy with the soldiers of the First World War, as you hear them describe their experiences, and reflect on their survival and the changes war wrought on them. Oral history keeps memories alive long after the participants have passed on.

1.2 Check your learning

- 1 What are archives? Why are they useful for historians?
 - 2 Describe the Liddle Collection. How could its contents provide a different perspective on the First World War than other official records?
 - 3 Create a table with two columns that outlines the risks and advantages of using oral histories to develop historical understanding of a topic.
-

■ **armistice**
the agreement made by opposing sides in a war to stop fighting



SOURCE 6
Poppies adorn the Roll of Honour walls at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The War Memorial holds an extensive archive of First World War records.

1.3

The reconstruction of historic sites: the Western Front



SOURCE 7 The 19 240 Shrouds of the Somme exhibition, Exeter, England, on the 100th anniversary of the first day of the Battle of the Somme. Each figurine represents one British life lost in first four hours of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916.

Today, some of the sites of the Western Front have been left as places of reflection, while others have seen trenches reconstructed to give visitors some understanding of what it looked like in 1916.

For young nations, such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, key events of the First World War are often referred to as their ‘coming of age’. In relation to Australia and New Zealand, it is the 1915 campaign at Gallipoli in Turkey that has the greatest meaning. Anzac Cove in Gallipoli has become an important focus of commemoration, and plays a significant role in the history and sense of identity for both countries. The Western Front – particularly the sites of Beaumont-Hamel and Vimy Ridge – plays a similar role in Canada’s history and sense of identity. These two sites are examples of different approaches to reconstruction.

Beaumont-Hamel

■ **dominion**
a territory of a sovereign or government

■ **battalion**
a large body of troops

In 1916, Newfoundland, Canada, was still a **dominion** of the British Empire (it would not become a Canadian province until 1949). As such, it answered Britain’s call for troops to fight in the First World War and sent a **battalion** of 800 men to Europe.

Beaumont-Hamel, 120 km south-west of the Belgian border, was the battleground of the first day of the Battle of the Somme. The Somme – which has become a symbolic representation of the Great War, particularly for the British – was in fact a series of battles that were fought between 1 July and 18 November 1916, near the Somme River, 160 km north of Paris.

SOURCE 8

Soldiers leaving a trench to attack during the Battle of the Somme



The first day of fighting, 1 July 1916, was one of the worst in the history of the British Army in terms of casualties. The Somme was designed by the British to be an offensive battle to break the **stalemate** on the Western Front. It did not go according to plan. The attack was preceded by a week-long bombardment of the German trenches, in which one-and-a-half million shells were fired. This artillery attack was intended to destroy the German barbed wire and wipe out the front-line trenches. However, this aim was not achieved. The Germans were aware of the impending attack and prepared for it by digging huge underground chambers, 12 m below the ground, to enable them to shelter from the bombardment. The result was that the battle lasted significantly longer than planned. The impact of four-and-a-half months of intense conflict left major scars on the French landscape.

The Canadians were part of the third wave of soldiers attempting to cross **no man's land** and seize the German trenches at Beaumont-Hamel on that first day. Of the almost 800 men that left their trenches at 8.45 a.m., most would be dead or dying within the first 20 minutes of the advance. At the next morning's roll call, only 68 men could respond. A total of 324 were killed or missing, and a further 386 were wounded, many so severely that they would die shortly after.

This was a devastating blow for such a small dominion, and 1 July remains an official day of remembrance in Newfoundland. The site of the battle at Beaumont-Hamel has also become a significant memorial, and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial is one of only two National Historic Sites of Canada outside of Canada itself.

Rather than try and reconstruct the trenches, the Canadian Government has left them as winding scars in the landscape (see Source 9). Visitors are able to walk through the trenches the Newfoundlanders left, and reflect on the huge sacrifice of lives that occurred on the morning of 1 July 1916.

■ **stalemate**
a situation where neither side is able to gain an advantage

■ **no man's land**
the area between the trench systems of opposing armies; soldiers were unlikely to return from this area



SOURCE 9 English school students visiting First World War trenches of the Battle of the Somme at the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial, France

Vimy Ridge

On 9 April 1917, at Vimy Ridge in northern France, all four divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force fought together for the first time, successfully driving the German forces back and capturing the high ground. Today, Vimy Ridge is the site of a memorial to the 60 000 Canadians who gave their lives in the First World War: the Canadian National Vimy Memorial.



SOURCE 10 Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau walks through a trench at Vimy Ridge on 9 April 2017, the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

In contrast to Beaumont-Hamel, the decision was made by the Canadian Government to reconstruct the trenches at Vimy Ridge, using concrete sandbags (concrete moulded to look like sandbags) to ensure the safety of the many visitors that flock to the site each year.

Historical reconstructions cannot place us back in the reality of the First World War, but, when they are built accurately and with care, they can allow for a degree of authenticity. They can give visitors the opportunity to walk through and stand in the same places that their ancestors did, and gain both insight and historical understanding of the experiences those people endured.

1.3 Understanding and using the sources

- 1 What historical understandings can be gained by the school students visiting sites such as Beaumont-Hamel, as shown in Source 9?
- 2 Compare Sources 9 and 10. Explain how they show different approaches to the preservation and reconstruction of historic sites.
- 3 To what extent could Sources 9 and 10 be regarded as sources by historians investigating the First World War?

