

WHAT IS HISTORY?

Using the Chamberlain case to explore evidence in history

The National Museum of Australia has a collection of objects associated with Lindy Chamberlain — the mother of 9-week-old Azaria Chamberlain, who disappeared at Ayers Rock (Uluru) in 1980. The prosecution of Mrs Chamberlain for her daughter's murder, and the subsequent appeals and inquiries that eventually exonerated her, made the case a controversial and divisive part of Australia's history.

This unit looks at some of those objects, together with other primary sources, and challenges students to come to their own conclusions based on a critical analysis of the evidence. Students may know very little or nothing about this case, but as they work through the evidence they will be able to discuss it with their parents and grandparents who may likely still hold strong opinions about it.



Jazmina Cininas
A two-legged dingo stole Lindy's tears (2008)
Reduction linocut 39.5 x 49.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Port Jackson Press Australia

The National Curriculum for History requires students to consider 'What is history?' This involves understanding *how we know what we know* from the past.

History is undertaken in classrooms in two basic ways:

- ◆ Most of what students do involves a study of topics, themes, issues, people or questions that mainly rely on secondary sources such as textbooks. Some primary source documents may be included, but the emphasis is on secondary sources.
- ◆ There is also some emphasis on in-depth inquiry or investigation, where students use a variety and quantity of primary sources analytically as the basis of their investigation, supplemented by secondary resources.

This unit will help develop students' ability to undertake the second of these – the detailed investigation of an event – using primary sources. It will improve students' understanding of the nature of evidence in history, particularly the role of objects, and will develop their critical and analytical historical skills. It also provides a model for organising students' approaches to their own historical investigations, and helps them develop the skills needed to do history. **The unit has been constructed to allow students to examine a great deal of evidence, but in a manageable way through working in small groups.**



National Museum of Australia display, showing the Chamberlain car's dashboard spray – see Source 3.10 on page 15

A suggested classroom approach for this unit is:

1

Have students work in small groups to complete **1 Starting your investigation** (on page 4, using the collection of evidence on the back cover of this edition of *STUDIES*, page 4). This will introduce the case, engage students in the mystery and the controversy, raise a number of the main issues associated with the evidence, and provide a focus for students' subsequent investigations. A discussion of each group's sequences and comments will help create hypotheses and expectations that can now be tested by introducing more evidence. You may decide to hand out the **What happened to the Chamberlains: A Chronology** (page 22) here, or you may choose to do so at any later stage.



2

Students read **2 Testing your ideas** (page 5). This page provides a table of questions and answers that students will work on at several stages.



3

Students read through **3 Using evidence in history** (page 6). This prepares them to critically analyse the 'evidence set' that they will receive.



4

Students read and discuss **4 Agreed facts and alternative explanations** (page 7). Their task is now to decide between two competing theories, using evidence to reach an informed conclusion.



5

Hand out the **Map of Ayers Rock and the camping ground** (page 8), the **Evidence sets summary table** (page 9), and the **five Evidence sets** (pages 10-19). We suggest that you divide this task among small groups and give one evidence set to each group (i.e. create five groups). This will make it more manageable for students to go through the process of analysing evidence. Each group reports back on their evidence set to the whole class.



6

Students look at **5 Reflections** (pages 20-21) to reach their own individual conclusions and discuss the 'lessons' that can be learned from this case study about how we study/do history. Students may then want to follow up with some other investigations based on what they have learned about how to do history in this case study.

1

Starting your investigation

History is what happened in the past, right?

Yes, it is. But how do we know what happened in the past, and what history tells us about people and society? How do we find out? And how certain can we be about what we think we have discovered?

This unit is a way to introduce you to a number of ways that we use history to make sure that we have the greatest degree of certainty possible in what we say happened in the past.

We are going to do this by asking you to be a historian — to find out from a variety of evidence what happened in a famous criminal case in Australia — the disappearance of baby Azaria Chamberlain in 1980. In addition, it will also be interesting for you to talk to your parents and grandparents about this case. It is likely that they may have strong opinions about it!

A history inquiry starts with initial information — you become interested in some event, and you want to know more about what happened.

Look at the set of information about the case of Azaria Chamberlain on page 48.

- 1 As part of a small group, cut out each piece of information and re-organise the set into a sequence that tells the story.
- 2 List any questions about the story that you do not think have been answered properly from your sequence.
- 3 List what other types of evidence you think you still need to answer these questions.

Each group should present its sequence and discuss it with the whole class.

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National Museum of Australia



National Museum of Australia



NT Royal Commission



National Museum of Australia

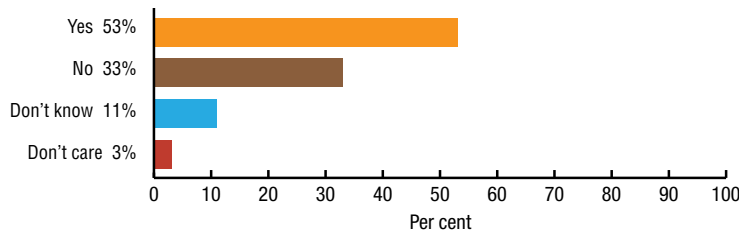


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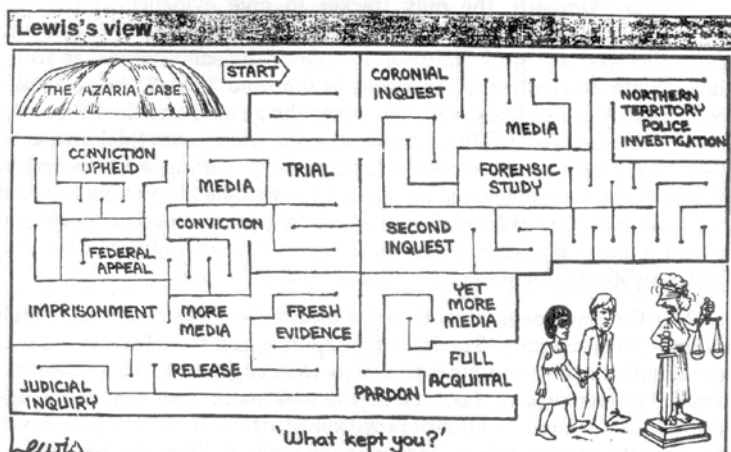
Results of a recent survey 'Was Lindy Chamberlain innocent?'



Public Debate voting booth www.publicdebate.com.au



NT Royal Commission



Lewis, The Newcastle Herald



You have now developed some idea of what happened in the Azaria Chamberlain case.

The next step is to test your idea by gathering and analysing more information. This may confirm your original idea, or it may challenge it and force you to change it.

You will soon be provided with some key evidence available at the time. You will need to sort and analyse the evidence, decide which of it you believe and which you do not, and come to your own conclusion.

There are only two possible conclusions:

- ✦ **that Mrs Chamberlain killed Azaria in the car and later disposed of the body**
- OR
- ✦ **that a dingo killed the baby and took it from the family tent.**

Other theories have been put forward but they are not realistic alternatives.

