

Kokoda

A major two part documentary series based on the book by Paul Ham



A **STUDY GUIDE** BY ROBERT LEWIS



<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>



<http://www.theeducationshop.com.au>



From the corridors of power to the blood-stained battlefields of the Papua New Guinea highlands, *Kokoda* (Don Featherstone, 2009), tells the story of the brutal World War Two military campaign between Australia and Japan that changed the course of Australian history.

WHILE most Australians have heard of the Kokoda Track – the scene of an eight-month campaign that led to the defeat of the advancing Imperial Japanese Army and proved a turning point for the Allies in World War Two – few know much about the struggle that forged its treacherous reputation. No army had fought in such terrible conditions; no General believed it possible.

Fought without mercy by foes with everything to lose, the ferocious battle for the Kokoda Track saw bravery and atrocity, and noble and malicious intent on both sides.

From day one of the Kokoda campaign, the fighting was politicised, mismanaged and mythologised.

Kokoda delves behind the myths of war to tell the story from both sides of the conflict, giving an authentic and comprehensive account of the desperate

confusion of war, the intricate connections between the frontline soldiers and military high command, and the political agendas that influenced the campaign and continue to percolate through contemporary Australian society.

The series follows in the footsteps of Australia's ill-equipped and poorly trained conscripts, the 'chocolate soldiers', and the battle-hardened troops of the Australian Imperial Forces, walking the treacherous 98-kilometre jungle trail from Port Moresby to Kokoda, then on to the blood-stained battlegrounds of Gona, Buna and Sanananda.

The two-hour documentary series includes interviews with Australian and Japanese veterans and historians, previously unpublished documents and letters to loved ones, as well as archival footage, footage from the track and dramatisations filmed in Australia and Papua New Guinea. The diaries of embedded

war correspondents Okada Seizo and Chester Wilmot paint an intimate picture of how soldiers on both sides felt during the battles.

The series introduces the key commanders, including controversial American General Douglas MacArthur, Australia's General Sir Thomas Blamey and Japanese Commander Tomitaro Horii, for whom defeat in a campaign that had cost thousands of Japanese lives was intolerable.

Kokoda examines the Australian public's response to military campaigns – both then and now – and the myths that they engender.

The two x 57-minute documentary series is based on the best-selling book, *Kokoda*, by Paul Ham (HarperCollins Australia, Sydney, 2004).

CURRICULUM APPLICABILITY

Kokoda is a suitable classroom resource for middle to upper secondary students in:

- History
- Society and Environment
- Australian Studies
- English
- Media Studies

BACKGROUND

The following material on the state of the war by 1942 may be useful for students who have not yet studied any aspect of the war before watching *Kokoda*.

A. HOW WERE AUSTRALIANS INVOLVED IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR BEFORE 1942?

To understand the significance of what happened in 1942 on the Kokoda Track you need to be able to explain why and how Australia was involved in the Second World War up to early 1942.

Divide the class into six groups. Each group is to take the summary of a period of the war and report back on it to the whole class.

Group 1 – 1939

During the 1930s, Germany's Nazi government was expanding its territory and re-arming. In 1939 it threatened to invade Poland. Finally confronting German expansionism, Britain and France warned Germany that if it invaded Poland, they would declare war. Germany did invade on 1 September, and on 3 September Britain and France declared war on Germany.

Most Australian people felt very closely tied to Britain because of the historical connection. They were also opposed to German expansion by force. When the British Government declared war, Prime Minister Menzies announced 'Australia is also at war'.

With the coming of war, Australia had to make a decision: whether to look after home defence (there was a fear that Japan, which had invaded Manchuria in 1931 and China in 1937, might try to expand its power even further in Asia),

or to commit troops to help Britain fight against Nazism in Europe. Britain had assured Australia that it would protect it from Japan – it expected that sending a British Pacific fleet to the British naval base at Singapore would stop any Japanese advance in the Pacific towards Australia. This had been the basis of Australia's pre-war defence planning. So, Australia committed itself to the European war.

While Australia had started a re-armament program before 1939, it was not well prepared to fight a war, and in this early part of the conflict Menzies stressed that it was 'business as usual' while an effective fighting force and supply system were developed. Those elements of the Royal Australian Navy that were overseas were put under British command; the Army began recruiting and training men, and under the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) recruits were sent to Canada and South Africa for training and then posted to serve in Royal Air Force (RAF) units (though where possible they maintained their separate RAAF identity).

