

Zero Hour

The Anzacs on the Western front

Leon Davidson

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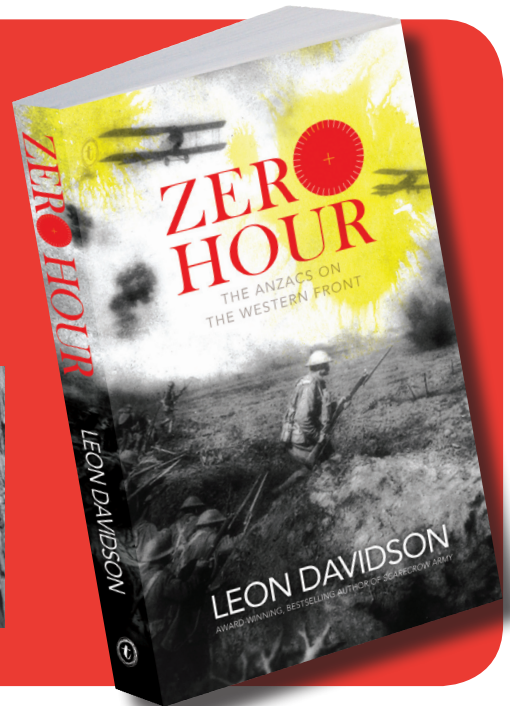
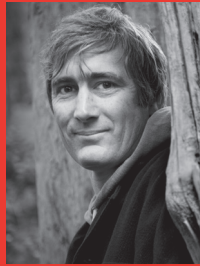
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Fiction, B+ paperback

Recommended for Lower/Mid Secondary

Resource Kit Contains

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Synopsis

One of the first photographs in *Zero Hour* is of a row of soldiers of the 45th Battalion wearing gasmasks in a trench in the Ypres sector. Photographs such as these, combined with Davidson's vivid descriptions of the Western Front, force the reader into a world that is frightening and very real. The history in this book will surround students: they will see, hear, taste and touch it. *Zero Hour* is a great book to use as part of a classroom study on World War I.

The book focuses on the Anzac experience on the Western Front. It's perfect for Years 9 and 10 students. Davidson gives an overview of the causes of the war and the major battles and campaigns. He writes in depth on those that involved the Anzacs. There are debates here that will fire discussion: the role of commanders, the vulnerability of soldiers, punishments and the terrible conditions in the trenches. Davidson clearly conveys the size of this war. He provides students with information to complement their knowledge of events in Gallipoli.

One of the real strengths of *Zero Hour* is the attention given to the soldiers' personal stories. From the mass of deaths (over 10 million people in total) Davidson pulls out the fine threads of those lives that were lost.

Students will also read about the reasons why Australia and New Zealand became involved in the conflict and how the war in Europe impacted on the home front. There is a particularly interesting section on how New Zealand reacted to the issue of conscription and the consequences of this for the Maori population.

The reference section contains a list of websites that will take students to primary sources. They can view photographs, footage and propaganda posters. These provide opportunities for students to assess bias in historical resources. Davidson lays his bias out in the

introduction and this is an excellent way of introducing students to the idea that all histories must leave gaps.

Zero Hour is an important text, and one that allows students to develop their historical knowledge and understanding, their historical reasoning and interpretation.

Teacher note: all graphic organisers mentioned in these notes can be found on the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority website.

About the author

Leon Davidson grew up in Christchurch on a diet of Second World War comics and movies. He lived overseas for 10 years, mainly in Melbourne, and now works as a primary school teacher in Wellington. His previous books are *Scarecrow Army: the Anzacs at Gallipoli* and *Red Haze: Australians & New Zealanders in Vietnam*.

ACTIVITES

Pre-reading Activities

Find the meaning of the words/concepts listed below. Create a glossary page in your notebook to record your definitions.

- The Western Front
- Central Powers
- Allies
- Anzac
- Primary source
- Secondary source
- Origin

- Context
- Bias

Trace or photocopy a map of Europe in 1914. Make sure that your map has a border, title, northing, key and scale. As you progress through the topic, add information to your map and key.