To make a decision in an inquiry a historian needs to answer a set of basic questions from the available evidence:

- ✦ *What happened?*
- ✦ *When?*
- ✦ *Where?*
- ✦ *Who?*
- ✦ *How?*
- ✦ *Why?*
- ✦ *What were the consequences?*
- ✦ *What was its significance?*
- ✦ *How certain can you be of these answers?*

In the Chamberlain case these become: ➔

This table provides a way of summarising your answers to these questions. You will need to come back to this table at various stages to add to your answers, and reach your final conclusion.

- 1 From the evidence you have already looked at in **Starting your investigation**, write your initial answers to each of these questions in this table. You will have to add to this table as you find out more, and you may need to change some of your first answers. Some will be easily answered and will be clear and straightforward. Others will be difficult to answer, and you may find that different class members have different answers even though you have all used the same evidence!

Chamberlain Case Questions and Answers Summary Table

Questions:	My answers to these questions:
What happened to baby Azaria Chamberlain and to her parents?	
When did these events occur?	
Where did these events occur?	
Who was involved in the events?	
How did the events occur?	
Why did the events occur in this way?	
What was its significance? What does it tell us about Australian society at the time?	
How do you know? What evidence is available?	
How certain are you of these answers? How definite is the evidence and your conclusion?	

3

Using evidence in history

As you find more information about the Chamberlain case you need to be clear about what different kinds of evidence historians analyse when they investigate and write about an event in history.

In history evidence is usually divided into *primary* and *secondary* sources.

Primary source evidence is evidence from the time and place that is **directly** associated with the events. Primary source evidence can be:

- ◆ spoken
- ◆ written
- ◆ images
- ◆ physical objects

Secondary evidence is information that is available from a later time or from sources that were not actually present at the time. It can also be spoken, written, images or physical objects.

Sometimes a source may contain both primary and secondary elements.

1 Decide whether these are primary (P) or secondary (S) sources:

an eye-witness account of events	P S
an official account by an investigator	P S
a blood-stained piece of clothing from the victim	P S
a blood stain	P S
an expert's analysis of a blood stain	P S
a photograph of the site taken a few days after the event	P S
a painting done several years after the event, but based on eye-witness accounts	P S
a book written by a historian who uses eye-witness accounts as well as other resources.	P S

Usually we rely on primary evidence as a major source where we are doing an investigation of our own.

On the other hand, we tend to rely more on secondary evidence where we are looking for a summary of what happened, rather than working it out for ourselves.

The most important thing to consider when looking at primary and secondary evidence is to try to work out if it is good and reliable evidence.

But how do we know if it is good evidence? We can apply a number of tests by asking questions such as:

- ◆ Who created it?
- ◆ Were they in a position to know what happened?
- ◆ Were they biased or in some way not a fair observer?
- ◆ Were they accurate?

Once you have collected and analysed all the available evidence you need to ask:

- ◆ Have all aspects been covered in such a way that I can come to a confident conclusion?

You are about to be given more evidence. Each of you will have:

- ◆ information on the **agreed facts and the two possible theories** of what happened (page 7)
- ◆ a **map of the area** (page 8)
- ◆ an **Evidence Sets summary table** for the different aspects of the case that the evidence covers (page 9)
- ◆ **one of five Evidence Sets** that you need to analyse (two of the pages 10-19).

You can also refer to the **chronology of events** on page 22.

Follow these steps in analysing the evidence:

- A** For this evidence set you need to look carefully at each of the sources in the set, and for each source indicate:
- if it is a Primary or Secondary source;
 - the aspect of the case that it is most relevant to;
 - the type of evidence it is (e.g. an eye-witness account of events etc)
 - your analysis of whether it is a reliable and believable source — record this on your summary table on page 9.

For example, Source 1.8 might look like this:

SOURCE 1.8

☒ Primary ☐ Secondary

Tourist **Sally Lowe** heard a cry from Azaria, at the same time that Michael Chamberlain claimed to have heard one.

Type of evidence

Eyewitness

Relevant aspect

Behaviour, Opportunity

Your summary page might show this:

7 BEHAVIOUR

Did the Chamberlains behave suspiciously?

Sally Lowe (1.8)

She heard the baby cry, so Chamberlains were not making it up

- B** Each group reports back to the whole class on your findings.
- C** As other groups report back on their evidence sets you will add to your summary table on page 9.
- D** When all groups have reported back you will have a summary of all the main evidence available, and you will be able to draw your final conclusions about each aspect of the case.
- E** Then complete your Chamberlain questions table (page 5) and decide:
- Which version of the death of Azaria Chamberlain does the historical evidence support?
 - How certain are you of your conclusion?

4

Agreed facts and alternative explanations

Before looking at more evidence you need to be clear about the agreed basic facts of the situation. Here they are:

On Saturday, 16 August 1980, the Chamberlain family arrived at Ayers Rock (Uluru) in the Northern Territory on a camping trip.

The family consisted of:

- Michael Chamberlain, aged 38 and a Pastor of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Mt Isa;
- his wife Alice Lynne, usually called Lindy, aged 34; and
- their children Aidan, aged 6 years and 10 months, Reagan, 4 years and 4 months, and baby Azaria, aged 9 weeks.

On the following day the family toured the area, at one stage visiting a place called the Fertility Cave, where Mrs Chamberlain commented to several other tourists that a dingo standing above them on the rocks seemed to be staring at her and Azaria, who was in her arms. Mr Chamberlain took some photos of the area, as did several other tourists.

That evening the family ate a meal in the company of other campers at a barbecue area near their tent and car.

Around 8pm Mrs Chamberlain went to the tent and screamed out "a dingo took my baby".

Campers immediately began searching in the dark, using torches. Aboriginal trackers and park rangers joined the search.

A few days later tourists discovered articles of Azaria's clothing at the base of Ayers Rock. The child's body was never found.

The local police gathered evidence at the site and eventually charged Mrs Chamberlain with the murder of Azaria. They also charged Pastor Chamberlain with helping his wife to conceal the murder. The Chamberlains protested their innocence.



