

# Stage 4

## Decoding History

# Student Workbook



Temora Aviation Museum

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[www.aviationmuseum.com.au](http://www.aviationmuseum.com.au)

# Decoding History

## What is History?

1. Brainstorm the definition of history and the key terminology used during its study. Using the key terms come up with a definition of 'history'.

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What are the definitions of 'heritage' and 'conservation'.

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## Your History

- Find out where your family members were during WWII and what they did. Interview a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent about their experiences during WWII. Collect copies of family photos, letters, clothing or objects from the period. Compile a power point report on their family history during the period.

# Decoding History

## Primary vs. Secondary Data Sources

*Primary sources are created in the period that you are researching such as a newspaper article that was written about an event when the event occurred.*

*Secondary sources are created by someone who was not at the event or time but has instead used primary sources to learn about the event*

**1) Look at the list below. Circle primary data sources and underline the secondary data sources**

photo	website	object
newspaper article	book- Ron Maslin	oral history
opinion/editorial article c.1940	documentary	Museum Display Board
Novel	poem	Source Booklets

**2) Which source is more reliable and why?**

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**There is a further category division that must be made that will influence the potential useability of primary sources**  
*- Fact and Opinion*

**3) What is the difference between the two and why would one be more reliable than the other?**

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**4) Look at the list below. Circle fact and underline opinion.**

Photo	website	book- Ron Maslin
object	Museum Display Board	novel
Documentary	oral history	

Some examples of Primary and Secondary sources are on the next page.

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## Primary vs. Secondary Data Sources

The following interview will teach you more about Primary Source information, and what life was like at 10EFTS

### **Corporal Jean Bruce WAAAF**

#### 1) What was your job?

I was a fabric worker. My work involved folding parachutes in the parachute section. As the boys brought them in they were unfolded and hung in a flu for several hours then laid out on a large table which had a lighted glass section. The parachute was moved over the lighted glass so we could inspect the silk for the slightest hole. The area on which any damage was noted was recorded and repairs carried out by one of the senior girls.



#### 2) As a fabric worker do you have to repair the tiger moths?

Yes, the repairs involved special stitching, or the replacement of a section of fabric. We then applied several coats of red dope. As we were using dope we were required to drink plenty of milk.

#### 3) How were your meals?

The meals were passable, but I still remember the herrings, or goldfish as we called them, which we had on Fridays.



#### 4) What was your favourite past time?

I started a garden with a row of sweet peas. Some of us also used to go for walks in the bush beyond the airfield. We would get bread and butter from the kitchen and go yabbing.

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## Reading a Site

Locate the below images on the site map by drawing a line to each



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**The Herald**  
13 August 1940

## **MINISTERS DIE IN CRASH**

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**TEN VICTIMS OF  
R.A.A.F. DISASTER**  
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### **Army Chief Included**

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From Our Special Representative

CANBERRA, Tuesday. - Ten people, including three Federal Cabinet Ministers and the Chief of the General Staff were killed when an Royal Australian Air Force bomber crashed in hilly country about eight miles from Canberra, and a mile from the Canberra Air Force aerodrome, about 10.15a.m. today.

#### *Those Killed Were:*

Mr. G.A. STREET, Minister for the Army and Minister for Repatriation.  
MR. J.V. FAIRBAIRN, Minister for Air and Civil Aviation.  
SIR HENRY GULLETT, Vice-President of the Executive Council  
GENERAL SIR BRUDENELL WHITE, Chief of the General Staff.  
LIEUT.-COL. FRANCIS THORNTHWAITE, Staff Officer to Gen. White.  
MR. R. ELFORD, Private Secretary to the Minister for Air.

#### *Air Force Crew of Four:*

FLIGHT-LIEUT. RICHARD EDWARD HITCHCOCK, 28, married, pilot  
PILOT OFFICER RICHARD FREDERICK WIESENER, 29, married, co-pilot.  
CORPORAL JOHN FREDERICK PALMER, 29, married, wireless operator  
AIRCRAFTMAN CHARLES JOSEPH CROSDALE, 30, married, flight mechanic.

The men were attached to a squadron at Laverton R.A.A.F. station.

## **Sheet of Flame Follows Explosion**

THE plane was seen by watchers at the Canberra Aerodrome and Air Force station to circle the drome, and then rise and head south. It disappeared behind a low tree-dotted

The office staff of the Minister for the Army watching from a window in the the Minister's office at Parliament house had seen the plane arrive, and

### **War Leaders In Today's Disaster**



Mr. Street



Mr. Fairbairn



Sir Henry Gullett

# Decoding History

hill. There was an explosion and a sheet of flame, followed by a dense cloud of smoke

An emergency squad from the Canberra R.A.A.F. training squadron left immediately. To reach the plane the squad had to drive along the Queanbeyan Road for about three miles and then across rough country for about a mile.

When they arrived the plane was blazing fiercely, and it was impossible to approach within 50 yards of it. The men were forced to stand by without being able to rescue the occupants from incineration.