Form pairs to brainstorm what you know about WW1 in general, and what you know specifically about the involvement of Australians and New Zealanders on the Western Front. Make a list of at least five things that you would like to learn about this subject. Record your answers in the first two columns of a K-W-L-H organiser with the following headings.

- What do you **k**now about the subject?
- What do you **w**ant to learn about the subject?
- What have you **l**earned about the subject?
- **H**ow did you learn it?

As you progress through the notes, add to the third and fourth rows of the K-W-L-H organiser.

As a class, discuss the questions listed below.

- Did you obtain your information about WW1 from primary or secondary resources? Give some examples to illustrate your answer.
- Much of the information we have about history comes from films. Discuss the ways in which films can sometimes be unreliable sources.
- There is a range of primary and secondary resources in *Zero Hour*. What do you consider to be the advantages/disadvantages of primary sources? What do you consider to be the advantages/disadvantages of secondary sources?

Throughout *Zero Hour* you will read about soldiers fighting in terrible conditions. You will read about male and female medical staff putting their lives at risk to help them. Some of the men and women would have been only a little older than you are now. As a class, respond to the questions below.

- If you had to go to war, what things would you miss the most?
- What would be your greatest fear?
- Would you be excited about anything? If so, what?
- Do you believe men and women have a duty to defend their country?
- Do you believe that people have the right to refuse to go to war?
- What things, if any, are worth fighting for?
- What things are not worth fighting for?
- Should women be allowed to fight? Why/why not?
- In what ways do you think your answers would differ from that of a soldier in 1914? In what ways do you think your answers would be similar?

- How do you account for these similarities and differences?

In pairs, analyse one photograph from *Zero Hour*. Use the questions below to guide your analysis. Share your findings with the class.

- What is the origin and source of the photograph?
- In what ways is the photograph a reliable source?
- In what ways is it unreliable? (Photographers make choices, like writers and filmmakers. What is included? What is left out? How are you meant to feel when you look at the shot?)
- Based on your photograph, what predictions can you make about the war? (You might consider weapons, the nature of fighting, the problems soldiers faced, the number of deaths and the impact of war on the landscape.)

As a class, discuss the cover of *Zero Hour*. It is a composite page. Two photos were put together to make it appear more dramatic.

- What do you learn about the war, based on this cover?
- Do you think it is a reliable source? Give reasons to support your opinion.

READING ACTIVITIES

Causes of World War I

Find the meaning of the words/concepts listed below. Record the meanings on your glossary page.

- Empire
- Nationalists
- Treaty
- Alliance system
- Neutral countries

Re-read the section '1914' on page 8 of *Zero Hour* and complete the following activities.

- What event triggered World War I?
- In pairs, investigate the causes and effects of the assassination. Remember to record the bibliographical details of all sources used. Record your notes on a cause and effect table with the following headings:
Causes of the assassination/Effects of the assassination
- Design a chart or diagram to represent how the alliance system brought nations into the war.
- On your map of Europe, use symbols or colours to represent the Allies, Central Powers and neutral countries at the outbreak of World War I.

The Schlieffen Plan

Re-read the section 'The Schlieffen Plan' on page 9 of *Zero Hour* and answer the following questions.

- What was the Schlieffen plan?
- How did the plan lead to Britain declaring war on Germany?
- How did the French, British and Belgian armies thwart the plan?
- Use symbols to represent the plan on your map of Europe.

To view an animated map of the Western Front, including an explanation of the Schlieffen Plan visit: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/interactive/animations/western_front/index_embed.shtml

Reactions to war in Australia and New Zealand

Re-read the sections 'God Save the King' and 'The Contemptibles' on pages 9 to 12 of *Zero Hour* and complete the following activities.

- Use a spider map to brainstorm the reasons why men volunteered for war.
- Use the information on your spider map to write the journal entry of a young Australian man. Outline his reasons for joining the war effort.

Western Front Campaigns and Battles

Find the meaning of the words/concepts listed below. Record the meanings on your glossary page.