Jo Darbyshire, National Museum of Australia

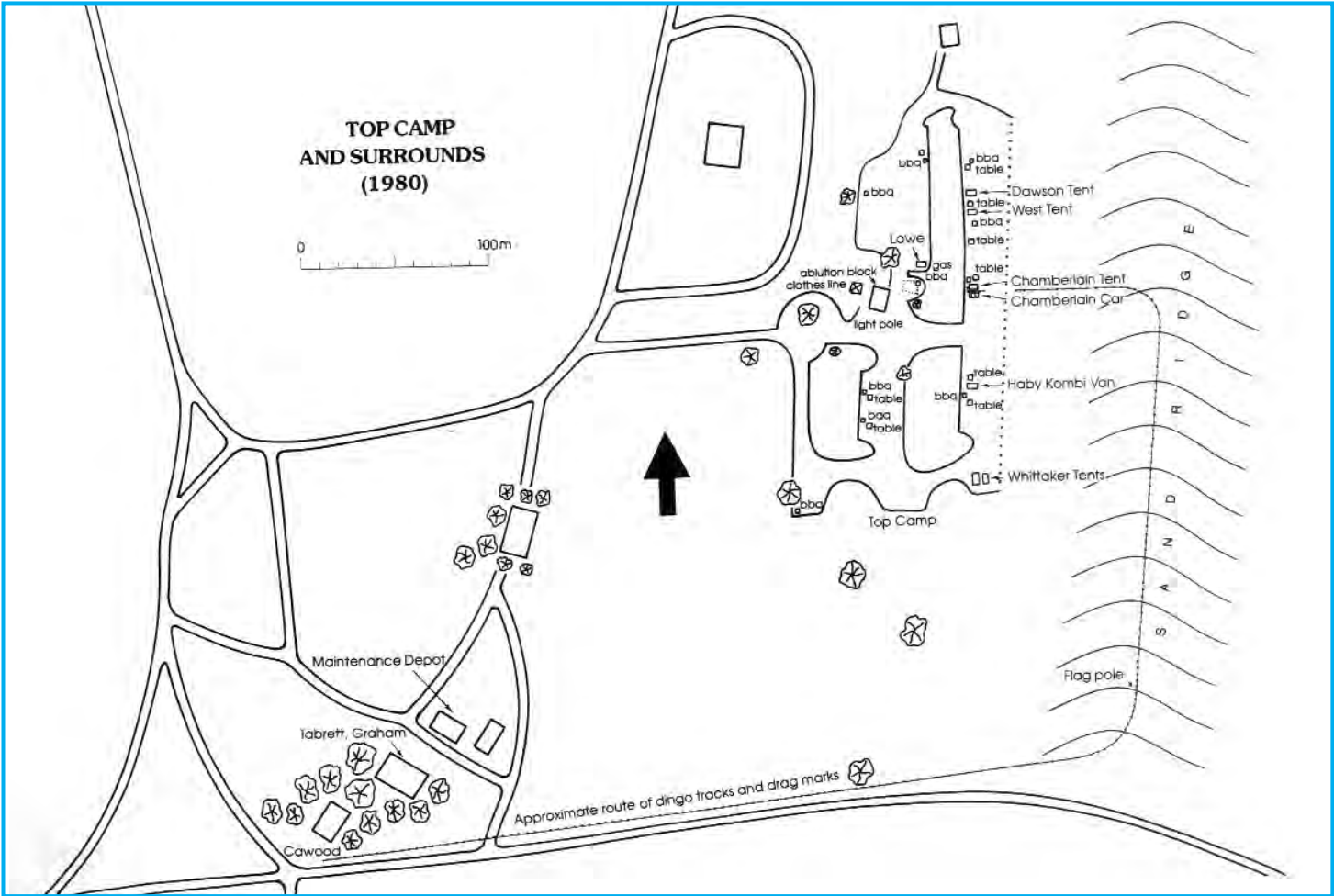
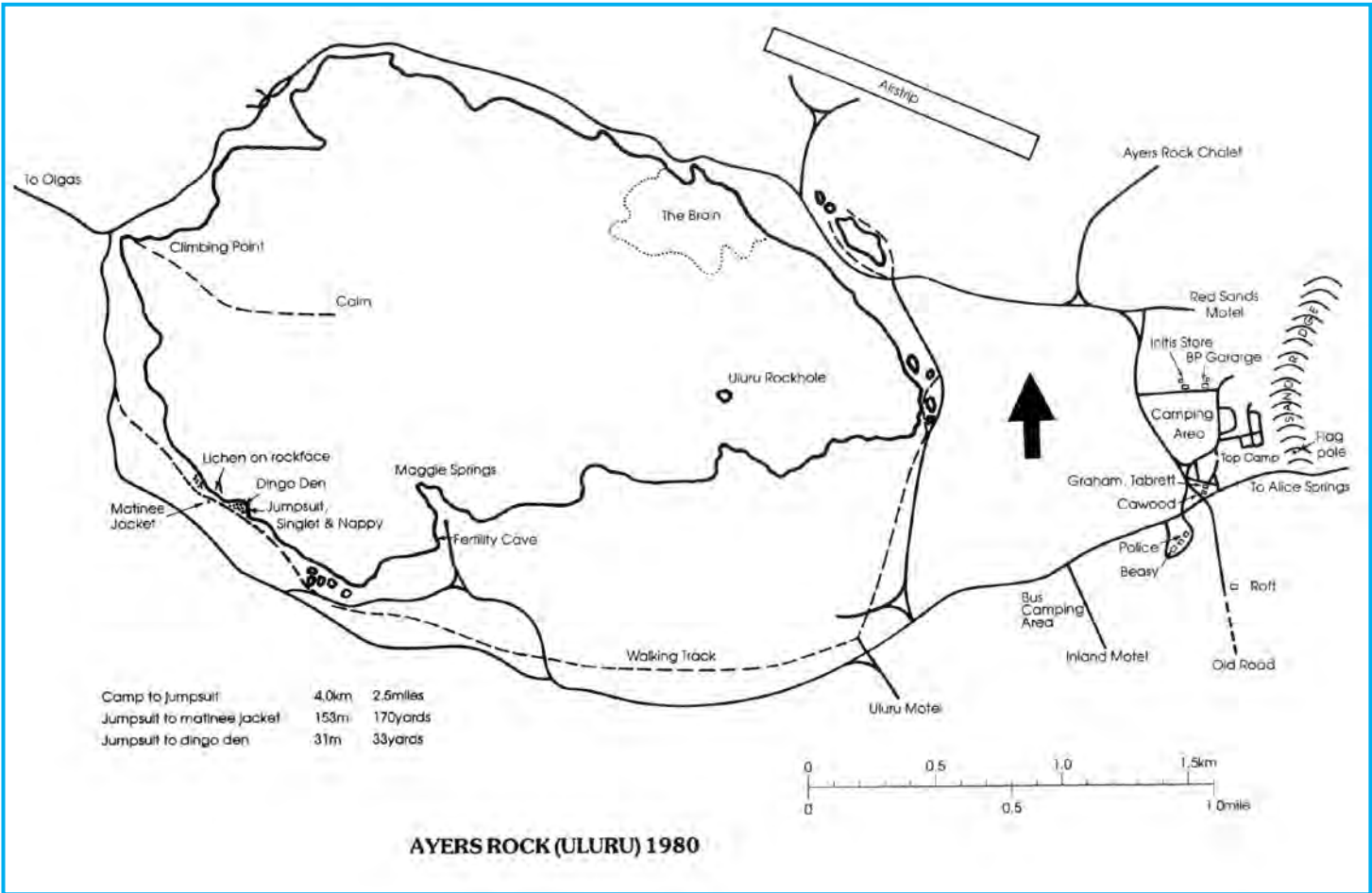
Here is a summary of what each of the two different sides in the case says happened:

