

# Territorians at War

Unit 3



*A Secondary School Education Resource on the*

## Bombing of Darwin

# Territorians at War

## Overview

In these units students will explore how the bombing of Darwin and the War in the Northern Territory affected civilians: essential service personnel, Aboriginal people women and children, evacuees who became refugees in their own land, and those who were declared “enemy aliens” and were interned for the duration of the war and beyond.

In this section students will be encouraged to develop the skill of empathy and develop their awareness of the cultural context of the war. Students will be encouraged to consider the threat that war poses to aspects of democracy such as civil liberties and citizens’ rights.

Students will continue to explore the ways wartime fears exacerbate regional and racial stereotypes and how propaganda and government policies exploit these fears and stereotypes. Chapter 7 of the Federation Frontline Book is recommended as reference reading

Bloom's Taxonomy	Content	Learning Outcomes – students will
	<b>Part One – The experiences of civilians</b>	
Analysis, evaluation and synthesis	Postal workers	Read about essential service personnel
Analysis, Evaluation and synthesis	Leper colony heroine	Explore the language of bias and persuasion
Analysis and Evaluation	Darwin Women were all Heroines	Find evidence to support a view
	<b>Part Two –The experiences of aboriginal people</b>	
Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation	Daisy Martin & Matthias Ulungura	Read aboriginal views
Synthesis	An Aboriginal Elder's Story	Develop empathy to individual and cultural differences
Comprehension and analysis	Betty Fisher's story and map	Develop knowledge of the terrain in the north
	<b>Part Three – The experiences of evacuees and internees</b>	
Comprehension, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation	Democracy Under Threat: Refugees	Develop empathy and explore the way wars affect civil liberties
Comprehension, Analysis, Synthesis	Democracy Under Threat: Internal Enemies	Develop awareness of how wartime fears exacerbate stereotyped and racial views.

### *A Cultural Warning*

People of Aboriginal or Islander descent should be aware that the images and names of deceased people appear in the following pages.

# The Postal Workers

Read pages 51-56 *Federation Frontline: A People's history of World War II in the Northern Territory*, by Peter and Sheila Forrest.

Postmaster Hurtle Bald started work with the Post office in 1909, postmaster in Darwin from 1928 to 1934, and again from 1934.

Alice Bald came to Darwin with her husband Hurtle in 1940. She refused to be evacuated and volunteered to work as a telephonist

Iris Bald, only daughter of Hurtle and Alice, worked in the tax office in Darwin.

Emily Young had been a telephonist but was forced to resign when she married. Later she volunteered to return to work to help overcome staff shortages.

Eileen and Jean Mullen were telegraphists. Eileen came to Darwin in early 1941 to operate the new trunk line exchange, Jean followed in August 1941. The sisters were on duty together in the telegraph exchange when the air raid began.

Archibald "Bro" Halls. A First World War veteran, worked in remote locations in the Territory before coming to Darwin as telegraph supervisor just five days before the raid.

Aurthur Wellington, postal clerk, agreed to come north in 1940, following a call for extra help in Darwin. His wife and baby daughter were evacuated but he chose to stay.

Walter Rowling, foreman mechanic based at the post office, was mortally wounded and died aboard the *Manunda* during the voyage from Darwin to Fremantle. He had been in Darwin less than a fortnight before the raid.

Fay Stasinowski, telephonist since 1925. Because of her special expertise, she was asked to come to Darwin to operate new equipment.

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Forrest, Peter and Forrest, Sheila (2001) *Federation Frontline. A people's history of World War II in the Northern Territory*. Centenary of Federation Northern Territory, Darwin pp 52 - 54

## Exploring the nature of heroism.

### *Analysis*

1. Why do you think some of the postal workers refused to be evacuated?
2. Why do you think the Post Office was targeted?
3. In your opinion are the post office workers heroes? Explain.

### *Synthesis*

1. Write an obituary for one of the Post Office workers
2. Write a news story for "The Postal Workers Gazette" about the bombing of the Post Office and the loss of lives that resulted from the raid.

# Leper Colony Heroine



**The Australian Women's Weekly of April 25, 1942 carried a story entitled "Leper Colony heroine tends Darwin wounded" and described how a 19 year old girl on the Channel Island leper colony tended to wounded seamen after their blazing ship had run aground.**

1 How beautiful Madge Gaden lived up to her reputation as heroine of Darwin leper colony in the ruthless bombings of the first Japanese air raids on the Australian mainland is now revealed in a delayed message.

2 When she was pronounced cured of leprosy on her 19th birthday last year, after eight years in the colony, she announced her intention of devoting herself to alleviating the sufferings of lepers, and she was still at the colony when the raids began.

