Shadowers of History
Commonwealth History Project
Manorvale Primary School, Werribee
The Shrine of Remembrance
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Background

Manorvale Primary School is situated on a bend in the Werribee River. It currently has a student population of approximately 550 students with multi-age classes in all units except for the Prep Department.

Integrated units of work are designed to take place over a two-year cycle. History is therefore a major focus in at least one unit per year especially in the Year 3 /4 and 5/6 Departments.

Integrated units are currently been modified to suit the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). Units include:

- Solid Rock Sacred Ground Aboriginal Australians
- Gold
- Exploring the Unknown Maritime and Inland Explorers
- The Gift of Years - ANZAC Day studies
- Werribee - Our Past and Our Future
- Australian Hall of Fame
- History of Australian Horse Racing.

Themes have been generally knowledge-based and designed to give the children understandings of the history of their country and a greater global understanding. This local and global knowledge will assist them with decision-making in their present lives by learning from the mistakes of the past.

History is taught within an integrated unit and use of the Thinking Curriculum has been a greater focus in recent years. Rich tasks have been introduced to engage the children in deeper research and use of the ‘Thinkers Keys’ have enabled the children to focus more deeply on specific issues that have arisen from their studies.

Multiple Intelligence or Bloom’s Taxonomy matrices have been used as a basis for children’s projects. The children are encouraged to tap into their preferred learning style.

Units are now being revisited and the discipline-based humanities topics will form the basis for planning over a two year cycle.

D.A.T.Ts are used to discover the children's prior knowledge, understanding and interest in specific History-based topics. Individual learning assignments using ICT are negotiated with each child or small group, and community links are encouraged.
About the host organisation

Date of visit: September 11th and 12th
Host Organisation: The Shrine of Remembrance
Education Officer: Marg Marcovic

The Shrine offers a variety of programs for Victorian students to develop understandings of Australian service history in war and peacekeeping.

Programs are designed to enhance values, civics and citizenship and for a specific learning focus.

The experience

My shadowing visit gave me the opportunity to view lessons across a range of Middle Years classes. I also had the opportunity to tour with the classes and participate in open-ended, thinking-based activities that really enhanced the children’s understandings.

Margaret and her team have designed a program that is not meant to scare, intimidate or cast racial slurs. Guns and other weapons are not evident and the focus is put on keywords such as sacrifice, courage and mateship.

There is a real emphasis on the importance of remembering the ultimate sacrifice, not the battle. The values of comradeship, honesty, respect and loyalty are reinforced in the children’s visit.

The hands-on focus incorporated discussion on contemporary and recent Remembrance Day songs. This proved to be a provocative discussion starter for the Middle Years classes.

The Early Years classes had a tour book that used Simpson and his donkey as friendly guides who explained the layout and significant sites at the Shrine in simple language.
New knowledge and practice

At the school, we have several History-based topics currently running. With the VELS, we have reintroduced a topic on Democracy and Decision Making.

We also intend to make use of local community resources and closely examine the growth and development of Werribee within an historical context.

My visit to the Shrine assisted me in my planning for our term four topic about the History of Space Exploration. The experience clearly showed me how elements of the Thinking Curriculum can be used to enhance understandings. This appeared to be far more motivating than bombarding the children with factual information.

My nephew (Ryan) and I were fortunate to receive a grant in 2006 to assist us to produce resources to enhance Middle Years students’ understandings of the War in the Pacific, specifically the Kokoda Track campaign.

My visit to the Shrine assisted us to make links not only with the Education Officer but also with members of the 39th Battalion who were at the forefront of the fighting in 1942. We intend to conduct interviews with surviving members of the 30th early in 2007.

Both my nephew and I have visited battlefields around the world and have walked the Kokoda Trail. We intent to produce similar learning kits for:

- the Western Front
- Gallipoli
- the Shaggy Ridge, Papua New Guinea
- the Burma Railway
- Changi, Singapore.

The Shrine experience has given us a wonderful opportunity to make links with History educators who can assist us in our endeavours to promote greater understandings of significant events in Australia’s history.

We’d be delighted to show you our fully published kit if you wish to see it. It will be trialled at our schools in early November.