

This workshop outline was the one used by the Education team at the Australian War Memorial in conjunction with the *Captured in colour: rare photographs from the First World War* exhibition.

The workshop is aimed at primary school-aged children. Intended for our school holiday audience, it was developed with the learning perspectives outlined in national and state curriculum documents in mind. The aim of this workshop is to:

- cover the development and process of colour photography
- develop a timeline in history relevant to this exhibition
- explore primary and secondary colours as they relate to the photographic process
- develop an understanding of visual literacy using an inquiry-based learning method.

Activities for Primary Students

Main Themes

The workshop covers a tour of the exhibition: focusing on interpreting photographic portraits, it looks at the use of costume, gesture and facial expression. The workshop also involved an introduction to the early process of glass plate colour photography, as outlined in the exhibition's text panels and further explained on the Memorial's website (www.awm.gov.au). The workshop also offers the opportunity to explore the primary and secondary colours through the process of colour photography. Students then dress up and role-play the gestures used in the exhibition. They could also create their own narrative and have their portrait taken using a polaroid or digital camera.

Suggested group size: 15 max.

Staff needed: Two

Total time: Approx. 1 ½ hours

Age range: 5–11yrs

Workshop outline

Gallery component (30–45 mins)

The group tours the exhibition, looking at the use of gesture, costume, and facial expression in portraiture; this could include role-play work with children in front of the works, introducing the concept of visual literacy through portraits and critical thinking.



Workshop or studio space (15 mins)

An opportunity to introduce the concept of primary and secondary colours in connection with the photographic process, or to explain the process of glass plate colour photography by using

- a transparency made from a copy of one of the photographs from the exhibition
- a light source
- coloured cellophane paper.

Alternatively, you could use paint to explore primary and secondary colours. For more information read *Elusive Colour* at www.awm.gov.au/captured/colour/

Workshop or studio space (30 mins)

Students choose characters from the photographs and dress up like them. They then apply knowledge and understanding of the use of costume, gesture, and drama in portraiture. Using a polaroid camera would enable each student to take home a photograph of themselves in costume and character. It is recommended that you have another activity for the rest of the group to do while these photographs are being taken. Perhaps they could undertake an abstract colouring-in activity using copies of some of the prints from the exhibition.

If you wish to discuss the workshop further, contact the Education office at the Australian War Memorial on (02) 6243 4268.



Educator notes

Inquiry technique to use with the portraits in the *Captured in colour: rare photographs from the First World War* exhibition

The purpose of a portrait

Portraiture has a history as long as human existence. For thousands of years we have created portraits for many reasons, in many media. The Egyptians created sacred portraits of their pharaohs inside the pyramids and the indigenous peoples of Australia left behind their portraits in the stories told through their rock art. In modern western civilisation, artistic portraits were traditionally for the wealthy and important: kings and queens, or members of the nobility. The invention of photography in the 1840s led to a revolution in the history of portraiture. As the medium reached a wider public, more people had the opportunity to have portraits of themselves made or come into contact with the photographic portraits of others.

The photograph became an important part of documenting history. The American Civil War (1861–1865) was one of the first conflicts to be recorded using early black-and-white photography. The photographs in *Captured in colour* are rare because they are in colour, and because they document the first war people had experienced that spanned much of the world.

Today photographs are part of our everyday lives; they are everywhere. At the time the photographs in this exhibition were originally taken, such images would only have been seen by a small percentage of the population, as lantern slides or as prints in rare books and magazines.

These photographs are a record of our history, and they are also part of Australia's national identity and memory. They help us remember the faces and stories of those who sacrificed their lives in war.

Activities and questions to help with inquiry technique

Compare and contrast these two photographs.



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Costume

What are they wearing?

What colour is each man's uniform?

Who else wears red and sits on a throne?

How do you think wearing these uniforms makes them feel?

Is it before or after the battle?

Is it hot or cold?

Which man looks more important than the other, and how can you tell?

Both uniforms are French army ones. Which is the older uniform?

How does the title of the photograph help you?

What has changed about the uniform and why?

Which uniform works better as camouflage?

Facial expression

Can you see their facial expressions?

What might they think of themselves?

What do you think they might have said to each other in this situation?

What is different about their faces, and what can we tell about them?

Which one is looking at you, and how does that make you feel?

Can you see a story in their faces?

Gesture

How are they standing, and how does this make you feel about them?

Copy the pose. How does it make you feel?

Which one is posing, and which is simply standing?

Which one looks more tired?

Would you have the same impression of them if they were lying down relaxing under a tree?

Which pose is more formal?

Composition and other contextual information

What else is in the photograph?

Were the photographs taken inside or outside?

Are they in battle?

Why do you think these photographs were taken?

Are both of the photographs about the people or something else. How does the photograph reveal its purpose?

Where might these photographs have originally been displayed or kept?

What do the titles of the work tell us?

What are the dates of the photographs?

How important is the colour in these photographs for understanding the story?

Why do you think it was important to take a photograph of the flags or "colours" (as they are properly called)?

Do you think the colours are important to this soldier. If so, how does the photograph tell us why they are? What has happened to the colours of this French regiment?



Role play activity for workshop

Role play can enable the children to explore the narrative in a portrait

First, demonstrate the different ways in which you can affect the way people feel about you, by showing an angry expression on your face and standing with your arms crossed. Then smile with your arms open as if to say “welcome”. Ask the children to describe your gesture, using words that describe emotions. Make sure they explore all options – happy and sad are at opposing ends of the spectrum. Help them to think of other words that may be more accurate.

Next, ask two students to tell a story without speaking. Get them to act it out in front of your group. Give them a character and a situation, and then ask them to freeze in a pose that tells the story. Then ask the group to explore the story in the “freeze”. How did the children show their feelings? How did they tell a story?

This activity will warm them up for the “portrait posing in costume” later on in the workshop.

Alternative activities for Primary students

Creative thinking

Using this photograph, *French women working in the snow*, explain to the students that little is known about these women or what they are doing, but that we can imagine the story just from looking at the photograph.



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To get them talking, lead the group with questions, such as:

Is it hot or is it cold?

Are they wealthy and important people?

Do they know each other?

Are they related?

Do they know a man who might be fighting?

What are they doing?

Where are they going?

Are they hungry?

Are they tired?

Are they cold?

Creative writing activity

Ask the students to write a story about the photograph of the *French women working in the snow*, using the same questions to prompt them. They may want to finish the story at home.