3 While the raiders continued their onslaught Madge tended to the wounded seamen who had reached Channel Island, where the leper colony is situated, after their blazing ship had run aground. Madge told her story at Pine Creek, the tiny township 150 miles south of Darwin, where she is now staying -with her mother and sisters. . . .

she

4 Her story of the first Jap raid was that she had a grandstand view of the whole bombing from the safety of a hill on Channel Island, which was not attacked. . . "I went to the highest point of the island and watched the big Japanese bombers go over," she said. "We could hear the roar of bursting bombs and see flames and debris leap far into the air. All the native patients in the colony were terrified by the raid, and immediately hid in the bush. That night they were given rations and willingly went bush by crossing to the mainland at low tide.

5 "I saw the Japanese dive bomb the ships in Darwin harbour. One ship, blazing fiercely, was steered toward Channel Island and ran aground in the mangrove swamp nearby.

6 "A number of the crew got away from the ship in a motor launch and landed near our shelter shed. Two of the crew were suffering from bullet wounds - one a major in the last war and the other a boy of about 19, who was badly hit in the knee. "While the Japanese were flying high over Darwin to make their second raid . . I tended the wounded.

7 "After the raids a naval launch came out and took the wounded away. "Meanwhile the captain of the ship and several of the crew had run aground in a launch in the mangroves and did not get out until the next day.

8 We could not leave as we had no fuel for our launch. "In the tremendous confusion in Darwin after the raids we were somehow forgotten. Finally, Mr Jones (the curator) and my father rowed out to the ship, which had now burnt itself out, and found some petrol on board.

9 On the day after the raid we all went to the quarantine station at another point in Darwin harbour. I was anxious to get to Darwin to see what damage the bombing had caused, but was told it was not safe for me in Darwin.

10 "I arrived at the quarantine station in a white dress, and soon afterwards the 'alert' sounded. I was standing by a slit trench when someone yelled out. "Take off that dress". I shouted back, "I've got practically nothing

on underneath it!” “Well leave it on but get out of sight”, came the answer. . . as soon as the ‘all clear’ was sounded I was forced to wear a khaki shirt and trousers. . . . I had just made myself neat when Jap fighters began to machine gun Darwin. . I had to go into a slit trench. There was a few inches of water in the bottom, and it was full of mosquitos and ants. I was mud from head to foot when I emerged.”

11 Driven from the colony that has been her home for eight years. well-educated and self-possessed Madge Gaden cannot at this uncertain stage make plans for her future. But she is almost certain that her days in the leper colony are over.

12 When asked what calling she would like to follow she revealed intimate glimpses of her life among Darwin’s lepers.

13 She confided that she had written a large part of a full-length novel which she had intended to enter in The Australian Women’s Weekly Novel Competition “I filled up several school books, on a typewriter that a well-wisher sent me, she said. “Unfortunately, in the rush to leave the colony, I burned these along with most of my other possessions.”

14 “I also taught myself to do shorthand and touch-typing. “Mr. Jones instructed me to operate a Morse Code Aldiss lamp. And before the Japs came into the war I often talked by lamp to bored soldiers at camps around Darwin. “If they were bored, I was not. I always found plenty to occupy me in the colony

## Close study of SOURCE *(paragraphs are numbered for your convenience)*

### *Analysis*

- 1 Madge is described as “beautiful” and the Japanese as “ruthless” in the first paragraph of this article.
- What sort of language is this?
  - What effect does the author wish these words to have on the reader?

### *Evaluation*

- 2 What adjective would you use to describe the kind of person Madge is, after reading the second paragraph?

### *Analysis*

- 3 Read paragraph 3. Quote a word which describes the Japanese actions and a word which describes Madge’s actions which continues the contrast set up in the first paragraph.

### *Application*

- 4 Paragraph 4 describes the reaction of the ‘native’ patients to the raid. They are described as “terrified”. What evidence is there that Madge did not share their feelings?

### *Evaluation*

- 5 Why do you think the ‘natives’ were willing to cross to the mainland at low tide? Why do you think they had not left the colony earlier? Why do you think the non aboriginal people did not go with them?
- 6 Give evidence from the source that Madge has the following attributes
- > Resourcefulness
  - > Courage
  - > Confidence
  - > Curiosity
  - > Observation skills
  - > Education
- 7 Is there anything about the language, style or content of this article that makes you aware that this piece was written in 1942? Explain



## Darwin Women were all heroines

**The Australian Women's Weekly of March 7, 1942 carried an article with the headline "Darwin women were all heroines...They behaved like soldiers as the bombs rained down."**

Despite the evacuation of many women and children, there were women in essential services and others yet to be evacuated who came under fire, and survived, or were wounded or killed in that first bombing raid on Darwin on 19 February 1942 and in later raids.