Mrs Chamberlain killed the baby	A dingo took the baby
<p>If this happened Mrs Chamberlain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • left the BBQ area • returned to the tent with Aidan • put on her tracksuit pants • took Azaria from the tent to the car • cut Azaria's throat with something • hid the body in a camera bag • cleaned up some of the blood on herself and in the car • cut Azaria's clothing to make it look like dingo teeth marks • removed her tracksuit pants • found a can of baked beans for Aidan • returned to the tent • entered the tent, leaving spots of blood • collected Aidan • returned to the BBQ area • went back to the tent and raised the alarm about the missing baby • continued as normal until she could tell Mr Chamberlain what she had done, and get his help to dispose of the body and the bloodied baby's clothing during the confusion of the search. 	<p>If this happened Mrs Chamberlain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • left the BBQ area • returned to the tent with Aidan • went to the car • found a can of baked beans for Aidan • returned to the tent • entered the tent • collected Aidan • returned to the BBQ area • continued as normal until someone heard a baby's cry • went to the tent as a dingo that had just killed the baby was emerging • saw a dingo emerging from the tent, and shaking its head • cried out in alarm • ran into the tent • searched for the baby • then waited as others searched while a dingo took Azaria back near its lair, where it peeled off the jumpsuit and ate her body.

1 Add any new information to the **questions and answers summary table** on page 5.

Your task is to critically evaluate the evidence and decide which of these two versions you think the evidence supports best.

Map of Ayers Rock and the camping ground



Evidence Sets summary table

- A** Work through your own evidence set and create a summary.
- B** Report to the class so that they can add your information and ideas to their summary table.
- C** Listen to the reports of other groups and add their ideas and information to your summary table.
- D** When you have considered all the evidence from all the groups go back to the sequence of events for each possible explanation on page 7. Which sequence does the evidence best support?
- E** Finally, go back to the **Chamberlain case questions and answers table** on page 5, and summarise your final answers.

Aspect	Evidence for	Evidence against	Your conclusion
1 CAMERA BAG Was it used to conceal the body?			
2 TENT Was there a dingo in the tent?			
3 DINGO Could a dingo take a baby?			
4 BLOOD Was Azaria's blood in the car and the tent?			
5 OPPORTUNITY Did Mrs Chamberlain have a chance to be alone and kill and dispose of the baby?			
6 MOTIVE Did Mrs Chamberlain have a motive to kill the baby?			
7 BEHAVIOUR Did the Chamberlains behave suspiciously?			
8 WEAPON Was the baby killed with scissors?			
9 MRS CHAMBERLAIN'S CLOTHES Did she get blood on her clothes from killing the baby?			
10 PUBLIC ATTITUDES Were people fair and reasonable in their judgements?			

EVIDENCE SET 1/5

SOURCE 1.1

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Greg Lowe, who was camped next to the Chamberlains on the night of Azaria's disappearance, told how he was talking to the Chamberlains at the barbecue area. He saw Mrs Chamberlain take Azaria and Aidan to the tent shortly after eight o'clock. She was away for eight to ten minutes before returning with Aidan. She brought back some beans from the car for him.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.2

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

A hitchhiker named **Lenehan** gave evidence that he had been injured in an accident, and had been picked up by the Chamberlains. The rear seat had been put down for him, and he was carried with his head facing towards the front of the vehicle. He was bleeding quite freely.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.3

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Constable Frank Morris was the first policeman to inspect the jumpsuit and other clothing found by a tourist. In his evidence he said that the top four buttons of the jumpsuit were undone. He had picked up the clothing to see if any human remains were there, and had put the clothing back exactly as he found it. He said that the singlet was inside the clothing — and he photographed it that way.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.4

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Professor Malcolm Chaikin, an expert in textiles (cloth), believed that marks on the jumpsuit were cuts rather than holes, and were made by sharp scissors. Tests carried out on similar fabrics had caused him to come to that conclusion. Tufts appeared after he cut the material, and 5 similar tufts were found in the camera bag and 3 in the car.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.5

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Professor Cameron, a British expert in wounds, said that it was impossible for a dingo's jaw to open wide enough to encompass a baby's head. He admitted that his beliefs came from studying plaster casts of dingo jaws, and not from observation of the animals.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.6

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Dr Vernon Plueckhahn, an expert in blood, claimed that blood can continue to ooze after death, and perhaps create patterns; he believed that a dingo's teeth might have plugged any immediate wounds, thus with little immediate loss of blood.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.7

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Tourist **Lorraine Hunter's son** had been attacked by a dingo at Ayers Rock the day before Azaria disappeared. Her son had been rolling on the ground with the dog, screaming. There was a mark on his arm where the dingo had bitten through his tracksuit. The dingo casually trotted off when she ran towards it.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.8

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Tourist **Sally Lowe** heard a cry from Azaria, at the same time that Michael Chamberlain claimed to have heard one.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.9

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Scientist **Dr Andrew Scott** had examined the tent, and had found only a few spots of blood. An area of blood stains on a side wall near the floor of the tent was examined, but in Dr Scott's opinion it was not human blood. He agreed that the spray mark of blood was consistent with a dingo carrying a bleeding baby. The volume and pattern of blood on Azaria's jumpsuit was consistent with large blood vessels of the neck being injured.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.10☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Sally Lowe, a mother herself and camped next door to the Chamberlains, said that Mrs Chamberlain was not sullen or angry, but on the contrary had a “new mum glow” about her.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.11☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Five common rumours circulated about the Chamberlains at the time of the trial.

- Azaria was abnormal or deformed.
- The name ‘Azaria’ means “sacrifice in the wilderness”.
- Azaria was dressed in a black sacrificial robe.
- A child’s coffin was found in the house.
- A family bible was underlined in red at a passage about a ‘ritual slaying’ by a tent peg.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.12☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Northern Territory policeman **John Lincoln** was a detective sergeant investigating the case at Ayers Rock. He took photographs of large paw prints a few centimetres from Azaria’s cot and found what was probably blood outside the tent. He collected samples, but they were not tested.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.13☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Tin chewed by dingoes during the making of a film about the Chamberlains

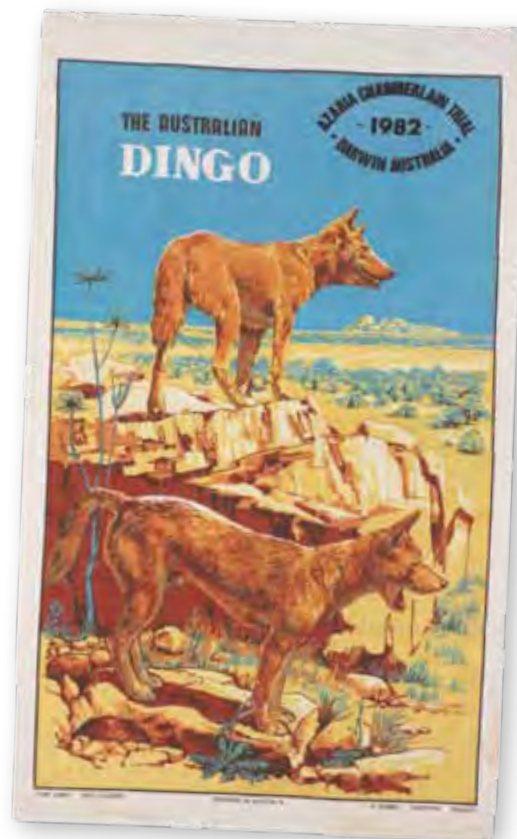


National Museum of Australia

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.14☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Chamberlain trial souvenir tea towel