1.3 Check your learning

- 1 How long did the Battle of the Somme last?
 - 2 Describe what happened on the first morning of the Battle of the Somme.
 - 3 Why are the battle sites of Beaumont-Hamel and Vimy Ridge so significant for Canadians?
 - 4 Discuss the value of reconstructing historical sites. Outline the arguments for and against reconstructions.
-

1.4

The contribution of archaeological and scientific techniques in the investigation of the past

Australian and British historians and archaeologists have focused on sites in the Somme region to gain a better understanding of trench life and the experiences of ordinary soldiers in the First World War. The most significant of these undertakings was the 2009 excavation of mass graves at Pheasant Wood near Fromelles, France, close to the Belgian border.

The challenges of surveying trench sites

Battlefield archaeology can add an extra dimension to our understanding of war, as it gives us a unique insight into the experiences of soldiers. However, the excavation of trenches along the Western Front has sometimes been made difficult by the postwar construction of memorials and monuments where battles were once fought. While these can be of great emotional significance for soldiers and their families, memorials alter the original military **topography** and can contribute to the destruction of significant historical artefacts.

topography
the arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area

Fortunately for archaeologists, the Somme has provided a surprising number of artefacts; rather than monuments, the ongoing challenge here has been the decomposition of many of these artefacts. Archaeologists and historians have cross-referenced remains (for example shreds of uniforms, identifying badges and ammunition) with archival records (for example photographs and oral testimonies) to develop a deeper understanding of what occurred at sites such as Fromelles.



SOURCE 11 A First World War mass grave at Fromelles



SOURCE 12 An archaeologist at work, recovering human remains and historical artefacts at Pheasant Wood

■ **stratigraphic dating**
the geological method of dating objects by their position in the stratigraphy – or layering – of rocks and sediment

Interestingly, even the most well-preserved trenches can cause problems for archaeologists using **stratigraphic dating** techniques. Stratigraphy – the method of dating artefacts by their relationship with the levels at which they were found, with the oldest artefacts on the bottom and the most recent on top – is not always useful when studying trenches. In fact, in the trenches the traditional stratigraphic picture was often reversed, as troops along the Western Front would frequently dig themselves deeper underground and throw their waste up onto the surface. The stratigraphy was further confused by the massive artillery explosions that blew enormous craters in the ground and completely rearranged the topography.

Excavations of trenches have been further complicated by the fact that after the war, farmers who attempted to reclaim their farmland would simply take all the mounds of debris above ground and shovel them into the trenches to fill them in. Hence traditional stratigraphy cannot be trusted, and other means have had to be used to determine the true origins of artefacts.

Aside from the dangers of drawing false conclusions, archaeologists working in the trenches face physical dangers. Even a hundred years after the Western Front was an active battlefield, archaeologists have still come across unexploded shells and gas cylinders. For this reason, all archaeological work has had to be done with professional bomb disposal experts and other personnel on site.



SOURCE 13
Private Thomas Cosgriff, 59th Battalion, of Albert Park, Victoria, aged 20, was one of the many Australians killed at Fromelles in July 1916. His remains were positively identified through DNA testing.

■ **geophysical**
relating to the use of instruments to study the physics of the earth in inaccessible areas

■ **oste archaeologist**
a specialist in the study of human skeletal remains

Forensic examinations and DNA analysis at Fromelles

For the Australians, one of the most significant places on the Western Front is Fromelles, the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the Great War. Here, Australia suffered more than 5000 casualties in one night, between 19 and 20 July 1916, in what is sometimes called Australia's greatest military disaster. Of these casualties, hundreds of soldiers remained missing for over 90 years, until a **geophysical** survey of the area, commissioned by the Australian Government in 2007, located an unmarked mass grave at Pheasant Wood in 2008. According to the Australian War Memorial, the excavation revealed 250 bodies, of which 203 were thought by archaeologists to be Australian (due to remnants of clothing or location of the bodies etc). After teams of **oste archaeologists** removed the soldiers' remains, DNA samples were taken from their teeth and bones. These were then matched with DNA from relatives of soldiers in Australia. By mid-2015, 144 of the 250 bodies had been positively identified, and each of these was confirmed to be Australian. The lost soldiers were identified through a combination of anthropological, archaeological, historical and DNA information.

1.4 Understanding and using the sources

Analyse Sources 11, 12 and 13. Explain how each source can help you understand more about the role and value of archaeologists in developing historical understanding of modern history.

1.4 Check your learning

- 1 Who conducted the search for unidentified Australian bodies at Pheasant Wood near Fromelles in 2008?
 - 2 Outline some of the difficulties facing archaeologists excavating First World War battlefields.
 - 3 Research the Australian and British troops' aim at the Battle of Fromelles. How successful were they?
-

VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

Villers-Bretonneux, near Amiens in northern France, was the site of a significant engagement that was critical in the outcome of the First World War. In 1918, the German Army launched a carefully planned offensive in an attempt to win the war before growing numbers of American troops arriving on the Western Front could overwhelm them. This attack, known as the Ludendorff Offensive, broke through the British and French lines and was close to succeeding in its aim. Australian troops were involved in halting the German advance, and one of the key sites in this battle was the small town of Villers-Bretonneux. More than 2000 Australians were killed or wounded, while the cost to the Germans was estimated at more than 10 000.

The people of Villers-Bretonneux continue to honour the considerable effort made by the Australian troops to prevent Germany from breaking through the French lines. Today, Australians visiting the town can have a cup of coffee at Café le Anzac or Café le Kangaroo, and watch the local primary school, the Victoria School, celebrate Anzac Day. The school houses the Australian National Memorial, and has also erected a sign in its playground that reads 'Do not forget Australia'.