- Anzacs
- Division
- Section
- Platoon
- Company
- Battalion
- Infantry brigade
- Corps
- Army
- Trench warfare

Create a diagram to represent the Australian and New Zealand divisions of I Anzac corps and II Anzac corps.

Trench Warfare

Study the maps of the Western Front on pages vi and vii of *Zero Hour*. Re-read the sections 'Digging to Live' and 'The Lines Form' in chapter one.

- Mark on your map of Europe the Western Front in 1914 and 1918.
- Use the key to determine the length of the Western Front at the beginning and end of the war.
- In four years, how much ground was gained?

- How many lives were lost during the war, both civilian and military?

In a two column chart with the headings **Pros/Cons** list the positive and negative aspects of trench warfare.

Use *Zero Hour* and at least two other sources to research one of the battles/campaigns listed below. Presentations should occur in the order that the battles took place.

- Battle of Marne
- First Battle of Ypres
- Second Battle of Ypres
- Allied offensive at Loos
- Battle of Verdun
- Battle of the Somme
- Battle of Fromelles
- Battle for Pozières and Mouquet Farm
- Battle of Flers-Courcelette
- Battle of Arras
- First Battle of Bullecourt
- Second of Bullecourt
- Battle of Messines
- Third Battle of Ypres
- Battle of Menin Road
- Battle of Polygon Wood
- Battle of Broodseinde
- Battle of Poelcappelle
- Battle of Passchendaele
- Battle of Cambrai
- German Spring Offensive
- Allied Hundred Days Offensive
- Allied troops capture Mont St. Quentin and Péronne
- Battle of Havrincourt-Epehy
- Allied troops capture Montbrehain
- Last joint Allied offensive
- New Zealanders capture Le Quesnoy

Task 1: Mini Research Project

Your task is to prepare a PowerPoint presentation that informs the class about your campaign or battle. Your presentation must include:

- A map that clearly shows where your battle or campaign is located
- The date and duration of the battle or campaign
- An explanation of the aim of the battle or campaign
- A description of the event including fighting tactics

- Participants/Commanders
- Methods of communication
- Problems
- Losses/Gains (including ground and lives)
- Your assessment of the battle. Was it successful?
- A bibliography

Task 2: Analysis and Evaluation of Presentations

Your task is to take notes while students present their findings.

Mark the battle clearly on your map of Europe.

Draw a chart with the headings below and record notes about each presentation.

- Battle
- Date/Duration
- Aim
- Participants/Commanders
- Losses/Gains

Discussion Questions

- What comparisons can you draw between the battles/campaigns?
- What aspects do you find the most surprising?
- What is your opinion of the soldiers? Support your opinion with evidence.
- What is your opinion of the commanders? Support your opinion with evidence.
- What reasons can you give for the tension between the ranks in the army?
- Discuss General Haking's comments in the last paragraph of page 41. What do they indicate about his attitude? What do they indicate about the attitude of the army and governments towards the soldiers?

Re-read chapter eleven of *Zero Hour* and then view the footage taken at the Somme River, mentioned on page 188, at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bggGLzk6cQ>

Add to the third column of your K-W-L-H organiser. What have you learned so far about the social, economic and environmental impacts of World War I?

Air and Naval

Re-read the boxed information under the heading 'Troop Ships' on pages 14 and 15 of *Zero Hour*.

Complete the activities below.

- Draw symbols on your map of Europe to represent the convoy of Australian and New Zealand troopships and their escorts. Represent also, the SMS Emden.
- Why was the Emden the most hunted ship in the war?

- What information in this box is surprising? Why?

Use the index and timeline of *Zero Hour* to discover why America entered the war. How was it connected to German naval tactics?

Re-read the boxed information under the heading 'Pilots' on page 114 and 115 of *Zero Hour*. What dangers did the pilots face?

Use the index of *Zero Hour* to discover two more things about the role of aeroplanes in the war.

World War I Weapons

Use the index of *Zero Hour* and at least one other source to complete a chart with the following headings.

- Weapon
- Description of weapon
- How was it used in battle?
- Advantages
- Disadvantages

'The old world of steam engines and horse-drawn wagons was being replaced by new technology which enabled a war on a scale that had never been imagined before.' (p.3)

As a class, discuss this statement in relation to the weapons listed in your chart. In what ways did new technology alter the nature of war?