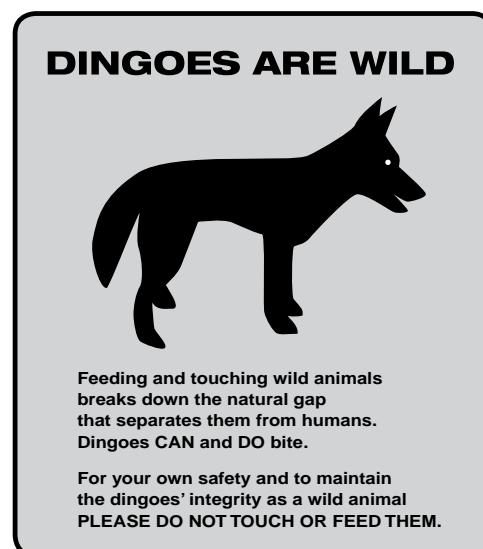


National Museum of Australia

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 1.14☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Sign ordered for Ayers Rock area in 1980 but not put up at the time.



Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.1

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Aidan made this statement to police shortly after the events of the night: "Me and Reagan were watching daddy cooking tea and mummy was there holding bubby in her arms. I think Reagan had some tea and then he went to bed in the tent. I think mummy took him to bed. After I finished my tea I said that I wanted to go to bed and mummy said that she would take me and bubby up to bed. I went up to the tent with mummy and bubby and I said to mummy is that all the tea that I get? Mummy said that I could have some more tea. While we were in the tent mummy put bubby down in the cot and then I went to the car with mummy and she got some bake[d] beans and then I followed her down to the BBQ area."

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.2

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Mrs Chamberlain said that she had cut up three jumpsuits to use as rags at about the time of Azaria's disappearance. She had also cut the feet off Reagan's jumpsuit to use as pyjamas for him. She had cut them with scissors. She had not cut Azaria's jumpsuit at any stage.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.3

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Camper **Wallace Goodwin** was the first person to discover the jumpsuit, singlet and nappy. He testified that the whole of the front of the jump suit was undone. There were no signs of disturbance of vegetation in the surrounding area. He said the clothing was lying there naturally, not artificially, on the ground. Goodwin had a camera with him, but had not photographed the clothing for fear that the camera might be confiscated. He believed that a child's singlet was beside the jumpsuit, not inside it.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.4

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Dr Harry Harding, a biologist expert in hairs, testified that he had found just two hairs on Azaria's jumpsuit, and neither was a dingo hair. On the singlet he found three non-human hairs, and in his opinion they were hairs from a cat.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.5

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Mrs Amy Whittaker, a nearby camper, sat with Mrs Chamberlain, who became agitated and said "The baby is out there. It must be out there under the bushes... they're looking in the wrong place... I will have to live with this for the rest of my life and I don't want to think that the baby is out there and, simply because they're looking in the wrong place, it will die."

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.6

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Les Harris, President of the Dingo Foundation, testified that in his opinion, based on years of study of the dingo, one could have enveloped the head of child in its mouth, and carried such a weight for long distances. A small child would have been seen by the dingo as viable prey. He produced photos taken of dingoes enveloping the head of a baby-sized doll in its jaws.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.7

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Katherine West told how a dingo had grabbed her by the elbow as she sat outside her tent in the same area used by the Chamberlains. This was the night before the disappearance.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.8

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Blood spots were found on the legs of Mrs Chamberlain's track suit pants. British expert **Professor Cameron** said that he did not think blood could have dripped on to them to form that pattern. They were more consistent with a spray of blood.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.9

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Professor Cameron believed that a lack of blood in the tent was inconsistent with a dingo theory. An attack by a dingo would, he believed, have crushed the head, severed the many arteries in the scalp, and caused a lot of bleeding.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.10☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Findings about five common rumours circulated about the Chamberlains at the time of the trial.

- i. Several doctors agreed that Azaria was a healthy, normal child.
- ii. The name 'Azaria' means "Blessed of God" or "The Lord's Helper".
- iii. Azaria did wear a black dress occasionally, because Mrs Chamberlain liked black. The dress was originally made for Aidan.
- iv. A child's coffin was used by Pastor Chamberlain in his 'stop smoking' campaigns, with parishioners invited to throw cigarette packs into it as he carried it past them. The idea came from a *Reader's Digest* article of January 1975.
- v. Red dye from an illustration in a bible owned by the Chamberlains had run into the text on the page opposite, about a 'ritual slaying' by a tent peg.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.14☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Model coffin used by Pastor Chamberlain in anti-smoking campaigns



National Museum of Australia

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.11☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Northern Territory Government scientist **Joy Kuhl** had been unable to find any blood on the camera bag. The slides she used to demonstrate the detection of foetal blood in the car were **not** slides of the actual blood samples tested, but were a set of demonstration ones showing what the theory said **would** be found, and not necessarily what **was** found.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.15☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Azaria's matinee jacket



NT Royal Commission

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.12☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

A fellow camper **Mrs West** testified that the Chamberlains were away from others for about two ten minute periods during the night.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 2.13☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Chamberlain family tent pegs



National Museum of Australia

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.1

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Scientist **Professor Barry Boettcher** claimed that scientist Joy Kuhl had drawn the wrong conclusions from the results of her tests. He believed that observations recorded by Kuhl in her work notes were not consistent with her conclusions that blood from an infant under 6 months had been detected during tests.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.2

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Mrs Chamberlain claimed that Azaria was wearing a matinee jacket on the night of the disappearance. No matinee jacket was found with the other clothing.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.3

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

A camper in the area said that “Mike [Chamberlain] and I kept going on searching for half an hour, and this was at full pelt through the scrub. At first Mike and I just froze for a few seconds then it was at full pace to get a torch and see what was going on.”

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.4

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Mrs Chamberlain had put Azaria to bed shortly after 8 pm. She testified that she had put her tracksuit pants on after 10 pm, and that the pants were folded inside the tent when Azaria disappeared.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.5

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Amy Whittaker, a nurse and social worker, camper at the site said that Mrs Chamberlain’s apparently cold and unfeeling attitude on the night “was perfectly consistent with the way some people normally react in grief and loss situations ... this is how people often react in the first stages of grief, it’s as if it isn’t happening, it’s part of the denial, it’s almost as if it’s happening to someone else – an emotional numbness.”