Sites such as Villers-Bretonneux make a major contribution not only to the historical understanding of individuals, but also to a broader national understanding of identity. They can provide a focus for historical memories and understanding that help shape a broader historical narrative. Although Gallipoli has dominated Australia's historical memory, as historical understanding of Australia's role in the First World War has expanded, Western Front sites such as Villers-Bretonneux have risen in significance.



SOURCE 14 The Australian national rugby team, the Wallabies, visits the Victoria School, following a commemorative service at the Australian National Memorial in Villers-Bretonneux.



SOURCE 15 French children tend the graves of Australians killed in battle on the Western Front, Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux.

1.4 PROFILE TASKS

- 1 How do sites such as the memorials at Villers-Bretonneux and Vimy Ridge contribute to historical understanding?
- 2 Investigate the role Australia played in the battle at Villers-Bretonneux. How important was it for the outcome of the war?
- 3 Discuss why Australian sporting teams such as the Wallabies would travel to Villers-Bretonneux. How could historians use Source 14 to help them understand the contribution of Villers-Bretonneux to any historical narrative of Australia and its place in the world?

Traditionally, archaeology has been seen as the domain of ancient history. As this chapter about the Western Front in the First World War has shown, however, it also has a crucial role to play in helping us understand modern history. The so-called Great War destroyed large areas of the French countryside, but the skills of archaeologists have allowed for the reconstruction of some of the trenches along the front.

Reconstruction has emerged as a popular way of accessing the past in the twenty-first century. It can take the form of preserving trenches or recreating areas, such as the dressing station shown in Source 3. In each case, the aim is to allow people from the present to experience aspects of the past.

Reconstructions contribute to our historical understanding of the past, but, like all sources, have to be analysed carefully. They may give a researcher a greater understanding of the experiences of participants, or simply allow them to ask historical questions, such as what sort of lighting would be available in a field hospital, or how surgeries could be performed there.

Science too is making a significant contribution to our understanding of the past. After the physical discoveries of archaeologists showed the way at Fromelles in France, DNA testing was used on the remains exhumed from the mass graves of Fromelles. Here, modern science allowed 144 Australians, who had been buried unnamed in unmarked graves, to be identified and buried with dignity and recognition. More than providing closure to families whose relatives had been lost to history, DNA analysis also allowed historians to gain a deeper and more complete understanding of the Battle of Fromelles. Perhaps, in time, that greater understanding will lead to enhanced recognition of the role of Fromelles and other Western Front sites in the development of Australia's national identity.



SOURCE 16 Australian soldiers stand in front of a wall bearing the names of fallen First World War soldiers at a dawn service at the Australian National Memorial in Villers-Bretonneux, France.



FOR THE TEACHER

Check your obook assess for the following additional resources for this chapter:

Answers

Answers to each *Check your learning*, *Understanding and using the sources* and *Profile* task in this chapter

Teacher notes

Useful notes and advice for teaching this chapter, including syllabus connections and relevant weblinks

Class test

Comprehensive test to review students' skills and knowledge

assess quiz

Interactive auto-correcting multiple-choice quiz to test student comprehension



2

The Contestability of the Past: Pearl Harbor

The American flag flying at the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial, Pearl Harbor

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- 1 How do the different interpretations of the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 illustrate the concept of contestability in history?
- 2 What do the sources and historians say about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?
- 3 How do the sources and evidence help historians evaluate different theories about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

KEY CONCEPTS AND SKILLS

Historical interpretation

One of the roles of historians is to interpret events and sources. The events at Pearl Harbor have challenged historians because much of the information comes from Japanese and American perspectives. Even historians may have their interpretation of events influenced by their national origins.

Historical investigation and research

Developing a range of questions to guide an investigation is an important step towards success in history. It is critical that you develop questions that guide you towards a well-reasoned and well-supported conclusion. A good starting point here is to ask what you would like to know about the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and perhaps develop a mind map from that question.

Explanation and communication

When you are dealing with a contested topic such as the bombing of Pearl Harbor, it is critical that you provide evidence and examples to support your interpretation. When communicating your findings, it will be essential to plan a method that makes it very clear that you have conducted sufficient research to show you understand the significance of your sources.

Analysis and use of sources

It is vital that you examine carefully the origin and intent of the sources you are using to develop your own interpretation.

LEARNING GOALS

- > Understand the nature of contestability in history.
- > Identify the different historical interpretations of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the reasons for them.
- > Discuss the contested interpretations of Pearl Harbor and assess their validity.

2.1 Introduction

■ **Allied Powers**
the coalition of countries in opposition to the Axis powers in the Second World War; they included Britain, the Commonwealth and France, which were joined by the United States and the Soviet Union in 1941

■ **Axis Powers**
the coalition of countries in opposition to the Allied powers in the Second World War; they included Germany, Italy and Japan

■ **capitalism**
an economic system in which businesses and industry are run for profit by private owners, rather than run by the government

As a student of history, you analyse and evaluate contested interpretations and representations of the past. This implies that historians will not always agree on why events occurred, or what those events mean. History is often contested, with differing historical interpretations around any given event. This is the case with the Japanese attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, during the Second World War.