This story give Mrs Gwenda Hansen's account of the raid. She was at her secretarial post in Qantas Airway's Darwin Office when the first bomb fell.

### *Secretary's story*

"We dashed out of our glass fronted office to go to ground," sad Mrs. Hanse.

"Ground" was the nearest gutter – a very dirty one.

"We saw a bomb hit the lovely old sandstone post office. During a lull we set out to run there to see if we could help anyone, but the planes came over again and we dived flat in the nearest paddock."

"Several of us from the office lay there for, I think, about an hour.

"The planes were so low we could see the rising suns under the wings.

"As long as I live I shall never forget the awful rat-tat-tat of machine-gun fire.

"As soon as the 'all clear' came we ran to the car and I drove several of our pilots down to the wharf.

"I shall never forget the sight of men swimming and wading ashore.

"Some were only half-conscious. Most of them, their clothes stripped off by explosions, or by themselves to help them to swim, were badly burned by oil.

"While I watched them, wondering if I had the courage to help give them first aid, a naval man rushed up to me.



"For God's sake drive me to naval headquarters," he said.

I drove him to naval headquarters, leaving our pilots discussing the flying boat.

"We had decided that as I was the least grubby and least alarming in appearance I should drive out to the hospital to see how our hero Captain Koch was, and reassure him.

"I found him on the beach below the hospital, cheering up other people.

"On my way back there were wires down on the road, near a big bomb-crater. Remembering that electric wires are thicker than telephone wires, I got out to investigate. I heard someone call out and saw a man with his arm almost torn off at the shoulder. I know practically nothing about first aid, but knew enough to realise that I had to stop the bleeding somehow.

"I tore up some of my under-clothes and made a

ligature as best I could. He was almost unconscious and I wondered how on earth I was to get him into the car.

“A man came along, on a bicycle and helped me and I drove the wounded man to the hospital.

“When I returned to the harbour there was no sign of our flying-boat – or Capt. Hussey.

“Everyone knows now the story of how he took the plane to safety and brought it back. It was one of the most heroic actions in heroic little Darwin that day.

“The nurses at the hospital were magnificent. When their disorganised day was over they had to set to to evacuate all their patients as we expected more raids the next day. They worked all night to see their charges safely on the train.”

## Exploring the Nature of Heroism

### *Analysis*

1. The people of Darwin were accused of cowardice after the bombing of Darwin, and some officials claimed that there was undue panic and chaos.  
Is there any evidence in the article above of the cowardice or undue panic?  
Is there evidence in the article above of courage and level-headedness in the face of dramatic circumstances?

### *Evaluation*

2. In what ways might the officials who were critical of the actions of the residents be biased?
3. In what ways might the Women’s Weekly story be biased?



# The Experiences of Aboriginal people



## Background Briefing

Miss Daisy Martin was a part-Aboriginal girl who had been brought up at Kahlin Compound in Darwin and was employed as a maid at Government House in Darwin. On 19 February 1942, during the Japanese bombing raids, she sheltered with the Abbott family and other staff at Government House.

Daisy was killed beneath falling masonry and concrete when the office received an almost direct hit from a 1,000-pound high explosive bomb. She was buried in a temporary grave at Kahlin Beach the next day, but was exhumed and reburied at Berrimah War Cemetery on 30 June 1942. Her body was later transferred to the Adelaide River War Cemetery.

A plaque in memory of Miss Daisy Martin was installed near the spot where she was killed.

Read this extract from a poem written by John Muk Muk Burke in response to the headstone of an aboriginal woman, Polly Mop or Mine written after he visited the cemetery

## Some Lines for Reading

### *A war cemetery*

Bones of Polly Mop or Mine  
Below  
the last plaque on the grass:  
blasted into death  
there's now no flesh  
but her still fresh name has stopped me.  
Fouteen runes I read  
'POLLY MOP OR MINE'  
  
Her secrets buried deeper  
than J F Simon's,  
Corporal, twenty,  
Whose familiar letters  
burn bullet hot in the tropic glare  
but tonight will share with Polly  
all the grave black air  
beneath a clouded moon –<sup>1</sup>





Many aboriginal people were killed in the Japanese bombing raids on the north  
Read this account of the bombing and strafing of Milingimbi, told by an Aboriginal Elder.

