

Getting your students ready for Category One

Extended Writing in Response to Historical Evidence.

Michelle Brown

Like many people, I find this much more difficult to teach students than an essay in Senior English. I personally believe that this essay is more complex for students because of the need to show how the evidence in the sources provided has been critically analysed. The credentialing and interrogation of sources is an extra layer that many students will not have been taught in their English classes, and some times not in Year Ten SOSE/History classes either. Thus, the first attempt a student makes at the Category One task needs to be scaffolded and practised.

In previous journals, I have included a sample student essay [which I added to] to assist students deconstruct a Category One essay. Attached to this preface are two activities that I have used in the past to assist students in their preparation for their first Category One task. As you can see from the first handout – the Anzac task - my main goal is to get the students to consider the evidence provided as a whole, to compare and contrast sources and to begin to consider the basic process of analysis and hypothesis forming –based upon the evidence at hand – *not what might be in their heart*.

In the second task - the Curtin debate - the skills of analysis are being honed more finely.

In each case, my students were all fired up with the emotion of the debates created in class before these activities. After completing the debates in class, they were then given written evidence to formally respond to. The aim of this procedure is to bring home the point that the essay I want is an objective discussion, not the subjective discussion students are prone to give when it is about their own country. It is a bit of a pain to mark a lot of practice work in the lead up to essays. But I and my students feel less pressured at exam time if practices are spread across the inquiry process. Also, students should not be assessed upon something which they have not practised before the exam; much as they like to think they have a handle on things, invariably they don't. Nothing signals 'Oops! I need to work on my criteria two analysis in my essay!' more than receiving back practice work - done in complacent innocence - covered with teacher comments and advice.

Year 11 Modern History

Theme 12: National History

Voices of the Nation



Getting ready for the response to stimulus essay.

Keep in mind that this test is all about:

- 📖 Developing argument based upon the *evidence provided in the sources*
- 📖 Framing that argument in a logically organised format: *essay*
- 📖 *Critically* analysing those sources for or against an argument.
- 📖 *Using a variety* of the sources provided.

Step One: Critically analysing the sources [C2]

Read the sources provided:

Freudenberg, G., (2006), “Anzac story still evolving”, Courier Mail, April, 26.

1. What point is the author trying to make about the Anzac story and its importance to Australian history? How do you know-find a quote
2. What values and perspectives is the author trying to position the audience to accept? How do you know-find a quote
3. What type of source- primary or secondary? How does this affect its meaning?
4. What type of history? How does it affect its meaning?
5. What information do we have about the author –does this help us decide whether to trust his information or not??
6. Does the information in the source confirm or contradict what you have been taught in class? How?

Now look at Crotty from the 2004 test:

Crotty, Dr. M., (2004), “Learn from sacred day” Courier Mail 23 April, p.19

Anzac day undoubtedly is our most sacred national day. The dawn service, parades and speeches that will mark Sunday are part of a long tradition of commemoration stretching back to when Australians first read the breathless dispatches of how Anzac troops had acquitted themselves so mightily on the day of the landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915. The main outlines of the legend, particularly as it relates to Australia’s involvement in World War One are familiar to most. Strapping Australian men, mainly from the bush, downed farm implements and rushed enthusiastically to the call to arms. Their bush backgrounds, uniquely egalitarian outlook on life and strong sense of mateship made them especially fine soldiers...

Many of the “facts” of such a story break down on closer examination. We know now that only a minority of Anzacs came from the bush, that enlistment was initially slow, and that the egalitarianism and mateship of Australian soldiers is an overplayed quality. We know, too, that the German armies Australians helped defeat in 1918 were at the point of exhaustion anyway, and that far from giving birth to the Australian nation, World War One just about tore it apart with vicious class, ideological and ethnic divisions that lingered long afterwards.