Japan's surprise attack on the US Navy's 7th Fleet on 7 December 1941 was a defining moment in twentieth-century history. The event triggered a dramatic response from the US Government and a change in the United States' view of its place and role in the world. Before Pearl Harbor, the United States had stood apart from the conflict between the **Allied Powers** and the **Axis Powers** that had been ongoing in theatres of war in Europe and North Africa since 1939. It was Pearl Harbor that led the United States into the Second World War, moving it away from a position of isolation from world affairs to the position it has held since after the war, the role of international leader of the Western, **capitalist** world.

In this chapter, we will use the bombing of the US naval base at Pearl Harbor to illustrate why it is important to examine contested interpretations, and the sources and evidence they are based on, before coming to a conclusion. As you examine the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the events that followed as a result, you will confront a range of viewpoints and interpretations. From these you will develop your own interpretation, using sources and evidence to support you through the process.



SOURCE 1 An aerial view of the U.S.S. *Arizona* Memorial, Pearl Harbor, with the sunken battleship just visible under the surface

Understanding the context: the background to Pearl Harbor

The Japanese economy had suffered during the **Great Depression** in the 1930s, and its industries lacked key resources, such as oil and rubber. Japan's invasion of China in 1937 was seen as an immediate solution to these problems. In 1940, Japanese Prime Minister Yosuke Matsuoka had announced the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, with the idea of creating a bloc of Japanese-occupied Asian nations that were free of Western influence. If realised, the scheme would have replaced Western imperialism with Japanese imperialism, allowing Japan to access resources from the Asian countries they would dominate.

These expansionist policies reflected the rise to power of aggressive military leaders in Japan. The most significant of these was Hideki Tojo, a general who became prime minister in October 1941. It was he who ordered the attack on Pearl Harbor. As prime minister until July 1944, Tojo led Japan through most of the Second World War.

In response to Japan's invasion of China, the United States had imposed **economic sanctions** on Japan in 1939. Britain also joined the economic blockade of Japan. If the sanctions had continued, Japan would run out of resources by 1942. Most critically for Japan, a shortage of oil was a serious threat in a world where oil had emerged as the fuel needed to drive both industry and the military.

The military leaders who dominated Japanese politics resented what they saw as Western interference in their country's right to secure their future through expansion. Against this background, a high-stakes attack on the United States seemed a realistic approach for the Japanese. The government believed that a decisive surprise attack on a key asset such as Pearl Harbor might prevent the United States from engaging in the war, and force it to drop economic sanctions that were slowly depleting the country.

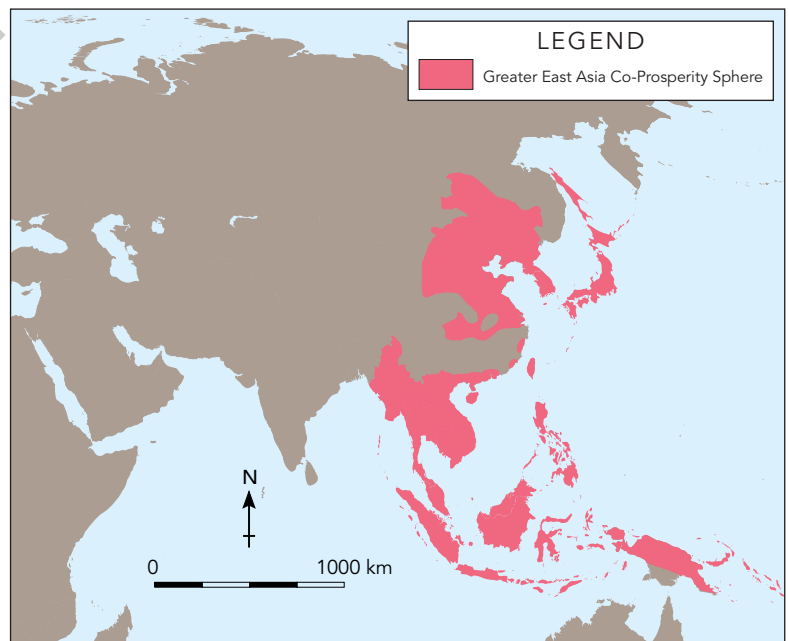
■ **Great Depression**
a period of severe economic downturn that began in the United States and quickly spread around the world during the 1930s and 40s

■ **economic sanctions**
restrictions on trade



SOURCE 2 Hideki Tojo, Prime Minister of Japan, 1941–44

THE PROPOSED GREATER EAST ASIA CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE, 1940



SOURCE 3 This 1940 map shows the proposed nations that Japan intended would comprise its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

But how would the United States respond to such an attack? The major risk was that Japan was unsure whether it could defeat the United States in a full-scale military confrontation. If the attack on Pearl Harbor succeeded in keeping the United States out of the war, it would be a success. If the United States chose instead to go to war, it could lead to Japan's defeat. It is unthinkable that Japan's leaders would have contemplated Pearl Harbor if they could have foreseen the catastrophic impact of the atomic bombs dropped by the United States on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. History, however, has to reject hindsight, and interpret decisions that were made at the time. Japan's decision to attack Pearl Harbor would have an impact on history throughout the Asia-Pacific region, as well as globally.

One of the many sources historians can access to help them understand the context of Pearl Harbor is the work of Ikezaki Tadataka, a Japanese civilian writer on military affairs. In 1929 he commented: 'It is well known that Japan's over-population grows more serious every year. Where should we find an outlet for these millions?' Tadataka went on to say that the Western powers had already divided up the world but the Asian mainland remained, and that Japan had a claim to the region 'written in the blood and treasure of two wars', referring to the wars that Japan had fought against China in 1894–95 and against Russia in 1904–05.