## An Aboriginal Elder's Story

### *Bombing and Strafing at Milingimbi*

That thing, thing happened before, long time. First we were living out bush. There was no war. We were out bush when the war started. the second war, army and American air force. They were fighting at Yurrwi (Milingimbi). We didn't know what was going on. There were three balanda missionaries at Milingimbi, Glen, Bob and Mr Will, in war time. We saw the army and the fighting and we ran, all of us, women, girls and old men, everyone, through the bush and dived under the water to get away. The war was getting worse. The war with the Japanese. The Japanese were shooting at us. The war went on for ..... maybe eight weeks, at the mission. The balanda mob mission, they were there. They were witness. A telegram come on the wireless. Some people were at Burdiya and the Japanese attacked us. Another mob were at Miwatj and another mob were at Ngalngicherra. They were hiding there. I was with some people at Balma. We were hiding there in the jungle. We were running around everywhere and they were shooting down at us.



*World War 2 Hudson Bomber, wrecked near the Milingimbi School. . (Photo by J. Boland)*

War. The war was getting worse. All the people from Gartji they crossed the water to go back to Gartji. They were frightened of the war. We all went into the jungle, everybody. People from Ramingining, Nganggalarla, and Miwatj. Also Yirrkala, Bindjuwa and Lake Evela. Everywhere. And also Langarra. People from all these places were at that mission. Burarra people from Gamurr Guyurra and Kunabidji people from Maningrida and Anbarra people. They were all at that mission because it was the only place that had tobacco. You could buy it at the mission. We were buying tobacco while they were shooting at us. The army was still shooting at us and one man was killed. The man who was killed was Galmatta. He was killed by a bomb.

His uncle's name was Djowa. Some people were playing cards under the mango tree. When that bomb came down all the people scattered ; and that when Galmatta was killed. Galmatta was blown to pieces by the bomb. Every body ran away they ran back to their country; to Mwaq; to Ngalngicherra; to Gartji ; near the billabong; Magambal; Djimidja and Burdiya. Also we ran away. We all ran back bush. We had to cross every creek because it was an island and the bombs were coming down everywhere; coming down on us.



*World War 2 Hudson Bomber, with local Milingimbi School Students. . (Photo by J. Boland)*

They were shooting down at us .... Everyone scattered. They ran away. Nobody was there. Still everyone was alive except for one man. He was a young fella, a young fella like Andrew [Campion] here. He was torn apart by the bomb. A young fella, Djowa's nephew. The plane was shooting down at us. Nyooowww tat-tat-tat-tat. He went 'round again and came back swooping down at us.

Nyoo tat-tat-tat-tat. Some people ducked down under the water to hide and some people hid behind

the rocks. The rocks were smashed by the bullets. Some people were hiding behind the trees in the jungle and some people hid in the mangroves. The bomb scared them. Some people ran to the river, some people ran to the creek. From that bomb, now. Afterwards, some of us men went to check up and while we were on our way we suddenly saw the plane coming back down. We said to each other “Hey! That plane, he’s going to shoot us, shoot us!” Then we ran flat out and threw ourselves into the river. We stayed under water for a short while. When we came up our bodies were dripping with mud. Everywhere mud. We were covered in mud. We looked at each other and laughed and laughed.<sup>2</sup>

Not only were communities under fire, but many Aboriginal people also worked for the armed forces as coastguards, or helped the military to live off the land, or served in the forces as soldiers, sailors or airmen. The first Japanese prisoner of war was captured by an Aboriginal man, Matthias Ulungura on Bathurst Island.

Read the account of the capture below:

## Matthias Ulungura

At about 5 o’clock the afternoon of 21st February 1942, Tiwi Aboriginal man Matthias Ulungura was walking through light forest on Melville Island, towards a group of people gathered in a bush camp. Matthias saw that the Tiwi people had strange company in the camp – a Japanese man.

Matthias approached, and hid behind a tree. As the Japanese man walked past, Matthias crept up behind him, then seized his right arm. Matthias then grabbed a pistol from a leg pocket in the strange man’s flying suit.

Stepping back, Matthias pointed the pistol at the man and said “Stick ’em up, right up. Two hands up!” The Japanese instantly obliged, and was then stripped to his underwear and searched. Matthias had captured Zero pilot Hajime Toyoshima, the first prisoner of war to be taken on Australian soil

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Forrest, Peter and Forrest, Sheila (2001) *Federation Frontline. A people’s history of World War II in the Northern Territory*. Centenary of Federation Northern Territory, Darwin p 10

## Exploring the Aboriginal Experience

### Synthesis

Choose one of the following tasks

1. Carefully read the Aboriginal Elder’s story. Create a storyboard or sketch that depicts part or all of the Elder’s story.
2. Create the front page of a newspaper that reports on either the bombing of Darwin, or the bombing and strafing of Milingimbi
3. Create a front page story for a modern Australian newspaper which tells the story of the capture of Australia’s first Japanese prisoner of war.