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.6

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Camper **Greg Lowe** remembered seeing Mrs Chamberlain going to the tent to put Azaria to bed. He saw her come out of the tent, not carrying the baby. She then walked to the car with Aidan, her left arm around him, and her right arm unimpeded.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.7

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Mr Chamberlain told the Court he had seen blood on the inside of the car before Azaria’s death, from a bleeding hitchhiker picked up earlier by the Chamberlain’s. Both Aidan and Reagan had suffered nosebleeds at various times.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.8

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Colin Lees, a friend of Mr Chamberlain, had several times seen the camera bag carried as Mr Chamberlain said it was, at his feet in the car.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.9

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Bernard Sims, a London scientist, was an expert in dog bites. He did not feel that a dingo could easily carry a large weight without resting to re-gain purchase on it. He found none of the anticipated dog bites on the clothing. He did not believe that a dingo could open its mouth sufficiently wide to envelop a baby’s head. He demonstrated this with a dingo’s jaw and a doll. He also had found none of the expected saliva on the clothing.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.10☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Tests were made on several Holden Torana hatchbacks with the same pattern of spray as was under the dashboard of the Chamberlains car. These were shown not to be blood but to be a chemical sound deadener, Dufix, which was sprayed under the car during manufacture, and sprayed under the dashboard through a small hole in the car's floor.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.11☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Ian Barker, prosecuting lawyer at the trial: "We can't make up a motive for the purposes of a case. We don't have a motive, we can't prove a motive, so our position here is quite simple, we can't prove a motive and I haven't come here to prove a motive, I've come here to prove a murder, and that is what had been proved."

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.12☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Medical evidence showed that Azaria was a perfectly normal and healthy child. Azaria had once fallen from a shopping trolley, but had been taken straight to a doctor and suffered no major injury.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.13☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Some **expert testing of the jumpsuit** suggested that the cuts and tears in the fabric were more consistent with the action of canine teeth than with scissors.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.14☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Sally Lowe, a camper at the site, had comforted Mrs Chamberlain at the tent. She had brought Reagan out of the tent. While doing this she saw a pool of blood in the tent, about 15cm x 10cm.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.15☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Azaria's sun dress



National Museum of Australia

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.16☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Chamberlain's tent at Ayers Rock, with sand dune in the background



NT Royal Commission

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 3.17☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Souvenir t-shirt



NT Royal Commission

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.1

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Northern Territory Government scientist **Joy Kuhl** claimed to have identified foetal blood (that is, the blood of a child under 6 months old) in 22 areas of the Chamberlain's car; the clasp, handle and zipper of the camera bag, the car floor and seat, the yellow towel, the car console, the handles of both door window winders, a chamois cover, scissors, and ten cent coin. One stain had been rectangular in shape a little bigger than the camera bag, and on the floor near the drivers' seat. She had, however destroyed all the original tests and photographs of the tests before the trial. This was normal practice in the laboratory.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.2

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Nurse Roberta Elston had driven with the Chamberlains from the camp site to the Uluru motel that night. She recalled seeing the camera bag at Mr Chamberlain's feet as he drove. She offered to take the bag, but Mr Chamberlain declined. She noticed that the bag looked full. She did not see or smell any blood in the car or anywhere else about the Chamberlains. She sat in the front passenger seat during the drive to the motel.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.3

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Rex Kuchel, a botanical expert, had studied the jumpsuit and the Ayers Rock area. He identified seven types of plant caught in the fibres of the jumpsuit. Those seven varieties of vegetation occur in the area between the road and the place where the clothing was found, and not around the campsite and the nearby sandhills area.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.4

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Mr Chamberlain disagreed with suggestions that he did not search much. He was searching for about one third of the night, venturing out about 5 or 6 times. He had been told to stay near the camp in case anything had been found by search parties, and in any case he wanted to be near his family.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.5

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Two weeks before Azaria's disappearance head ranger **Derek Roff** had requested ammunition to destroy dingoes. He warned that "children and babies ought to be considered possible prey."

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.6

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

The Chamberlains and others near them had seen a dingo catch a mouse outside their tent earlier on that evening.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.7

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Mrs Chamberlain told how Michael had said he thought he heard Azaria cry, so she went to the tent to check. When half way there she saw a dingo, but not properly because its nose was obscured. It was shaking its head vigorously. She suddenly realised that there was danger, and cried "Michael, Michael, the dingo's got my baby!" She ran to the tent to check on her children. Realising that Azaria was missing she chased in the direction she thought it had gone, and called out to her husband for a torch. She could not say exactly where the dingo was when she first saw it — other than that it was near the entrance to the tent, and it seemed to be having difficulty getting out of the tent, and was shaking its head.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.8

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Nobody was aware of bloodstains on Mrs Chamberlain's tracksuit pants until she pointed them out to her friend and asked her to take them to the dry cleaners. This was when she had returned to Mt Isa and was sorting through the clothes and equipment used on the holiday to Ayers Rock.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.9

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Blood expert **Dr Vernon Plueckhahn** thought that there might have been little bleeding because the dingo's teeth might have plugged the wounds.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.10☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

A friend, **Mrs Ransom**, testified that Mrs Chamberlain had always wanted a girl and had cared enthusiastically and well for Azaria.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.11☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Mrs Chamberlain's mother, **Mrs Avis Murchison**, while helping her daughter unpack the camping equipment, found two dingo prints on a blanket from inside the tent. Mrs Chamberlain immediately called the Alice Springs police, who arranged for a young policeman to collect the blanket. "As this policeman walked into the lounge room Lindy unfolded the blanket and held it up to him and he sort of stepped forward almost eagerly or excitedly, and he said 'Oh yes, there's no d...'" and then he didn't say any more. He just became official and we talked and the blanket was folded and put into a plastic bag carefully and sent to Alice Springs."

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.12☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Blood expert **Professor Barry Boettcher** after the trial contacted the German chemical company which made the reagent used by Northern Territory Government scientist Joy Kuhl to test for the existence of foetal blood in the car. The company admitted that the batch used by Kuhl was faulty and would indicate the existence of foetal blood even when tested on known adult blood.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.14☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Souvenir t-shirt



Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 4.13☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Aidan's parka with damage marked



Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

National Museum of Australia

SOURCE 5.1

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Scientists **Dr Jones and Professor Cameron** claimed that the blood spray pattern found under the dashboard of the Chamberlain car could have been produced by a cut in a small artery.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.2

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Dr Kenneth Brown, a dentist, had examined the holes in Azaria's singlet, and believed that none was caused by a dingo's teeth. One hole appeared to have been made by a slender, sharp, pointed object. He believed that a dingo could not have made the marks on the collar of the jumpsuit. Dr Brown had no experience in investigating animal marks in materials, nor did he have any expertise in the behaviour of fabrics when cut.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.3

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

A nearby camper, **Mrs Whittacker**, told Mr Chamberlain of Mrs Chamberlain's concern that searchers were looking in the wrong area, and suggested that he take Mrs Chamberlain into the area to help her peace of mind. They went off into the area for about 15 to 20 minutes.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.4