In trying to understand the historical context of Japan's decision to bomb Pearl Harbor, it can be valuable to examine its tactics in its first war with a Western power: the Russo-Japanese War. In 1904, a Japanese squadron of warships attacked the Russian naval base at Port Arthur (in Kiaodong Province, China), without warning and without any declaration of war. In December 1941, the Japanese – again without warning or declaration of war – attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbor.

SOURCE 4

Russo-Japanese War (1904–05)

An important conflict over control of Manchuria and Korea. The Japanese launched a surprise attack on Russian warships at anchor in the naval base of Port Arthur ... without declaring war ... Port Arthur fell to the Japanese ... The Russian Baltic fleet sailed 28 000 km from its base in the East China Sea, only to be destroyed in the Tsushima Straits by the Japanese fleet ...

Edmund Wright (ed.), *The Desk Encyclopedia of World History*, 2006, p. 556

2.1 Understanding and using the sources

- 1 How can Source 3 help you understand the threat Japan presented to Australia in the period before and during the Second World War?
- 2 In what way could Source 4 be used as evidence by a historian investigating the reasons for the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

2.1 Check your learning

- 1 Explain what is meant by the concept of contestability in history.
 - 2 Name two key resources that Japan was concerned about accessing during the Great Depression.
 - 3 What was the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere?
 - 4 Who was Hideki Tojo?
 - 5 Which Japanese military action provided a precedent for the attack on Pearl Harbor?
-

2.2

The attack at Pearl Harbor

Just before eight o'clock in the morning of Sunday, 7 December 1941, Japan launched the first of two waves of attacks on the US naval base. In the first wave, 183 Imperial Japanese Navy aircrafts bombed US aircraft parked in their hangars, as well as warships moored at the base. These included the battleship U.S.S. *Arizona*.

The *Arizona* exploded and sank after a bomb hit its gunpowder stores, resulting in the death of more than a thousand of its crew. It was the only ship from the attack that could not be salvaged. Today, a white memorial on the surface above where it sank is one of the most visible markers of the attack (see Source 1).



SOURCE 5 The U.S.S. *Arizona* explodes and sinks after a Japanese air strike hits its gunpowder stores

The second wave of attacks followed 90 minutes later, with the arrival of an additional 170 Japanese planes.

When the attack on Pearl Harbor was over, 18 American warships had been damaged or sunk and 2403 Americans had lost their lives.

There was, however, resistance during the two-hour attack. The US soldiers at the base mounted counter-attacks using anti-aircraft guns, and some US airmen were able to take to the skies, even as their airfield came under direct attack. The Japanese lost 29 aircraft, and 55 Japanese airmen were killed during the attack.



SOURCE 6 The scene from the airfield as the US naval destroyer U.S.S. *Shaw* explodes during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

News and images of the shocking attack quickly appeared in newspapers and in film bulletins, and it seemed that American naval power in the Pacific had suffered a debilitating blow. However, the situation was not as bad as it first appeared. This was due partly to an element of chance, and partly to what proved to be poor decision making by the commander of the Japanese attack, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo. Nagumo decided against launching a third wave of attacks because he did not know the location of the US aircraft carriers and feared a counter-attack by US carrier-based aircraft. The initial waves of Japanese invaders had also suffered more casualties than they had anticipated, because of the retaliation of the American forces. Nagumo reasoned that the strikes had done enough.

The following day, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war on Japan and, as a result, the United States entered into the Second World War on the side of the Allied Powers. Within six months of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the US Navy had rebuilt its strength. The United States led the resistance to Japan's expansion in two crucial sea battles: the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway (both 1942). America's ability to rapidly repair, rebuild and replace vessels lost at Pearl Harbor would prove to be crucial to the outcome of the Second World War.



SOURCE 7 Smoke rises from burning buildings at Pearl Harbor after the surprise attack by the Japanese.



SOURCE 8 An aerial view of Pearl Harbor, showing the damage inflicted by the bombing

2.2 Understanding and using the sources

- 1 Examine Sources 5, 6, 7 and 8. How could a historian use these sources to analyse whether the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was successful?
- 2 What conclusions do you draw about the attack's short-term success after examining the sources?

2.2 Check your learning

- 1 Argue for or against the idea that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was successful.
 - 2 Research the bombing of Pearl Harbor. List the major outcomes of the attack.
-

THE PEARL HARBOR ADVANCE-KNOWLEDGE CONSPIRACY THEORY

Ever since the attack on Pearl Harbor took place, a persistent conspiracy theory has suggested that President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the US Government were forewarned about the attacks, but did nothing to alert the field commander at Pearl Harbor. The reason for this, according to the theory, is that Roosevelt wanted a reason to bring the United States into the war and end American isolationism. Some go even further, to suggest that entering the Second World War had been the President's political aim all along. Considering that the country's entry into the war was a crucial step on the way to making the United States the superpower it is today, it is perhaps not surprising that this theory has had many supporters over the years.

As historians, it is crucial that we aim to find the source of the theories we study. The origin of the advance-knowledge theory can be traced back to a book published in September 1944 by John T. Flynn called *The Truth about Pearl Harbor*. Flynn was a journalist and a political opponent of Roosevelt. He was also a co-founder of the America First Committee, which wanted to keep the United States out of the Second World War.



SOURCE 9 The attack on Pearl Harbor was used for pro-war propaganda in the years that followed.



SOURCE 10 President Roosevelt, wearing a black armband, signs a declaration of war against Japan at 4.10 p.m. on 8 December 1941, the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, while Cabinet members watch with mixed emotions.