Private Hector McLeod considered fighting an enemy soldier nothing compared to the artillery fire, which was 'not war, it's absolute murder'. (p.64)

To what extent can the vast number of deaths be blamed on weaponry? What other things are to blame? Do you agree with McLeod that artillery fire was 'murder'? Is there such a thing as murder in war?

Trench Warfare Game

To play the 'Trench Warfare' game and test your knowledge of weapons and the difficulties the soldier's faced on the front-line visit:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/worldwarone/>

List three things that you have learned as a result of playing the game.

Virtual Mark I Tank

To explore a virtual Mark I tank visit:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/launch_ani_mark_one_tank.shtml

View the animation and answer five of the questions listed below.

- What was the maximum speed of a Mark I tank?
- How many people could it carry?
- What weapons did it carry?
- Was it successful in the aim to end the stalemate of trench warfare?

- What were the conditions like inside the Mark I tank?
- How did the occupants gain vision of the outside battle?
- How did the Germans attack the tanks?
- What sort of engine did the tank have? How was it started?
- What were the engine drawbacks?
- How did the soldiers drive the tank?
- How effective was the tank's armour?
- What were sponsons?
- What were the advantages and disadvantages of caterpillar tracks?

Life in the trenches

Find the meaning of the words/concepts listed below. Record the meanings on your glossary page.

- Communication saps
- Breastworks
- Sandbags
- Billets
- Duckboards
- Parapet
- Parapet Joe
- Fatigues
- Dugouts
- Estaminets

Use the index of *Zero Hour* to locate information about life in the trenches. Scan for information to complete a chart below on the soldier's experience in the trenches using the senses as headings:

See/Smell/Hear/Taste/Touch

To view more information on the trenches, including photographs, visit: www.awm.gov.au

To go on a virtual tour of a trench visit:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/launch_vt_wwone_trench.shtml

Add to your chart on the soldier's experience in the trenches.

Use your chart to answer the question posed by Australian Sergeant James Makin: What will the actual trenches be like? (p.25) Give Sergeant James Makin as much information as possible. Warn him about the things he will face. Draw a labelled diagram of the trenches to go with your explanation.

Provide Makin with an explanation of fatigues. Describe some of the good things that he might experience.

Discipline

Read pages 81 to 84 of *Zero Hour* and answer the questions below.

- What were some of the causes of discipline problems?
- Describe some of the common forms of punishment.
- What were the reactions of Australian soldiers to these punishments?
- What is your opinion of these punishments? Were they fair? Why/why not?
- Why were Australian soldiers seen as larrikins?
- Why was the Australian government afraid to give Australian officers permission to execute their soldiers?
- Imagine you are Major General Russell. Defend your decision to allow the execution of soldiers.
- Imagine you are a New Zealand soldier. Argue against the policy allowing executions.
- What does Major General Russell's attitude indicate about the values of this time period?
- Do you agree with the General's decision? Why or why not? Defend your opinion.
- In what ways is his decision a violation of human rights?
- What laws and institutions protect you from the problems that the soldiers faced in World War I?

Health

- Read the section 'Blighty' on pages 85 to 86 of *Zero Hour*
- What did getting a blighty mean?
- Describe the hospital conditions during the war.
- What impact did the war have on soldier's mental health?

Leave

- What was life in England like during the war?
- How did the soldiers on leave impact on civilians in London or Paris?

Australia and New Zealand home fronts

Find the meaning of the words/concepts listed below. Record the meanings on your glossary page.

- Conscription
- White feather
- Shirker
- War profiteering
- Ballot
- Conscientious objector
- Patriotic

Re-read chapter 6 of *Zero Hour* and complete the activities below.

How did the people at home in Australia and New Zealand support the war effort?

For the following headings discuss their meanings, the dominant value or expectation associated with them during the war and how these values/expectations may or may not have changed in modern times.

- White Feather
- Women's role in the war effort
- Racial conflict at home
- Conscription
- Pacifism

Conscription

Make a list of some organisations and or people that supported conscription in World War I.