Present a brief summary of the key events of this period involving Australia.

Group 2 – 1940

EUROPE

After the invasion of Poland in 1939, there had been little fighting. Then in the summer of 1940 Germany attacked. Its blitzkrieg ('lightning war') used aircraft and tanks to move quickly and break through the defences of most western European nations. After June, Britain remained the only European country still at war against Germany, but German forces in France were now less than fifty kilometres from the British coast.

The Germans then tried to gain control of the air over Britain to enable them to launch a seaborne invasion of that nation. In the Battle of Britain Germany tried to destroy both the British fighter planes and their bases. They failed. About thirty Australian airmen were involved in this ferocious air battle as part of the Fighter Command RAF. Once defeated in this way, Germany switched its tactics to bombing British industrial

centres and large cities.

MEDITERRANEAN AND NORTH AFRICA

When Italy entered the war on the side of Germany new theatres of war – the Mediterranean and North Africa – opened up.

Royal Australian Air Force planes and Royal Australian Navy ships were now sent into action in this area. In July, HMAS *Sydney* sank the Italian cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni*, a significant Australian naval success of the war.

HOME FRONT

The Commonwealth government worked to increase industrial production as fast as possible – this was to be a war that would be won as much by the factories as by the men and women in uniform. Increasingly, civilian production was changed to production of war-related goods.

Present a brief summary of the key events of this period involving Australia.

Group 3 – 1941

EUROPE

In July 1941, Germany broke its peace pact with Soviet Russia and invaded. This meant that Germany now had to supply troops against Russia as well as in Western Europe.

MEDITERRANEAN AND NORTH AFRICA

Australian troops had been sent to the Middle East early in 1941. They were very successful in defeating Italian troops at Bardia, Benghazi and Tobruk, and Vichy French troops in Syria. The biggest test came against the crack German troops who were trying to take the port of Tobruk, which would allow them to advance to Egypt. Allied troops, including many thousands of Australians, set up their defences, and were able to hold off repeated and determined attacks. The Germans had contemptuously referred to the defenders as 'rats' in their holes – the Australian and British troops took on this title with pride, and called themselves the 'Rats of Tobruk'.

The Australians fought well and successfully in North Africa, but disaster struck in Greece and Crete. The 6th Division had been sent to Greece to help oppose enemy invasion. This was a disastrous decision. The German forces inflicted heavy casualties among the Australians and the British, and over 2000 were taken prisoner. The survivors retreated to Crete, where the same thing happened – defeat, more dead, and over 3000 Australian prisoners taken. The Royal Navy, including Australian ships, suffered heavy losses in ships sunk and damaged while successfully carrying out the evacuation of Greece and Crete.

Australian ships were active in the Mediterranean against the Italian navy, and supported Australian and other Commonwealth troops at Tobruk, where the ships would run supplies in to the besieged troops by night, while frequently under heavy attack from the German Air Force. The Navy ships *Waterhen* and *Parramatta* were sunk while providing supplies to the troops at Tobruk, the latter with only twenty-three survivors from a crew of 160.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The 8th Division (about 15,000 men) was formed and most were sent to Malaya and Singapore, as garrison troops to protect that area from any possible Japanese invasion. RAAF Squadrons had been there since late 1940, and made up about one quarter of the British air garrison at the time of the Japanese attack.

HOME FRONT

Industry continued to be the main focus of the war effort, with almost all civilian production being changed over to war materials.

The increasingly serious war situation meant that as many men as possible were needed in combat and direct support roles – so the services decided to start replacing men in non-combat roles with women. For the first time, women were now allowed to join the armed services: the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF) was formed in February, the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) in April, and the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) in July.

There was also an increased compulsory call up of men aged between eighteen and sixty for the Australian Military Forces – the militia, the conscripted body that was reserved for home defence of Australia.

There were several German raider attacks in the Indian Ocean, and enemy mines were laid in busy shipping lanes.

In November the greatest Australian naval disaster occurred – the sinking of the HMAS *Sydney* by a German raider off the coast of Western Australia. All 645 crew died while destroying the *Kormoran*, which was threatening sea supply lines. The location of the wreck of the *Sydney* was only discovered in 2008.