For an opposing view, historians can look to the 1996 article 'How Roosevelt attacked Japan at Pearl Harbor: Myth masquerading as history' by Robert Butow, Professor of Japanese History at the University of Washington. The article, which is available online through the American National Archives, directly challenges the conspiracy theory, relying on evidence to support its argument. It shows how historians use sources not only to arrive at reasoned interpretations, but also to challenge conspiracy theorists who develop interpretations without the critical analysis used by historians.

2.2 PROFILE TASKS

- 1 What is the main argument of the conspiracy theory regarding President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Pearl Harbor?
- 2 Research John T. Flynn. Does his background provide any evidence that could be used to challenge his theory as being biased? Discuss how his background could influence his work, using the evidence you have researched.
- 3 Read the article 'How Roosevelt attacked Japan at Pearl Harbor: Myth masquerading as history' online, and explain how it uses evidence to reach its conclusions.

2.3

How historians test hypotheses about the past

hypothesis
a proposed explanation for an event

Historians develop **hypotheses** as they search for explanations to help understand why events occur. This is called understanding causation. A hypothesis is not necessarily true, but if sufficient evidence is available to support it, it may become accepted. To assess the validity of any hypothesis, historians have to ask a range of historical questions and investigate sources and evidence, in order to see whether they support the hypothesis. This process is the backbone of history as a discipline, and is something you will become increasingly familiar with in your studies.

Developing hypotheses from historical questions

Source 11 shows examples of hypotheses that could be developed from historical questions regarding the attack on Pearl Harbor. These reflect the emergence of new approaches by historians to questioning the causes and consequences of the Japanese attack.

SOURCE 11

QUESTIONS	HYPOTHESES
Why was the attack as successful as it was?	The Americans were unprepared for the attack on Pearl Harbor.
Who was to blame for the Americans being taken by surprise?	The commander of the Japanese fleet, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, out-thought the commander of the US fleet, Admiral Husband E. Kimmel.
Was there a conspiracy?	Americans believed President Roosevelt invited the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.
Was the defeat, in fact, as bad as it first appeared?	The bombing of Pearl Harbor devastated the American fleet.
How has the attack been remembered?	Pearl Harbor is the most momentous event in American history.

Using sources to consider the advance-knowledge theory

To assess the validity of any of these hypotheses, it is essential that you conduct a close analysis of sources and evidence. As an example of how historians use primary sources to test hypotheses, consider the question of the advance-knowledge theory. Historians assessing the hypothesis that Roosevelt was inviting a Japanese attack in order to enter into the Second World War can access a collection of interviews held by the US Library of Congress.

Shortly after the attack, the Archive of American Folk Song (now the Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center) asked its fieldworkers to collect ‘man on the street’ reactions of ordinary Americans to the bombing and the subsequent declaration of war by the United States. A second series of interviews, called ‘Dear Mr President’, was recorded in January and February 1942. These interviews can be accessed online, giving historians and history students evidence of how ordinary Americans reacted to Pearl Harbor. Reviewing these will enable you to draw conclusions about whether such Americans were blaming President Roosevelt in the aftermath of the attack.



SOURCE 12 A Japanese photograph taken during the attack on Pearl Harbor

Problems associated with the evaluation of sources: authenticity, reliability and usefulness

The fact that historians rely on sources to interpret history does not mean that there is always consensus regarding the role and importance of any individual source. On the contrary, a group of historians could be placed in the same room with access to the same sources, and all could come up with different interpretations. The contested nature of topics such as the reasons behind Japan's decision to attack Pearl Harbor requires students to evaluate sources carefully by asking questions about their context, origin, audience and intention.

No one source will hold a complete answer, and sources are always open to interpretation. When developing your own conclusions, it is important that you understand the contested nature of history, and the need to always support your interpretation with reference to sources and evidence.

Japanese sources and perspectives

In trying to understand Japan's decision to bomb Pearl Harbor, it is important to consider Japanese sources and perspectives. One obvious problem for historians who are unable to read documents and books written in Japanese is the need to employ translators, if there is no English edition available.

In Ikezaki Tadataka's book from 1929, called *Why Fear the United States?*, the author argued that Japan had no reason to fear the United States, and that there was no scenario in which the United States could defeat Japan in a conflict. He particularly stressed the strength of the Japanese Navy as a decisive element. This becomes a valuable source for a historian investigating reasons for Japan's actions, but it would certainly require close evaluation to understand the sources Tadataka was using to build his opinions. A historian would be able to challenge Tadataka's assertions, and it is likely that relying on it as a source would lead to highly contested conclusions.

Censorship of sources

Many Western and Japanese academic historians have been critical about how Japanese high school textbooks during the 1960s and 70s recorded the history of the **Pacific War**. Even today the issue is contested. The most famous example was the censorship imposed by the Japanese Ministry of Education on textbooks written about the Pacific War. The details of the war were either ignored or presented in such a way that they absolved Japan of all guilt. Again, this creates problems for historians relying on those books as sources, and it also raises questions about potential bias or misunderstanding for students who were schooled using those books.

In 1953, Japanese historian Saburo Ienaga's book *The Pacific War 1931–1945: A Critical Perspective of Japan's Role in World War II* went against the trend of downplaying Japan's part in the war. His book became subject to strict censorship by the government's schoolbook authorisation system.

To this day, the Japanese Education Ministry maintains control over what can be included in history textbooks. In 2002 the ministry approved the publishing of the book *New History Textbook*, written by a group of right-wing scholars, which sought to downplay Japanese aggression and imperialism. This book was, however, rejected by over 99 per cent of Japanese schools.