The idealised Anzac story suited the propaganda needs of the time (particularly with regards to recruiting), it reflected contemporary ideas of national identity, it comforted those waiting for loved ones to return and it gave the war a sense of higher moral purpose...the Anzac legend gave some much needed solace to those who had lost friends and relatives and it soothed physically and psychologically wounded veterans by making them national heroes.

Nearly 90 years on, however, such stories seem increasingly anachronistic and out of place with the needs of modern Australia. Anzac celebrates white men performing the impossible feat of giving birth to a nation; and downplays the roles women, indigenous people, non-Caucasian migrants and others have played in building Australia...Given the extent of human sacrifice [in the wars in which we have played a part], it's hard not to be awed, overcome and emotionally caught up in the folly of it all. Very real people died very real deaths, in very horrible circumstances – and very real wives, sons, daughters, parents and friends shed very real tears in their grief. This shouldn't cause us to boast or repeat old inanities...Anzac should not be demolished piece by piece by merciless historians bent on exposing the facts, and nothing but the facts and destroying all emotion in the process.

But equally, uncritical acceptance of the legend and some of its cruder distortions is of little use. The best way to honour the sacrifice of the Australian fallen is to get it right: for if we are honest from the past we can learn from it...

- 📖 Answer the same questions for Crothy's article that you did for Freudenberg
- 📖 Also compare and contrast the view points – where do the articles agree? Where do they disagree?
- 📖 How do you think Australia's involvement in Iraq has shaped these two people's opinions- find a quote to validate your decision.

Consider the C3 result-

- 📖 Using both sources combined what have been the changes in relation to the Anzac legend? Why have those changes taken place do you think? Are these changes positive or negative? Why?
- 📖 What are the continuities indicated? Are these positive or negative? Why? Why have these things remained constant? What does this say about us as a nation?

Year 11 Modern History

Voices of the Nation

Contesting History: The John Curtin debate



Hero or appeaser?

It is my contention as your history teacher that what makes Australian history different from other countries is the manner in which it is politicised. The ALP and the conservative parties [Liberal-National]s have tended to politicise discussions about certain events in Australia's history. The most recent debate [2006] about John Curtin is a good example of this. In class, we have discussed Curtin's actions from the perspective of whether he was correct and/or brave to announce a shifting of a defence allegiance to the USA. We have talked about whether it was necessary given the strategic considerations at play during that event.

Read the following articles:

Hopkins, R., (2005), "John Curtin: Australians All?", unpublished National History Challenge entry.

Wurth, B., (2006) "A Hero or Appeaser?" The Australian, 27th April

Colebatch, H.G.P. (2006), "Could Curtin have been so blind?" The Australian, 28th April

Downer, A., (2006), "Labor has a history of blind pacifism" The Australian, 2nd May.

For a beginning practice for your essay test you will need to decide to what extent it is true that Curtin could be labelled a war-time hero. To make a good decision you need to do a thorough analysis of the sources. For the first time you will get a table to fill out as a means of training you in that type of thinking. Fill out the table and decide for yourself -based upon the evidence provided

Write up your decision in a properly structured and properly referenced paragraph.

Analysis advice	Hopkins	Wurth	Colebatch	Downer.
What is the writer's main message about John Curtin? What is implied about Curtin within the message which is not explicitly stated?				
What evidence does the writer offer? Is this information accurate? How do you know? [is it a trustworthy source, corroboration with other sources & classwork]				

<p>How reliable is the source?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Perspective ☒ Bias –reason to exaggerate &/or distort the truth ☒ Gaps & silences? ☒ Positioning of the audience via language techniques e.g. emotional words 				
<p>Does the author use current events to shape his/her argument? Is there a hidden agenda behind this?</p>				
<p>Type of history/source</p>				
<p>Does the author complement/contradict; challenge or revise the other authors? If another perspective have been mentioned has that been represented fairly??</p>				

About the author

Michelle Brown teaches at Albany Creek SHS and regularly presents conference workshops based on her classroom work.