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### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Burke, John Muk Muk, *Night Song and other poems*, (NTU Press, 1999), p37

<sup>2</sup> from *The Warfare Workshop, Maningrida 1-4 April 1996*

Read Betty Fisher's story and study the map "Defending the North".

## Betty Fisher's Story

**Betty Fisher describes how she and other Aboriginal children walked from the mission on Croker Island to Pine Creek and finally spent the rest of the war thousands of kilometres from home.**

"Croker Island was a beautiful place, good fishing, we had our own cattle and goats, and an airstrip there where the plane used to bring in the mail.

Then the war broke out. I was about ten when it happened. All we knew was that the Japanese had bombed Darwin and they'd been telling us if aeroplanes came over we had to run into the jungle. We were only young kids and frightened. We used to keep saying "oh Japanese, Japanese coming!" We were scared but we didn't even know what it meant.

We waited day by day for news of what we had to do next. And word came. We were lucky we had one of the mission luggers that came with our food, so we could go across to the mainland and get off at Oenpelli from the South Alligator.

Before we left Croker all the children had to pick up stones and make a big cross and paint it white so that they could see it was a mission field, a mission station.

When we went across to Oenpelli, we didn't know what was happening. We lost one child there in Oenpelli. From there we had that big walk. The Oenpelli mob lent us a horse and so the rest of us children had to walk forty odd miles to some trucks that were supposed to come out and meet us from Pine Creek.

All the kids went, maybe a hundred kids. We had only one old ute that carried Mrs Adams, and she'd just had a new-born baby, plus they had to put in all our tucker and all our gear. So all the Children had to walk many miles each day and then we had to camp. Then we'd start off the next day.

While we were on the track walking across the continent I went to sleep under a tree and nearly got left behind. Every time we camped they used to count up the children, they found one was missing and that was me. So Mr Wale, one of the missionaries, came back on horseback. Luckily he found me because the grass was so tall – you know- spear grass. He found me lying under this tree and picked me up. The horse rump was that big and I couldn't put my little short legs over and I was crying. I was frightened of the horse! I'll never forget that!

Then we walked and walked until we met two or three trucks that came out from Pine Creek.

From there they took us in army trucks to Alice Springs. And from Alice Springs we were sent to a place on the south coast of NSW called Otford."

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(Talking History, *Land Rights News*, March 1989)

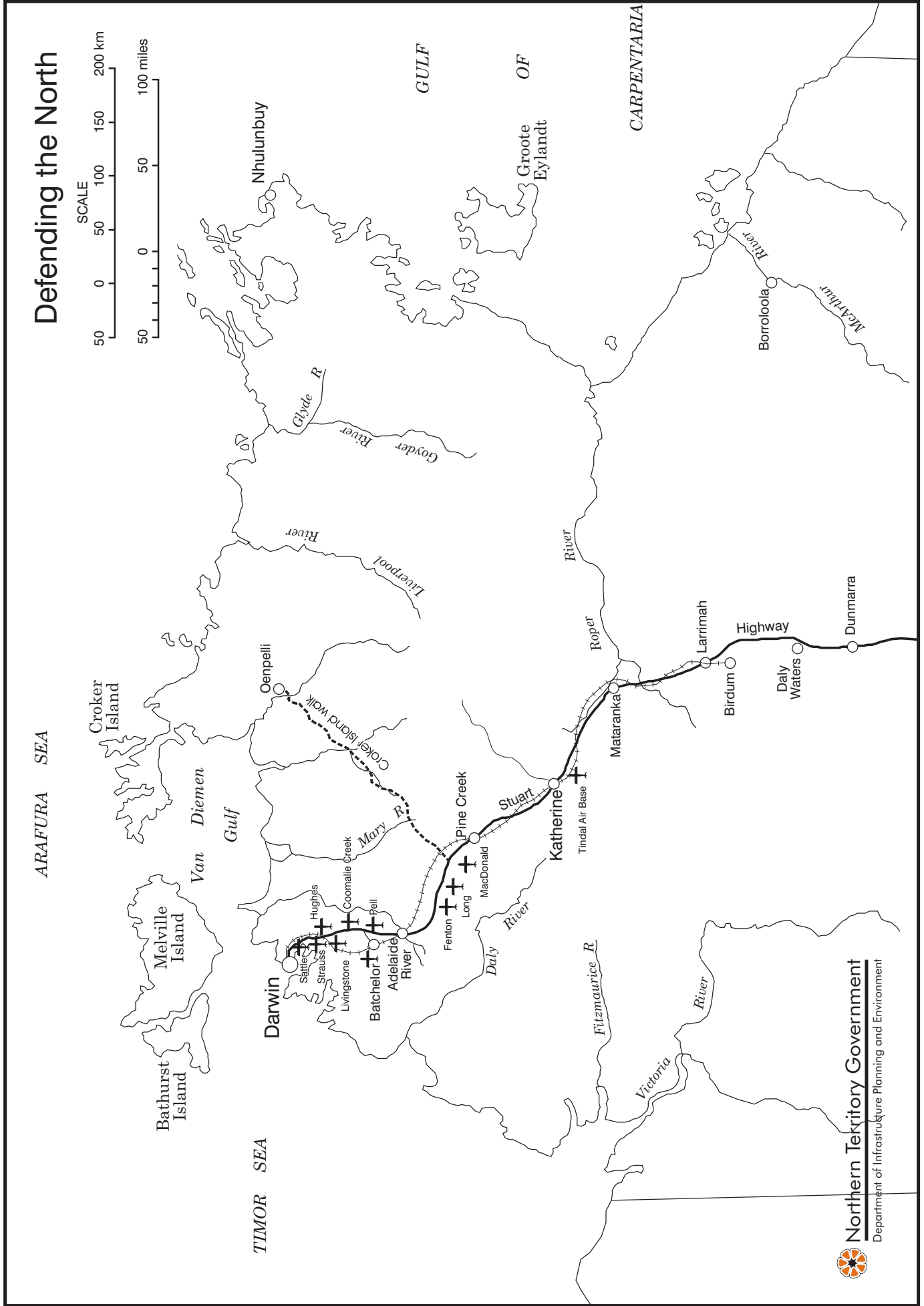
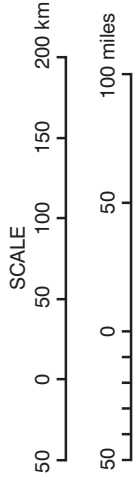
### Comprehension