■ **Pacific War**
the theatre of the Second World War, where the Allied Powers resisted the Japanese invasion of countries through the Pacific region and South-East Asia

SOURCE 13

I wrote this book to show the Japanese people the naked realities of the Pacific War. My objective was to stimulate reflection and self-criticism about the war.

Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War 1931–1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan's role in World War II*, 1978, p. xi



SOURCE 14 Did Australian Prime Minister William 'Billy' Hughes contribute to the attack on Pearl Harbor through his treatment of Japan at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919?

League of Nations an international organisation established at the end of the First World War to maintain world peace and prevent the outbreak of future wars by encouraging nations to negotiate with each other

contestation the process of disputing and debating different interpretations of sources by historians

Further historical perspectives about Pearl Harbor

Another perspective was provided by the American historian John W. Dower in his 1986 book, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*. Dower argued that both the Americans and the Japanese had used their sense of racial superiority to inform their ideas about the other power, and that these views helped explain the build-up to the attack on Pearl Harbor. After evaluating his sources, Dower described the Pacific War – including Pearl Harbor – as a 'race war'.

In a 2012 article in *The Australian* newspaper, titled '1930s couldn't happen again – could they?', Australian journalist Max Suich asked a question many historians may not have considered – did Australia contribute to the events that led to Pearl Harbor? Suich suggested that Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes' very public humiliation of the Japanese Government at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, may have helped sow the seeds that led to Pearl Harbor. Hughes was determined to resist Japan's call for racial equality to be recognised by the emerging **League of Nations**. His success left Japan distrustful of the power of the British Empire in the Asia–Pacific region, and Japan's solution was to develop the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (see Section 2.1). The fact that few historians have drawn connections between Hughes' actions in Paris and Pearl Harbor doesn't mean those connections do not exist.

2.3 Understanding and using the sources

- 1 Explain how Source 13 outlines the intentions of Saburo Ienaga in writing his book. Does this indicate bias?
- 2 Explain how Ienaga contests and challenges the viewpoint of Ikezaki Tadakata. Discuss how their **contestation** helps you understand the way historical interpretations change across time. Why do you think this particular interpretation has changed?
- 3 Tadakata's book *Why Fear the United States?* was written 12 years before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Discuss to what extent this might affect its validity as a source.

2.3 Check your learning

- 1 Explain how and why historians create hypotheses.
- 2 How could the 'man on the street' interviews collected by the Archive of American Folk Song assist historians to support or challenge the idea that there was a US Government conspiracy surrounding Pearl Harbor?
- 3 Outline the argument Max Suich makes regarding Australia's possible involvement in the attack on Pearl Harbor.
- 4 Explain why Ikezaki Tadakata's writings could be a useful source for historians investigating the bombing of Pearl Harbor.
- 5 Discuss why Saburo Ienaga would be regarded as a controversial figure in Japanese education. Would his views also be contested in the West?
- 6 What interpretation did John W. Dower develop to help explain Pearl Harbor?

2.4

The role of sources and evidence in the evaluation of different theories and remembrances of the past

Any historian is entitled to develop an original interpretation or theory about the past, but they must base their suggestions on sources and evidence. As a history student, it is important to train yourself to look for the sources and evidence that have been used whenever you investigate a historical opinion.

One contested area that could be investigated is the reasons why the attack on Pearl Harbor was so successful in the short term. Examination of Japanese sources might help a historian decide that Japan's planning and preparation was superior to America's. This would, however, be an unlikely conclusion for a historian relying only on American sources.

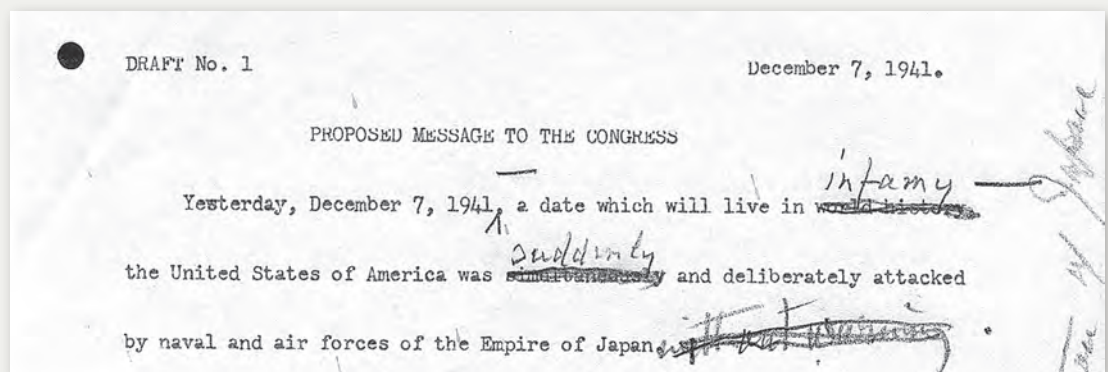
Pearl Harbor and the shaping of the American identity

Examining the draft and final copies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's speech to the US Congress about Pearl Harbor provides an insight into the way sources can be used to help shape versions of the past. In the typed draft of the speech that had been given to the President, the text read 'December 7, 1941, a date which will live in world history'. Roosevelt took his pen and crossed out the words 'world history' and wrote in 'infamy'.