Present a brief summary of the key events of this period involving Australia.

Group 4 December 1941 – February 1942: Japanese entry and victories

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Japanese government was increasingly dominated by nationalistic and militaristic individuals and groups. These leaders wanted to secure access to vital natural resources that were essential for Japan to increase its growth and power. In 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria to secure raw materials. In 1937 it invaded China. Australia stopped all iron ore exports to Japan in 1938, and the United States and Netherlands East Indies stopped oil exports there in 1941.

The Japanese now implemented their idea of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere – they would invade and 'liberate' southern and south-eastern Asia from Western colonial powers. Japan would then dominate the area, and have access to the vital oil and rubber of the area.

Ships were essential for this plan to succeed – they were needed to carry the troops, supplies and planes.

The United States was the only power that could possibly stop Japan's expansion, as it had the only fleet capable of matching Japan's fleet in the Pacific. It could also threaten the sea lanes that Japan needed to send its new resources to Japan.

On 7 December 1941 the Japanese attacked the United States base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, hoping to destroy a major part of the American fleet. But the American aircraft carriers that could provide the means of attacking Japanese invasion forces were not in port. The attack also failed to destroy the oil supplies held there. Had the aircraft carriers and oil reserves been destroyed, the outcome of the Second World War may have been very different.

Japan also attacked Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaya, Guam and Wake Island at the same time as attacking Pearl Harbor. The Japanese now seemed invincible, and swept through Asia and much of the Pacific area.

The entry of Japan into a Pacific war threw Australia's war strategy into chaos. Our greatest fear – an expansionary Asian power with a strong navy capable of bringing the war right into Australian territory – was realised.

Australian, British and other Commonwealth troops resisted the Japanese invasion with mixed success. The Japanese were outnumbered by the Allied forces, but they were battle veterans and used the terrain much better. There was some heavy fighting – the greatest number of Australian combat deaths of any campaign came in the two months of the Malaya campaign – but there was also much retreating, confusion and in some cases panic. The Allied troops retreated to Singapore and, faced with threats to the civilian population and the certainty that their water supply would be cut off, the Allied forces surrendered. Singapore was supposed to protect Australia. It fell, and with it the belief that Britain could protect Australia. The Malaya/Singapore campaign was Australia's greatest disaster of the war. It lost twenty-five per cent of all battle deaths against the Japanese in those eight weeks. Australia also lost over 15,000 men and a number of women nurses who were prisoners of war, more than one third of whom would die over the next three years, some of them brutally murdered.

The Navy also suffered losses. HMAS *Perth* was sunk on 1 March, with 457 dead in action or afterwards as POWs. HMAS *Yarra* was also sunk in March, with only thirteen of the 151 crew surviv-

ing. Navy ships *Vampire* and *Voyager* were also sunk in this period.

The Japanese took Java, capturing an Allied force that included the Australian 'Blackforce' of about 3000 men after ten days of fighting, and continued to sweep towards New Guinea. Three Australian Battalion groups were sent to defend Ambon (Gull Force), Timor (Sparrow Force) and Rabaul (Lark Force). Each comprised about 1000 men, and they were poorly equipped and outnumbered by the Japanese forces. Some of these men were killed in battle, some were executed on surrender, and many died as a result of their brutal treatment as prisoners of war of the Japanese. About 400 managed to make it back to Australia.

Port Moresby was now the key to Papua New Guinea, and to the control of Australia – if the Japanese could control that port and the surrounding sea lanes, they could launch attacks against the Australian mainland, disrupt supplies coming to Australia from America to be used against the Japanese, and could protect any gathering forces to invade Australia – if they wanted to make that their aim.

Present a brief summary of the key events of this period involving Australia.

Group 5 – Attacks on Australia

One of the important areas seized by the Japanese was Rabaul, in the East New Britain province of Papua New Guinea. This gave the Japanese an air base from which they could launch bombing raids in the area.

The Japanese knew that the United States would try to gather forces and equipment in Australia for launching counter-attacks against the Japanese in the southwest Pacific area. The Japanese aim was to stop this build-up of men and materials, and to keep Australia isolated from effective engagement in the area. This would also be helped if they could seize the port of Port Moresby, which they would attempt to do by landing troops there.