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Warning signs were posted in the camp area before Azaria's disappearance, advising visitors not to feed dingoes or to encourage them in any way.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.5

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Judith West was camped about 30 metres from the Chamberlains. On the night Azaria disappeared she heard a dog's low, throaty growl coming from that direction. She said the growl was a threatening one, the sort of growl her husband's dogs gave when he was slaughtering sheep on their farm.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.6

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Evidence given to police by **Aidan Chamberlain** shortly after the events: "When we got to the B.B.Q. area mummy opened the tin of bake[d] beans and daddy said is that bubby crying and mummy said I don't think so. Mummy went back to the tent and said the dingo has got my baby. While I was at the tent I was in my bed but I didn't go to sleep. Bubby's blankets were spread over the tent and I saw some blood on them. I saw some blood on a sleeping bag, I think it was on mummy's. I saw that the tent post at the front of the tent was knocked over away from the thing that it sits in, mummy told me not to touch it. I saw some blood on Reagan's parka on the sleeve. There was some blood on the wrist band of my parka. There was no blood on the parka before that night."

The statement was taken by **Sergeant Scott** of the Northern Territory police. He believed that Aidan had not been 'coached' in his statements, and that he seemed to be giving his own account of events. Mrs Chamberlain was present during the interview, but did not intervene or try to suggest answers to Aidan.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.7

☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Tourist **Max Whittacker** was involved with the search to find some clue of the whereabouts of Azaria Chamberlain. "Late in the night (approximately 12.45 am) together with several other people including my daughter Rosalie, I was called by ranger Derek Roff to help both him and an Aboriginal tracker follow dingo paw prints and the occasional scrape marks in the sand, which led in a westerly direction. Both Rosalie and I were led to believe that we were following the trail of a dingo which appeared to be carrying a heavy object, leaving scrape marks, which they believed to be the body of Azaria Chamberlain. I now know that the Aboriginal's account of following these tracks west that night has been denied by rangers and the Aboriginal's account of this incident has not been accepted."

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.8
☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

British scientist **Professor James Cameron** had written several books on the subject of wounds. He had extensive experience in examining bodies, including those with cut throats and animal wounds. His opinion was that a human had cut Azaria's throat, almost to the point of decapitation. In coming to this conclusion he had assumed that the jumpsuit had been done up to the neck when the wound, and the subsequent bleeding, occurred. He claimed that his ultra violet photography showed the impression of a small, bloodstained adult hand on the jumpsuit — a right hand under the left armpit, and the left hand on the right shoulder. Mrs Chamberlain later placed her hand over the area of the jumpsuit where Dr Cameron claimed there was a bloody hand print. Her hand was about 1.5 centimetres larger than the print, though the jumpsuit was empty during the demonstration and would have been filled if Mrs Chamberlain had made the impression in real life.

Dr Cameron admitted that his evidence in an English murder case, the Confait case, had led to a false conviction and imprisonment of the accused. In this case Dr Cameron had brought false beliefs to his examination of the evidence, which led him to draw false conclusions from it. In this the Chamberlain case Dr Cameron admitted that he had begun his investigation of the evidence with false beliefs about the jumpsuit — such as the number of studs undone when found (he thought 2, but in fact at least 4); a belief that Azaria was last seen alive at about 3.30 pm rather than 8 pm. He admitted that what he said were hand patterns might have been made coincidentally; and he also accepted that Azaria could have suffered a head and neck wound — though he maintained that he believed it to be a neck wound only.

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.9
☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Piece of the Chamberlain's car seat cover with stains, tested for blood



National Museum of Australia

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.10
☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Area near the Chamberlain tent



NT Royal Commission

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

SOURCE 5.11
☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

On the steps of Alice Springs court house



The Age

Type of evidence	Relevant aspect

- 1 What have you learned from this case study about primary and secondary evidence?
- 2 What do you think are the most important things in carrying out a historical investigation or inquiry?
- 3 What has your study of the Chamberlain case told you about Australian society at the time?
- 4 What does the Chamberlain case help you understand about:
 - ✦ expert evidence
 - ✦ eye-witness evidence
 - ✦ official evidence
 - ✦ the role of the media in our society
 - ✦ public opinion on controversial issues
 - ✦ the Australian legal system?
- 5 Look at the painting at the start of the unit. Identify and discuss the symbolism in it, and the messages about the Chamberlain case that it presents.
- 6 One type of evidence used in this unit has been various objects from the National Museum of Australia. Read the following extracts from the remarks of National Museum of Australia Senior Curator Sophie Jensen introducing a discussion with Mrs Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton in October 2007 and then answer these questions.
 - (i) How can objects help us understand history?
 - (ii) Are there some objects that should not be on public display?

Thoughts on the Chamberlain collection at the NMA

Sophie Jensen, Senior Curator

The material related to the Chamberlain story is one of the most fascinating collections that have been entrusted to the Museum. It contains over 250 items in total, which document every aspect of events surrounding the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain on 17 August 1980, and the subsequent experiences of her family. Formed through working closely with the Chamberlain-Creighton family, the collection will continue to be an invaluable resource for researchers, historians, curators and the public.

Putting together the collection has not been without controversy. Both the Museum and the Chamberlain-Creighton family have faced criticism on a range of fronts for our work together. During the early years of collecting many saw the collection as being somehow in bad taste. The collecting project was seen as a way in which the Chamberlains were profiting somehow from their experiences. A number of people expressed the opinion that the case was too recent and the wounds too raw for the Museum to have anything to do with it.

The publicity surrounding this exhibition was an interesting test of public opinion and mood 14 years after Azaria was taken, seven years after the royal commission headed by Justice Trevor Morling cleared the Chamberlains of any guilt or responsibility in Azaria's disappearance, and six years after the Supreme Court of Darwin quashed all convictions and declared the Chamberlains totally innocent.

Liz Noonan from one of the Chamberlain support groups contributed some of the joke T-shirts sold during the trial and stated in an interview that she felt that the exhibition was important as it kept the case in the public mind. Perhaps it was this very thing that made so many others uncomfortable with the display. There was a high level of discomfort and a feeling that this was too recent an event to be regarded as history. The case had gone from flavour of the month to something that left a bad taste in the mouths of many Australians, who would have preferred to forget. Most particularly, people were keen to forget their own fascination and participation in the frenzy of speculation that surrounded the case.

In 2001 we used Azaria's small black dress within the Eternity exhibition. Azaria's story was placed under the theme of mystery, not to examine the disappearance of Azaria herself but focusing on the mystery of the public's fascination with the case. Why did this one event cause such upheaval, disruption and attention? The black dress was, and is, such a powerful symbol of the ability of the public to judge – not judgements based on fact but judgements of people, of behaviour and of their own perceptions of what is right and wrong and therefore who is guilty and who is innocent. The real power of the Chamberlain collection and the display of the material is the ability of material culture, of real objects, to remind us all that we are not dealing with fiction, we are dealing with real people and real events.