1. Research to find out about the terrain the children walked through. Describe it as shown in the atlas. Give two pieces of evidence from the extract about the terrain. In what ways was the terrain dangerous for the children?
2. Use the scale on the map and Betty's description and estimate how far the children walked. Does the extract support your findings?

### Analysis

3. Look at the airfields indicated on the map by small plane symbols. Why do you think there are so many airfields? What do these airfields suggest about other dangers the children may have faced?

# Defending the North





# Refugees

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Just as the war in Europe and Asia, people in Australia became refugees, in their own country. In the Northern Territory women and children were made refugees in their own country, and because Darwin was a place of great racial variety, some of non British descent were treated particularly poorly by officials

The common experience of physical hardship, being under fire, being separated from loved ones, losing homes and possessions, the mistreatment by officials, and racism made the war experience quite similar for many Australians and other refugees.

The following information and extracts are taken from Janet Dickinson's book *Refugees in Our Own Country: A Story of Darwin's Wartime Evacuees*, unless otherwise noted.

**Few Australians today are aware that their own countrymen and women were war-time evacuees in their own country** <sup>1</sup>

In times of war, it is not only those who go to battle who have to pay the price for peace – in Darwin during the Second World War, the women and children evacuated from Darwin were among those who suffered most. When the order came, there was no choice but to leave husbands, fathers, sons, homes and possessions . . . More than a thousand women and 900 children had to leave – mostly by ship with the ever present danger of mines or enemy attack. Some made the long journey overland. Some went by air. Some never returned.

*Address by Chief Minister of NT  
Hon Marshall Perron, 15 February 1992*

In fact Marshall's mother with his older brother was one of the first to fly out, because she was almost due to have her second child. They had no choice of destination, and like everyone else, left all their possessions behind except for one suitcase of clothes. Thus Marshall was born in Perth.

Many were evacuated by ship. Glad Litchfield describes her experience. "We were loaded into trucks and taken to the wharf where we stood with hundreds of other women and children, for hours in the hot sun without so much as a drink of water, waiting to board the ship."

Some tried to be inconspicuous in Darwin in the hope that they would be left alone. Lydia de Julia tried to go to Adelaide River, but the authorities blocked the road. Then she was told she would be evacuated by truck. After many nights of waiting, the truck never came.

Eventually,

"Police came for me and took the children and myself nine o'clock in the morning and drop us at the gate. Young man, no more than 20 opened the gate to the wharf. So I walked up there. He didn't want my husband to go...My husband worked on the wharf but he wouldn't let him go. So I went with the children and somebody from the ship came down and said "You're not allowed to go." I wasn't the only... woman from Darwin. There were several there on the ship..."We are unloading now. It will be too much trouble. You better go home." So I went and this young man wouldn't open the gate for me. I said what do I do? "Oh well you can sit around here." In the sun. No log, nothing to sit on. We sat on the rail... He was so rude. We sat there".