During 1942 and 1943 the Japanese launched nearly 100 air raids on Darwin, Broome, Wyndham and other northern towns. The first raids on Darwin and Broome killed hundreds of American and

Australian servicemen, civilians and refugees. Most of the later raids caused little damage and few or no casualties.

At the same time, submarines prowled shipping lanes off the east coast of Australia.

In June 1942 three midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour to sink the American warship USS *Chicago*. One fired but missed and hit HMAS *Kuttabul*, a former ferry that was being used as floating naval accommodation, killing twenty-one Australian and British sailors. Other submarines shelled Sydney and Newcastle, causing little damage.

The government of the day pushed industrial production more towards a war effort. There was an 'all in' effort to win the war on the production front, as well as on the battlefield.

Most Australians did not 'fight' in the war. These are often the forgotten people: the men and, in lesser though growing numbers, the women who worked in the factories; those who stayed on the farms, giving up the 'glory' and the 'glamour', but also the danger in most cases; the 'Dad's army' of the Volunteer Defence Corps, ready to resist an invasion; the coast watchers of the north, tracking the movement of planes and ships; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guides, watchers and trackers; those manning searchlights night after night in city areas, or standing guard over vital ports and places in case of attack; the Civil Construction Corps – over 100,000 of them – sent to work building roads and aerodromes in the harshest of conditions. For every man fighting the enemy, there were dozens of men and women working to support him.

Sport was cut back. Petrol, clothing and some food items were rationed. As more men were sent overseas to fight, women were allowed to join the Air Force, Army and Navy in roles other than the traditional nursing ones, releasing men for combat roles. Engineers and labourers were conscripted into the Civil Construction Corps, as roads were built in outback areas to try and create a supply line to the northern front at Darwin. Women were taken into previously male jobs – such as on the trams, and in new areas in factories – though most did not receive equal pay for the work.

About 100,000 men left the farms, and some women joined the Women's Land Army to take over vital food production – though it seems that in most cases it was the farmers' wives and mothers who took up that burden. The main role for most women continued to be that of homemaker, a job made much harder and more demanding by the blackouts, rationing, shortages and difficulties of wartime life.

Present a brief summary of the key events of this period involving Australia.

Group 6 – Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway

CORAL SEA

Between 5 and 8 May, Australian ships and planes contributed to the American fleet's engagement with the Japanese in the Coral Sea.

The Japanese plan was to spread from Rabaul, in East New Britain, and establish strong bases at Port Moresby, and on Fiji, the New Hebrides, Samoa and the Solomons. This would enable them to cut Australia's supply line from America, and to attack northern Australian mainland bases that could be used to launch air attacks against Japanese positions. The Japanese would also launch an attack on Midway, between Pearl Harbor and Japan, with the aim of attracting the American fleet and destroying it, thereby severely limiting America's Pacific War capacity.

The first stage of this plan was to land troops at Port Moresby.

- 1 An **invasion force** of transports carrying soldiers would leave Rabaul, and head around the tip of New Guinea to Port Moresby. They would be protected by several warships.
- 2 Allied Task Force 44 consisted of a **group of Allied warships, including two Australian ships, the heavy cruiser HMAS *Australia* and the light cruiser HMAS *Hobart***. They were sent to find and attack this invasion group. This force was commanded by Australian Rear Admiral Crace.
- 3 There was also a **second Allied force of two aircraft carriers, the USS *Lexington* (commanded by**

ORGANISATION	STRENGTH	COMPRISING	COMMANDED BY
Army	60,000+	2 or more corps	General
Corps	30,000+	2 or more divisions	Lieutenant General
Division	10,000 – 20,000	3 brigades	Major General
Brigade	3000 – 4000	4 battalions	Brigadier
Battalion	780	4 companies	Lieutenant Colonel
Company	150	4 platoons	Major or Captain
Platoon	40	4 sections	Lieutenant
Section	10		Sergeant or Corporal

ITEM 1

Rear Admiral Fitch) and the USS Yorktown (commanded by Rear-Admiral Fletcher), together with protective cruisers and destroyers. Their task was to stop the invasion, and to do this they would have to tackle the main Japanese Carrier Striking Force.

- 4 A **Japanese battle group** planned to intercept this American naval force from two sides as it entered the Coral Sea.

However, American intelligence knew that the Coral Sea action was about to happen – they had broken the Japanese secret naval codes, and were able to move ships into the area to oppose the enemy.

