

Teachers' Notes

Socks, Sandbags & Leeches: Letters to my Anzac Dad

by Pauline Deeves



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The Story

This book consists of fictional letters from a character, Ivy, who is 11 years old at the beginning of World War I. The illustrations make use of original documents, photographs, ephemera, artworks and realia from the vast collection of the National Library of Australia.

The book explores the economic and social conditions that faced families whose men had gone to war. It reveals the political divisions, anxiety and deprivation prevalent at that time. It focuses on the massive contribution of schoolchildren who were co-opted into the war effort, whether they liked it or not. Their generous and energetic response deserves to be remembered.

Science and Technology—Kitchen Audit

Research the history of electrical appliances, dry cell batteries and synthetic plastics.

- What items from Ivy's time are still used in kitchens today?
- What items from Ivy's time are not used in kitchens anymore?
- What items would have been used instead?

Dilemmas and Debates

- The book refers to the conscription referendum. Read the poems *The Blood Vote* (page 60) and *A Mother's Lament* (page 63).
 - What arguments does each poem use to support its position?
 - How would you have voted in the referendum?
 - Design a poster to promote your position.

- In the book, Ivy's neighbour hides a deserter. This could have resulted in a heavy fine or even a jail sentence.
 - Could you be persuaded to hide a deserter who was a member of your family? Why or why not?
- During World War I, food became scarce and more expensive. Gangs of thieves stole animals from farmers and offered the meat at reduced prices.
 - If you were hungry and could not afford meat from the butcher, would you buy stolen meat? Why or why not?

Community Involvement

- In the book, the students spend most of their leisure time doing war work. They sew sandbags, catch leeches and knit socks.
 - Is there an organisation in your community asking for donations of warm clothes for disadvantaged people? Would you be able to donate any items?
- Research the organisation called Legacy.
 - When was it founded?
 - What do Legacy's volunteers do in your community?

Community History

- Towards the end of World War I, citizens all over Australia raised money to erect war memorials. Some people wanted statues, arches and obelisks while others opted for more practical projects like hospitals, halls and pools. What would you have chosen?
- Find and photograph war memorials in your district? Research their history. Can you recognise any names on the memorials?

Creative Responses

- At the beginning of the book, Ivy is about 11 years old. Someone born at this time was likely to have lived until the 1960s. Write a letter to 12-year-old Ivy and tell her how your life differs from hers.
- Choose a poster from the book such as *Buy War Bonds* (page 59) or *Spanish Influenza* (page 84) and use modern design ideas to convey the same message.

Family History

- If members of your family served in the Armed Forces during World War I you can obtain details of their service from the Australian War Memorial website at <https://www.awm.gov.au/>.
- Did your family live outside Australia at this time? Research conditions in their homeland.