There was a nearby shed and Lydia asked if she could sit in the shade of it but the guard made her stay where she was. By then it was midday and hot and the children were tired and thirsty. Finally Father Henschke came down and intervened and Lydia and her children were allowed to sit in the shade and Father Henschke went and got them food and drink. Finally at five o'clock, Lydia and her five children aged from 2 to 11 years old were allowed to board the ship. Her husband was not allowed to see her off.<sup>2</sup> This was the last time she was to see her husband, as he was one of the wharfies killed on 19 February 1942, the first Japanese bombing raid on Darwin.

Many people did not wish to evacuate, and leave behind all of their precious possessions, with no safe guards to protect them. They had good reasons to be worried. Lorna Lillie who was working in Paspalis' Rendevous Café in Smith Street describes a Friday night in Darwin, when tensions between the American and Australian troops resulted in a 'riot'.

"They went over to Lorna Lim's. They started on her place and they wrecked everything that was in her shop... it was very sad. Lorna Lim used to mend all their clothes... She was a lovely person, very kind, and they just wrecked her shop... Then they decided that wasn't enough so they came back... into the hotel... they pulled the doors off and wrecked everything and took the scotch."

The weather was also an enemy, being the cyclone season. The *Marella* had to contend with a cyclonic storm. It was also extremely hot.

For many, leaving their menfolk behind was heartbreaking and very worrying. Some were not even given the chance to say goodbye. The men could come home from a day at work to find their family gone, and they wouldn't even know where.

Despite the fact that the women were forced to evacuate, and to leave all their possessions behind, many women were made to pay their own fares. Some had to borrow the money. They were told they would get a refund, but for most, their applications were refused. When they reached their destinations, they received no assistance of any kind, although the evacuees from Java and Singapore, mainly Dutch and British, who arrived in Perth at the same time as those on the *Koolinda*, from Darwin received assistance from the government.

## Exploring the Evacuees' Experience

### *Synthesis*

1. Imagine that you had to leave your home for an unknown destination. You are only allowed to take one small suitcase. Make a list of the items you would place in it.
2. You get to the evacuation point and are told that the one small suitcase was per family. Interview family members to find out what would be their most important items. Rewrite your list

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### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Dickinson, Janet *Refugees in Our Own Country*, Historical Society of the NT, (1995), page v

<sup>2</sup> Dickinson, Janet *Refugees in Our Own Country*, Historical Society of the NT, (1995), page 15

# Internees

The Australian government decided that some of its own citizens were enemies and needed to be rounded up and incarcerated. Thus those they considered to be racially or politically “impure” spent the war in internment or prisoner of war camps.

## **A secret Report explains why the people of the North could not be trusted.**

“There is ample evidence, old and new, to support the fact that the Northern Territory and adjacent areas have been a hotbed of Japanese espionage and that Darwin has become the centre of collation and communication of information. It would seem to be highly probable that enemy agents are being landed at present by parachutes from aircraft coming in over the Gulf of Carpentaria. The possibility of these agents being clothed in Australian, USA, NEI (Netherlands East Indies Dutch Forces) uniforms should not be ignored”.<sup>1</sup>

This report suggested that the Japanese had penetrated “to the aboriginals and half-castes for the purpose of: spreading terror amongst the whites; attacking whites if and when landings were attempted by the enemy; fifth column work generally. Also, it claims the personnel of German and Spanish Missions in the north had “militant tendencies” and were guilty of “subversion of blacks and half-castes”. It recommended “rounding up all uncontrolled aboriginals and half-castes” and “all low whites and breeds”.<sup>2</sup>



The highly emotive terms of this report shows how suspicious many in Australia were of the Northern Territory and it was this attitude that led to the very poor treatment of so many of the citizens of the Northern Territory.

## **Some women and children of Darwin and the Northern Territory spent the war years and beyond in internment camps, accused of being Japanese spies.**

The Murakami family had lived in Australia since 1897. Murakami had become a leading citizen in Broome and had developed and patented a prototype of modern scuba gear, because of heavy loss of life on the pearl luggers. In 1943 an engineer, Emile Gagan patented scuba apparatus identical to that of Murakami, but Murakami could do nothing to protect his patent because he was arrested in 1941, and in 1943 was an internee of Tatura Internment camp, Victoria.

Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese and their families were rounded up and arrested. Army Police came and took some of the children from school.