Make a list of some organisations and or people that did not support conscription at this time.

Complete a table on the arguments for and against conscription at the time of World War I.

What is your opinion of conscription?

Propaganda

In pairs, locate one example of a World War I propaganda poster aimed at convincing soldiers to enlist. Analyse the persuasion techniques used and present your findings to the class.

Personal Stories

After reading *Zero Hour* you will be familiar with many personal stories of the soldiers that fought in World War I. As a class, discuss the impact of these personal references and stories. Why has the author chosen to include them? How does his view of war differ from those of the governments and generals that he writes about?

Go to the National Archives of Australian website www.naa.gov.au and view a scrapbook entry. You will be able to view the soldier's WWI service record and read the comments of a relative or friend. In some cases you will be able to see a photograph. Answer the following questions and share what you have found with one other person in the class.

- What is the name of the enlisted soldier?
- Where were they born?
- What was his service number?
- When did he join?
- Is he single?
- What is his trade?
- What other interesting things did you learn about this soldier?

Compare and contrast

Compare and contrast the subjects listed below.

- A soldier from the Allies and a German soldier.
- You and a young soldier in 1914 (see your statements in pre reading activities).
- An Indigenous soldier and a non-Indigenous soldier (see chapters 6 and 12).

Use a Venn diagram to help compare and contrast. For an explanation of how to use a Venn diagram visit: <http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/support/graphic/other.html#>

Returning home

Re-read chapter 12 of *Zero Hour*

'For many, returning home was harder than expected.' (p.202)

Create a PMI chart to explore this issue.

- Plus (Positive aspects of returning home)
- Minus (Negative aspects of returning home)
- Interesting (Aspects that caught your attention)

Outcomes

World War I was significant for a number of reasons. Re-read chapter 12 of *Zero Hour* and then complete a chart with the headings below.

- Events of World War I
- Short-term consequences
- Mid-term consequences
- Long-term consequences
- What have we learned?

ASSESSMENT TASK

Group Multimedia Presentation

Form groups and choose one of the tasks below. All groups must do the activities outlined below.

- Generate questions to guide the research.
- Complete a gantt chart that outlines the planning of the project. For an explanation of a gantt chart visit: <http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/support/graphic/other.html#gantt>.
- Submit a bibliography.

Topic A

You have been asked to give a speech and multimedia presentation to highlight the experiences of Australian and New Zealand soldiers that fought on the Western Front.

OR

Topic B

You have been asked to give a speech and multimedia presentation to highlight the contribution of women to the World War I war effort.

OR

Topic C

You have been asked to give a speech and multimedia presentation to highlight the contribution of Indigenous people to the World War I war effort.

CLASS DISCUSSION/ROLE PLAY

Form pairs and decide on a role, either from the list below or one that you have negotiated with your teacher.

With your partner, generate three to five discussion questions about World War I. Ensure that at least some of your questions highlight significant issues or events that concern the role you have chosen.

You might like to use a question cube as a prompt. For template and explanation of a question cube visit: <http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/support/tla/question.html#>.

As a class, compile a list of questions on the board. Check to see that questions are not repeated.

Discuss and debate each question, remembering to argue from the perspective of the role that you have chosen.

Role suggestions:

- An Anzac soldier who enlisted voluntarily
- A New Zealand soldier who was conscripted
- An indigenous soldier
- A conscientious objector
- A mother who has lost all her sons in the war
- A mother who would not send her sons
- A mother who objects to conscription
- A father who supports conscription
- A soldier in the Battle of the Somme
- A soldier in the Battle of Fromelles

- Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig
- General Sir Richard Haking
- A soldier who witnessed an execution during the war
- A civilian from Germany after the war has ended
- A civilian from Belgium
- A peace protester living today
- A German soldier
- A British soldier

CONCLUSIONS

Look back at your K-W-L-H organiser. Make sure that you have completed all columns.

- Discuss what you have learned about the subject.
- Have you learned something about the topics listed in column 2?
- Look at column 3. As a class discuss how you learned things during this topic.