The Canberra Fire Brigade and Ambulances from Queanbeyan and Canberra, as well as several Air Force tenders, arrived soon afterwards and fire extinguishers were played on the blazing wreckage.

After about half-an-hour, when the blaze had died down, it was seen that the entire undercarriage, wings and structural supports of the plane had been torn away and were a smouldering mass in which were the charred bodies of those on board.

All that was left of what had been a modern bomber was the rudder and tail pointing in the air at an angle of 45 degrees.

A charred tree was in the middle of the wreckage, and it is thought that the pilot, in attempting to make a forced landing, crashed into it after missing a higher tree about 20 yards from the wreckage.

As soon as possible ambulance officers and the emergency squad dragged from the wreckage the bodies of those on board. They were taken back into the Canberra Morgue by the Canberra ambulance and Air Force tender.

An armed Air Force guard was placed on the main road and near the scene of the crash to keep back many sightseers who rushed from Canberra and Queanbeyan by car as soon as the disaster became known.

had remarked "The Brigadier will soon be here."

They saw the plane circle and disappear from sight. Soon afterwards word came from the aerodrome that the plane had crashed.

The Private Secretary to the Prime Minister (Mr. Tritton), Private Secretary to the Minister for the Army (Mr. Hayter) and the Assistant Private Secretary to Mr. Fairbairn immediately drove to the scene of the crash to identify the bodies.

The Postmaster-General (Mr. Thorby), and the Treasurer (Mr. Spender) rushed out to the crash.

The Minister for Customs (Senator McLeay) was to have travelled by the fatal plane. Mr. Street had telephoned him yesterday asking whether he would like to fly to Canberra with him this morning. Senator McLeay refused the invitation because he had an important conference on the train with the Controller-General of Customs.

It was only by chance that the Assistant Treasurer (Mr. Fadden) was not on the Plane. He was in Melbourne yesterday and was invited by Mr. Fairbairn to join the party, but decided to take the train instead. Mr. Fadden was one of the first to hear the news at Parliament House.

The accident, which was seen by 50 or 60 people, including a number of Air Force officers and men on Canberra aerodrome, was vividly described by eye-witnesses.

Flying conditions were almost ideal when the machine arrived from Melbourne on schedule, and after a preliminary circuit of the Canberra aerodrome evidently to ensure that all was clear for landing, headed out to the west to make the final glide into the aerodrome.

The sky was flecked by a few high white clouds and there was a moderate easterly breeze blowing.



Sir Brudenell White

## INVESTIGATION AT CANBERRA

The Air Accidents Investigation Committee is at work on preliminaries for the inquiry, which will be held at Canberra.

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## Mystery Investigation: Canberra Disaster



Source: Canberra Times 14<sup>th</sup> August 1940

After reading the newspaper article on the previous two pages. Answer the following questions.

1) What is the key theme/issue displayed in this newspaper article?

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2) How experienced was the pilot Bob Hitchcock?

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3) What were the weather conditions like that day?

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4) Who was the pilot-in-command?

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5) What were the findings of the Court of Inquiry?

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A close re-examination of the fatal event, which killed ten people in total (including 3 war time government ministers), uncovered evidence indicating that Air Minister Fairbairn (and not the experienced RAAF pilot Bob Hitchcock) may have been flying the plane when it met its fiery destiny. Tales were also told of the charred bodies of victims being misidentified as smoldering stumps and improper collection and documentation of evidence resulting in the true nature of the tragedy being shrouded in mystery forever.

Please visit the below site:

<http://www.asc.asn.au/blog/2013/08/31/event-review-canberras-deadliest-air-disaster-re-examined/>

**What is the main issue of controversy regarding this crash?**

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Below: Photos of the crash site: Canberra air disaster 1940 which killed 10 people .



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## Initial Investigation of Canberra Disaster

What are the reasons SUPPORTING/INDICATING claims that someone other than the pilot was flying the Hudson when it crashed?

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What are some of the reasons SUPPORTING/INDICATING the pilot Bob Hitchcock was flying the plane and may have been at fault?

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How do you think this disaster impacted Australia? (Think of the time it happened and who was on the plane)

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# Decoding History

## My Research Project

First decide on a topic for your project. Do some research online to find out more information.

- The Empire Air Training Scheme and No 10 EFTS
- Warbirds
- Pilots in the RAAF
- Canberra Air Disaster

Next formulate your hypothesis about this historical topic e.g. Topic is 10EFTS and Hypothesis could be A trainee's life was hard work, sweat and tears.

**Focusing on this historical topic what else do you want to know?**

- *Who is involved?*
- *What was their role or activity?*
- *Why were they here?*
- *When – create a timeframe?*
- *How did they ....?*

**To answer your questions what other types of information or source material might you need to find?**

- *Archival records*
- *Photographs*
- *Objects*
- *Oral history transcripts*

**What type of secondary source would you want to create? (What format do you want your project to be when it's finished.)**

- *static museum display*
- *television documentary*
- *website*
- *book*

# Decoding History

## My Research Project

Topic:

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Hypothesis :

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Questions:

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Sources:

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Type of secondary source:

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