The Murakami family of six boys and two girls had lived in Darwin for many years. They were amongst the Japanese children who were taken unceremoniously from their classes by soldiers “brandishing bayonets”.<sup>3</sup>

The Murakamis found soldiers guarding their homes in Darwin, and when Kathleen asked why, the soldiers said it was for their protection.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Archives, Victoria: Department of Defence and the Department of the Army; MP729/6, Secret Correspondence files taken from Walker, R and Walker, H, *Curtin's Cowboys: Australia's Secret Bush Commandos*, Allen and Unwin, 1986, p 3

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

Later they were taken by truck (no seats, they sat on the floor) to Adelaide River. Kathleen was five months pregnant and she had her husband and small son Peter with her. After being held in Adelaide River with her mother, father, brothers and sisters and other Japanese families, they were taken back to Darwin. Here they found their homes looted, everything of value stolen.



They eventually boarded the HMAS Zealandia, which sailed from Darwin under martial law on 20 December 1941. On board were 542 women and children evacuees, 100 ship's crew, 200 troops to guard the 300 internees, already being called POWs by some, one ship's doctor, two army doctors and three army nurses.

The ship was overcrowded. There was fear of enemy attack by sea or air. It was hot. Food and water was scarce. Some crew cut their water ration so the children would not suffer.

The internees were kept below decks except for an hour or two in the fresh air each day during a time when no other passengers were seen. It was very hot below deck because of the time of the year and because the port holes were closed and shuttered due to blackout regulations.

The Zealandia internees arrived at Tatura internment camp in January 1942, which was to be home for many of them until 1947.

Some male Japanese internees were reclassified as POWs and this is what happened to Kathleen Murakami's husband Yoshio and her brother Francis. Kathleen's father, Yasukichi Murakami died at number 4 camp Tatura on 30 June 1944 and Theresa was unable to tell her son Francis that his father had died.

Camp life was hard. It was cold, and the people from the tropics had to make themselves skirts and dresses from old army blankets. The reclassification of sons and husbands as Prisoners of War, and their transfer to other camps was hard to bear.

The end of the war did not mean freedom to these people. The government still did not know what to do with them in January 1947. They also felt no obligation to return them to their homes. Some were still under threat of deportation to Japan.

Finally, they were released. In 1947 Theresa Murakami left Tatura camp widowed, penniless, thousands of miles from home and with a brood of young children to care for. They suffered greatly from racial discrimination. Kathleen's sons were beaten up at school, stones were thrown at her home and someone tried to shoot her husband and two of her sons on the beach at Cossack. Those on charges of being spies, like the noted pioneer Yasukichi Murakami who died at Tatura, have still not had their names cleared.

Finally, some of the Murakamis found their way back to Darwin where they found acceptance in the community...<sup>4</sup>

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### Picture Captions

Mr Yasukici Murakami Ph0096/0028

Mrs Murakami, baby Bernadette, in front Margaret, Frank, Sydney, Richard, Kathleen Ph0096/0015

Mrs Theresa Murakami, died Darwin 1980, born Cossack WA 22/8/1897 Ph0096/0017

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### (Footnotes)

<sup>3</sup> Dickinson, Janet *Refugees in Our Own Country, The Story of Darwin Wartime Evacuees*, Historical Society of the Northern Territory, 1995

<sup>4</sup> Information taken from *Japanese Pioneers of Northern Australia*, written by Fay Kilgariff, which includes information from interviews with Kathleen Murakami, conducted in 1984



# Exploring the Evacuees' Experience

## *Comprehension*

1. In what ways were people of Japanese origin discriminated against during the war? Use evidence to support your answer.

## *Analysis*

2. Do you think the Australian Government was justified in deciding to place Japanese citizens in internment camps?
3. Why do you think the government did not release the internees as soon as the war was over?

## *Synthesis*

4. Imagine you are a reporter for 'The Bulletin' magazine during WWII. Prepare a Bulletin style magazine special edition on the war in the Northern Territory.
5. Create a **dual narrative**, one from a refugee's perspective, one from the perspective of an Australian citizen who experienced the war in an Australian city far from the bombing. In your narrative you must show your understandings of the similarities and differences of the experiences, and the effect of propaganda on Australians' views and understandings of the war.
6. You are a Japanese-Australian internee. The war has been over for six months but you are still in detention. Write a letter to the Australian Government, describing your background, the conditions in the camp and explaining why you think you should be released.

## Extension

### *Analysis*

7. Watch **The Dunera Boys (PG)** (Ronin Films 1990) or **Snow Falling on Cedars (M)** and compare the experiences of the war time internees in the film, with those described above.

*NB Teachers are advised to ensure that they comply with the relevant policies and procedures in their jurisdiction in regards to the viewing of (PG) and (M) rated films.*

