

HMAS Sydney

The Mystery of Australia's Greatest Naval Disaster

By Mike Lefroy

Illustrated by Dean Jones

About the book

In HMAS Sydney The Mystery of Australia's Greatest Naval Disaster, Mark Lefroy recreates the battle between the HMAS Sydney II and the German raider Kormoran that led to the sinking of both ships on 19 November, 1941. 103 men from the Kormoran survived and were interned in Australian POW camps. Of the 645 Australian sailors, none survived. Wreckage of the ships was not found until 2008. It is still not certain how the Sydney II and its men were lost in such a way. Mark Lefroy creates a sense of danger and mystery in this book that will keep students engaged as they piece together the evidence. He also conveys a sense of the tragedy.

The break-out boxes and visual timeline clearly outline the progression of events that led to the discovery of the two wrecks. The photographs in the text, combined with the excellent website references, allow students to see, first hand, the people involved in this tragedy. The narrative style draws readers into the battle and gives the historical account immediacy. This text gives readers the chance to interact with history and to see the faces of the people involved in this disaster.

Rationale

Students should use the text and other sources to complete the tasks in these teacher notes. The activities are designed to engage students and provide a creative learning experience.

How to use

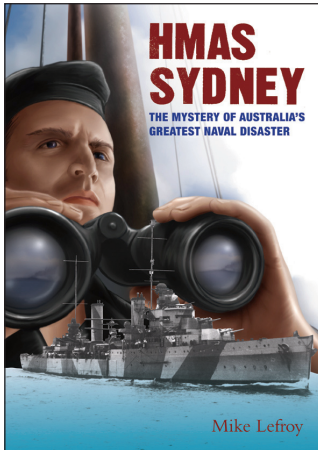
Learning activities suggested in one discipline may also be applicable to another discipline.

Readership

Mid primary to lower secondary students.

Genre: non-fiction, Australian history

Readership: Upper primary to lower secondary



Contents

Contact
German Raider
Open fire!
Any news?
The Kormoran survivors
The search for Sydney
The Finding Sydney expedition
Memories and memorials
There are things we still don't know
Visual timeline
Glossary
References
Index

Topics

- World War II
- Prisoner of War camps in Australia
- The Royal Australian Navy
- Rules of engagement at sea
- Naval communication systems
- Life at sea
- Ship weapons
- The Titanic
- Deepwater search technology
- War memorials

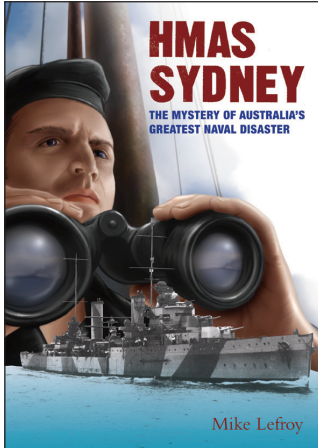
SOSE/HSIE

Draw a map of Australia.

- Mark in the states, territories and capital cities as we know them today. Include a border, title, northing, key and scale on your map.
- Mark in the surrounding oceans and seas.
- Mark in Shark Bay.
- On your map, represent the major events of the HMAS Sydney II and the Kormoran naval disaster. Include information from the search in 2008.

As a class, brainstorm what you know about the listed topics. You probably know more than you think about this time in Australia's history. Some of the class may have relatives who were directly impacted by the war.

In pairs, choose one of the topics listed below. Write five research questions about this topic and research your answers. Present your information to the class as a PowerPoint presentation.



- HMAS Sydney II naval history
- Weapons on ships during World War II
- Crews on ships/chain of command
- Dangers at sea (natural and man-made)
- The life of a sailor
- The life of a sailor's wife/family
- Daily life in Australia during World War II
- Australia's involvement in World War II
- British and German allies during World War II
- Morse Code
- Prisoner of War camps in Australia during World War II
- The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour
- Rules of wartime engagement
- Wartime tricks

Discussion Questions

- Discuss the reasons why cargo ships were attacked as a tactic of war.
- Discuss the rules of engagement for war as outlined in this text. Suggest reasons why there are rules to govern war.
- Discuss the 'war tricks' outlined in this text. Do you think they are fair? Why or why not?
- Discuss the impact of radio silence on the families waiting at home.
- Captain Detmers and some of his crew escaped on lifeboats after the battle. Discuss possible reasons why no one from HMAS Sydney II was found.
- On page 25 of the text, we read that Mrs Ursula Detmers, wife of Captain Detmers, wrote on the flyleaf of his book: 'Wars did much harm! May the mankind learn to keep always peace!' Discuss some reasons why conflict arises between individuals and between nations. Suggest ways in which conflicts can be resolved without war.