SOURCE 15 A US postage stamp commemorating the attack on Pearl Harbor, c. 1995

This was the beginning of the creation in the American public memory of the idea and image of Pearl Harbor. For generations of Americans, the legacy, myth-making and iconography associated with Pearl Harbor is similar to how Australians have viewed and represented Gallipoli and Anzac Day. This is not to deny the importance of the event, its historical implications and the tragedy of the loss of life. Nevertheless, Pearl Harbor has been used for propaganda and a range of political and nation-building purposes. Roosevelt and presidents after him have used Pearl Harbor to create a version of the American national identity. The historian's role is to use sources to evaluate this version and arrive at a valid interpretation.



SOURCE 16 An excerpt from the first draft of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's proposed message to the US Congress, with his handwritten corrections

The portrayal of Pearl Harbor in films

There have been two feature-length motion pictures made specifically about the attack on Pearl Harbor. The first, *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, was released in 1970 (in Japanese, 'tora' means 'tiger', which was the code name for the attack). This Japanese-American film, which was co-directed by one American and two Japanese directors, went to great lengths to deal with the details of the attack from both sides. The primary focus of the film was, however, the shortcomings of the US commanders at Pearl Harbor: Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and General Walter Short.

The second film about the attack was the 2001 Hollywood blockbuster *Pearl Harbor*, starring Ben Affleck, which received harsh criticism from survivors of the attack as being grossly inaccurate. One of the main historical inaccuracies is a scene in which the Japanese bombers deliberately target hospitals. In reality, this did not happen. Although a local medical centre was affected by the attack, resulting in one American casualty, there was no deliberate targeting of hospitals or medical centres by Japanese pilots.

When watching films that feature actual historic events, it is sometimes easy to forget that their main function is to entertain, and not to give a scene-by-scene accurate account. But as a student of history, it is important not only to challenge these often simplified versions of history, but also to question the intention behind them. In the case of *Pearl Harbor*, director Michael Bay clearly sets out to **vilify** the Japanese. It is up to you to consider the reasons for this, and what the impacts could be on the audience's understanding of the events.



■ **vilify**
to make abusive statements about a person or people, so that others will have a lower opinion of them



SOURCE 17 A film still from the motion picture *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970)



SOURCE 18 A promotional image for the motion picture *Pearl Harbor* (2001)

Pearl Harbor memorial

The famous US Pearl Harbor memorial – the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument – is, like these feature films, an example of how history is constructed. Until 1999, the centrepiece of the site was the glistening white U.S.S. *Arizona* Memorial, above the sunken battleship. This site is the resting place of more than a thousand American servicemen who died in the attack and is an official US war grave site. As such, it is a place treated with appropriate reverence.

In 1999, the *Arizona* was joined at the site by the U.S.S. *Missouri*. The *Missouri* had served with distinction in the Second World War, the Korean War, and Operation Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf. It is arguably most famous for being the location of the formal Japanese surrender that ended the Second World War. The official explanation for bringing the *Missouri* to Pearl Harbor was that the two warships represented the beginning and the end of the war. This is true, but – as is always the case with history – there is more to it. The *Arizona* represented an American defeat; while the *Missouri* reminds visitors of American power and the ultimate American victory.

Even for historians, it is easy to accept the official story of memorials and museums. However, the key to sound historical thinking is a willingness to recognise that there are always contested versions of every historical event.



SOURCE 19 The *Missouri* arrives at Pearl Harbor to join the *Arizona* at the Pearl Harbor memorial site.

2.4 Understanding and using the sources

- 1 Examine Sources 17 and 18. Explain what each seems to imply about the film interpretations of Pearl Harbor.
- 2 Analyse Source 19. Does it provide evidence to support or challenge the assertion that the *Missouri* was placed at the Pearl Harbor memorial site to convey an image of American strength, power and victory? Explain your answer.
- 3 Explain how Source 20 (next page) could be used as evidence of the ongoing significance of Pearl Harbor for Americans.

2.4 Check your learning

- 1 Discuss the significance of President Franklin D. Roosevelt changing 'world history' to 'infamy' in his speech to the US Congress.
 - 2 Research reviews and comments on the films *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) and *Pearl Harbor* (2001). Discuss whether there is anything that would encourage you to rely on either film for historical understanding.
 - 3 Discuss the possible reasons behind the *Missouri* joining the *Arizona* at the Pearl Harbor memorial site. What explanation or explanations do you find most plausible?
-

As President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his speech to the US Congress, 7 December 1941 is 'a date which will live on in infamy'. There are a range of perspectives and interpretations about what the significance of that date actually is. For some, it represents an unprovoked attack that cost the lives of innocent people; for others, it was a desperate attempt to guarantee a future for their country. Still others will argue it was the event that brought the United States firmly into a position of world leadership.

Historical interpretations are always contestable, and rely on facts, sources and evidence to support them. This chapter has introduced you to some of the views of Pearl Harbor that have been debated in the years since it occurred. You may accept some and reject others. In history, the important thing is to always rely on the evidence to help you come to a valid conclusion.



SOURCE 20 US President Barack Obama visits the U.S.S. *Arizona* Memorial at Pearl Harbor in 2011.



FOR THE TEACHER

Check your obook assess for the following additional resources for this chapter:

Answers

Answers to each *Check your learning*, *Understanding and using the sources* and *Profile* task in this chapter

Teacher notes

Useful notes and advice for teaching this chapter, including syllabus connections and relevant weblinks

Class test

Comprehensive test to review students' skills and knowledge

assess quiz

Interactive auto-correcting multiple-choice quiz to test student comprehension