In an article in 2000 written in the *Australian Magazine*, Paul Toohey wrote: 'Lindy and Michael Chamberlain became totally fictitious human beings, characters, unrecognisable even to themselves.' Lindy herself reminds us of the reality of the case in her autobiography *Through My Eyes* when she states: 'This is the story of a little girl who lived, and breathed, and loved and was loved.' This statement is really at the heart of the collection at the National Museum. More than anything else what these objects do is to connect us with immediacy and an intimacy to real people and to actual events. They often do this with a greater power than any words can manage. As a visitor stands before a case that contains possessions of a family that could have belonged to them, that could still belong to them, they are reminded that these events are not fiction, that these people are real, living, breathing individuals – people who felt, suffered and survived.

When viewed as a whole, the collection documents every stage of the events surrounding the Chamberlain case. We hold material that helps to document Azaria's own short life: dresses and jumpsuits belonging to and worn by that little, breathing, very real child. The camping trip itself is represented in a range of objects, including torches used to light the tent while Azaria was being fed and tent pegs that took on a special significance following the discovery by police of a bible in which they claimed that the story of the sacrifice of Jael using a tent bag was found supposedly marked in the Chamberlains' house. This parka is one of the items of clothing worn on the evening of 17 August, and it bears the marks of forensic investigation, as do the mattresses from the tent from which Azaria was taken.

Other aspects of the case are represented in a number of the scene of incident maps, and other objects such as a souvenir tea towel from the trial - a tasteful memento to take home from your visit to Darwin.

Some of the objects like the black dress have become iconic. Some take on significance as you read the transcripts of the trials and inquests, or Lindy's autobiography. Important markers in the trial such as the space blanket on which the dingo prints were discovered, only to disappear once the blanket was taken by police, or the miniature coffin used by Michael Chamberlain in his anti-smoking campaigns were seen by police as further evidence of the Chamberlain's guilt.

When seen together these objects demonstrate their ability to illustrate some of the key aspects of the events surrounding the Chamberlains' ordeal. They speak to issues of public opinion, media, ethics, life behind bars, family relationships, religious intolerance, as well as attitudes towards the Australian environment, women and justice.

Lindy's story is still featured in the Eternity gallery. The object on display is a piece of metal from the Chamberlains' Torana that was said to have been splattered with Azaria's blood. This object speaks strongly to two issues: first the fallibility of science. The inability of a scientist to distinguish between sound-deadening fluid and blood demonstrates that scientists are still human and that scientific evidence is still a matter of interpretation and extrapolation. It is in the face of this type of evidence that it is still relevant to wonder: what if it were me sitting in the dock? How much trust do we place in forensic science and what role does it play in our justice system? Importantly, the object still speaks to the issue of public fascination. As the majority of content within the Eternity gallery is delivered electronically, we can see on any given day how often people are accessing stories. Without fail Lindy's story is the second-most accessed story on any given day. She's beaten only by the Wiggles and there are four of them, so it is really not a competition.

This continuing fascination is testament to the power of the collection and the importance that this story has for the public's understanding and imagining of Australian history.

www.nma.gov.au/audio/transcripts/NMA_Chamberlain_20071014.html

You can find many interesting comments by Lindy Chamberlain about the case if you read the interview in full.

What happened to the Chamberlains?

A CHRONOLOGY

17 August 1980	Azaria Chamberlain disappears from a camping ground at Ayers Rock.
24 August 1980	Azaria's clothing found at the base of the Rock, near some dingo lairs, about 4km away from the camp site.
15 December – 20 December 1980	Coroner Dennis Barritt rules that a dingo took Azaria, but there had been intervention by unknown humans in disposing of the body.
19 September 1981	N.T. Chief Minister orders the renewal of police investigations after hearing that a British expert believed from a study of Azaria's jumpsuit that her throat had been cut.
20 November 1981	The N.T. Supreme Court quashes the finding of Coroner Barritt.
14 December 1981 – 2 February 1982	New Coroner's inquiry before Coroner Gerry Galvin. Mrs Chamberlain committed for trial for murder, and Mr Chamberlain for being an accessory after the fact. Both released on bail.
13 September 1982	Trial of the Chamberlains in the N.T. Supreme Court at Darwin (transferred from Alice Springs for fear of not being able to find an unbiased jury).
29 October 1982	Mrs Chamberlain found guilty by the jury and sentenced to life imprisonment; Mr Chamberlain also found guilty and given a suspended 18 month sentence.
19 November 1982	Mrs Chamberlain released on bail to appeal to the Federal Court, two days after giving birth to a daughter.
29 April 1983	Leave to appeal to the Federal Court refused. The Chamberlains seek leave to appeal to the High Court. Mrs Chamberlain returned to Berrimah jail in Darwin.
1983	Screening of the Australian TV docu-drama, <i>Who Killed Baby Azaria?</i>
22 February 1984	High Court confirms the conviction 3:2.
2 February 1986	A baby's jacket, identified as Azaria's, discovered at the base of Ayers Rock near previously unknown dingo lairs.
7 February 1986	N.T. Government release Mrs Chamberlain and announce a Royal Commission into the case—though whatever the findings she will not be returned to jail.
8 May 1986 – 22 May 1987	Royal Commission sits in Darwin, Melbourne and Sydney. Justice Morling concludes that the Chamberlains' conviction ought not to stand.
1986	Publication of the influential book about the case, <i>Evil Angels</i> , by John Bryson.
1987	Release of the film <i>Evil Angels</i> starring Meryl Streep.
June 1987	N.T. Government announces that the Chamberlains are pardoned.
15 September 1988	N.T. Supreme Court reviews the case and declares the conviction quashed.
July 1990	N.T. Government and the Chamberlains fail to come to any agreement over compensation.
1992	Chamberlains were awarded AU\$1.3 million in compensation for wrongful imprisonment, a sum that covered approximately one quarter of their legal expenses.
1992	Lindy remarries, becomes Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton.
December 1995	Third inquest before Coroner John Lowndes finds that 'Azaria Chantel Loren Chamberlain died at Ayers Rock on 17 August 1980. As to the cause of her death and the manner in which she died the evidence adduced does not enable me to say. I therefore return an open finding and record the cause and manner of death as unknown.'
2002	The opera <i>Lindy</i> performed for the first time, at the Sydney Opera House.
2004	Screening of Australian mini-series <i>Through My Eyes</i> , based on Lindy Chamberlain's autobiography.

SOME RESOURCES FOR INVESTIGATING THIS CASE FURTHER

The Chamberlain website www.lindychamberlain.com
 Lindy Chamberlain, *Through My Eyes*, William Heinemann Australia, 1990
 John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, Penguin, 1986
 Ken Crispin, *The Crown Versus Chamberlain*, Albatross, 1987
 Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained: The Fight to Free Lindy Chamberlain*. The Federation Press, 1989
 TR Morling, *Royal Commission into the Chamberlain Convictions*, Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, 1987