ENGLISH

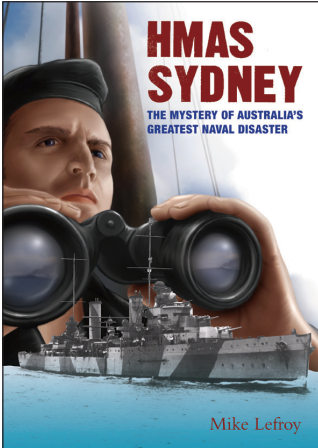
Reading and writing

View the photographs located at <http://www.sydney Memorial.com/Gallery.htm>

Write a personal account from the perspective of someone (or something) in one of these photographs. Possible accounts could include:

- A sailor on the day that he is leaving for sea
- A sailor in the middle of battle (German or Australian)
- The ship itself, as it engages in battle
- A member of a sailor's family on the day they hear about the disaster

On page 12 of the text you will see the front cover of The West Australian. Write the news report that goes with the headline: 'HMAS SYDNEY: THE SEARCH GOES ON'.



Speaking and listening

On the website <http://www.defence.gov.au/sydneyii/index.htm> find out when the next Commission of Inquiry into the Loss of HMAS Sydney II is scheduled to take place. In groups of five, create your own Commission of Inquiry and present this to the class. Call witnesses to support what you believe happened to the HMAS Sydney II. Witnesses could include historians, David Mearns, current Navy Officers or writers such as Mike Lefroy. You could present website information, documents and photographs as evidence. Solve the mystery of Australia's greatest naval disaster.

BOOK FEATURES AND FORMAT

HMAS SYDNEY has many features that are important in factual texts:

- Contents Page (note the clear headings)
 - Headings
 - Subheadings
 - Breakout boxes to highlight key information
 - Visual timeline
 - Glossary
 - References
 - Index
 - Page numbers
1. Locate each of the above features in the book.
 2. List some features of this book's glossary that make it clear and well organised.
 3. Create a set of challenges to test how well a classmate can use the index and glossary sections of this text.
 4. The information presented in this book is factual. Discuss how the writing style of this book differs from other non-fiction books that you have read.

VISUAL LITERACY

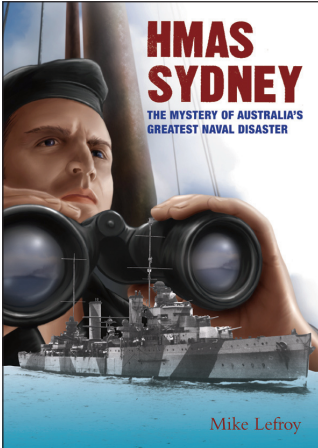
Illustrations

Much of the information in this text is conveyed through illustration, pictures and newspaper clippings.

- Choose one illustration or picture and list everything that you learn from it about the subject.
- What is your favourite illustration? Explain your choice.
- The illustrations convey a sense of danger. How has the illustrator created this mood?

Explore the website www.findingsydney.com/gallery.asp

- Record three facts that you learn about the naval disaster from the photo gallery and the video footage.
- View the documentary footage on this website. As a class, discuss new things that you have learned.



SCIENCE

On page 20 we learn that the SV Geosounder is caught between two tropical cyclones. Research some of the natural dangers that sailors faced when at sea. Include dangers associated with poor diet. Present your information in poster form.

CREATIVE ARTS

Make a play about something you have read in this text. Use costume and sound effects to heighten the impact of the performance. Plays could include:

- A conversation between two sailors on the sighting of the Kormoran
- A conversation between Captain Detmers and a member of his crew
- Pat Ingham saying goodbye to her husband, John

Design a poster to be hung at a memorial of the HMAS Sydney II

Add an illustration to the text. Remember to use techniques to create the appropriate mood.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Lefroy is a fifth-generation Western Australian with a passion for history, in particular the history of his hometown of Fremantle.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Dean Jones has a background in psychology, music and IT – but what he really loves to do is draw. He started his career in illustration by winning the student category of the inaugural Australian and New Zealand Illustration Awards in 2004. Since then Dean has been steadily busy with commercial illustration assignments. He recently joined the black dog family with two books – both collaborations with Carole Wilkinson – the most recent of which was Companion. Dean lives in inner city Melbourne.