The Allied losses were greater in the battle, but the greater victory was that they ended the proposed Japanese seaborne invasion of Port Moresby. It also helped lessen the size of the fleet that Japan assembled to destroy the American Pacific fleet a few weeks later at Midway, and, most significantly, left the Americans with greater aircraft numbers, and therefore crucial air superiority, in the forthcoming battle. Japanese historians call it a tactical victory for the allies only as they (the Japanese) didn't achieve their objective. The damage to the American Navy was equable.

MIDWAY

The Japanese, despite the setback in the Coral Sea, believed they were poised to destroy the Americans. The Japanese set a trap for the US fleet – they attacked Midway on 4–6 June, knowing that the Americans would respond, and believing that they could catch the American fleet unprepared.

However, the Japanese fleet was smaller than anticipated, the American fleet was larger than the Japanese had expected, the Americans had greater numbers of aircraft, and the Americans knew of the trap – having broken the secret Japanese communication codes.

Both sides suffered heavily, but the Japanese Pacific fleet air power was severely reduced, so Japanese resistance to all further Allied attacks was now significantly lessened. It also meant that there was no longer any practical possibility that Australia could be invaded by Japanese forces.

Present a brief summary of the key events of this period involving Australia.

Against this background you can now study the Battles of the Kokoda Track and Gona, Buna and Sanananda.

B. ORGANISATION OF THE MILITARY

You will come across several military terms in *Kokoda* that describe Australian units involved in the fighting. Item 1 (above) is an explanation of how Australian military forces were organised.

SEE ITEM 1 (ABOVE).

Here is a list of Australian military units at Kokoda Track and at Buna, Gona and Sanananda:

MILITIA: 39th Battalion (Vic), 53rd Battalion (NSW), 3rd Battalion (NSW), 3rd Militia Battalion

LOCAL: Papuan Infantry Battalion (Papua), ANGAU (Australian New Guinea

Administrative Unit)

A.I.F.:

- 21st Brigade 2/14th Battalion (Vic), 2/16th Battalion (WA), 2/27th Battalion (SA)
- 25th Brigade 2/25th Battalion (Qld) 2/31st Battalion (Australia wide) 2/33rd Battalion (Australia wide)
- 16th Brigade 2/1st Battalion (NSW), 2/2nd Battalion (NSW), 2/3rd Battalion (NSW)
- 2/1st Pioneer Battalion
- 2/6th Independent Company
- 14th Field Regiment
- 2/6th Field Company
- 2/14th Field Company
- 2/9th Australian General Hospital
- 2/4th Field Ambulance
- 2/6th Field Ambulance
- 18th Brigade (2/9th, the 2/10th, 2/12th)

There were also elements of the Royal Australian Air Force and Royal Australian Navy involved in the campaigns, and United States troops.

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM

1. Brainstorm to record your existing image of Kokoda. It does not matter at this stage whether you know a lot or very little, or even if your ideas are totally wrong. It is not a test. It is just a way of finding out what you know, and what you think you know.

You will be able to return to this at the end of the film and see if you would change any of these answers and ideas. You can add additional aspects to the list if you want to.

SEE ITEM 2 (ON PAGE 7).

ASPECT	BEFORE WATCHING <i>KOKODA</i>	AFTER WATCHING <i>KOKODA</i>
Where is it		
What is it like?		
Who was involved?		
Why were they there?		
Who fought whom?		
What was the fighting like?		
When did it happen?		
What was the outcome?		
What was its significance?		
What does it mean to you today?		
What do you think would be the greatest effects of war on participants? (You may suggest positive and negative effects.)		



ITEM 3: <http://www.kokodawalkway.com.au/walkway-tour>

2. Imagine that an Australian soldier who served on the Kokoda Track was coming to talk to your class. List five questions that you would want to ask him.

Discuss all the questions that class members have suggested, and choose the top ten that you would ask.

EXPLORING IDEAS AND ISSUES IN THE FILM

Understanding the campaign

The Kokoda campaign can be confusing. The film sets out the events in chronological order.

3. As you watch the film complete your notes on the aspects set out in the timeline, and trace each stage on the map. SEE ITEM 3 (ABOVE), ITEM 4 (ON PAGE 9), AND ITEM 5 (ON PAGE 10).

(Where a name is in **bold**, identify it on the map.)

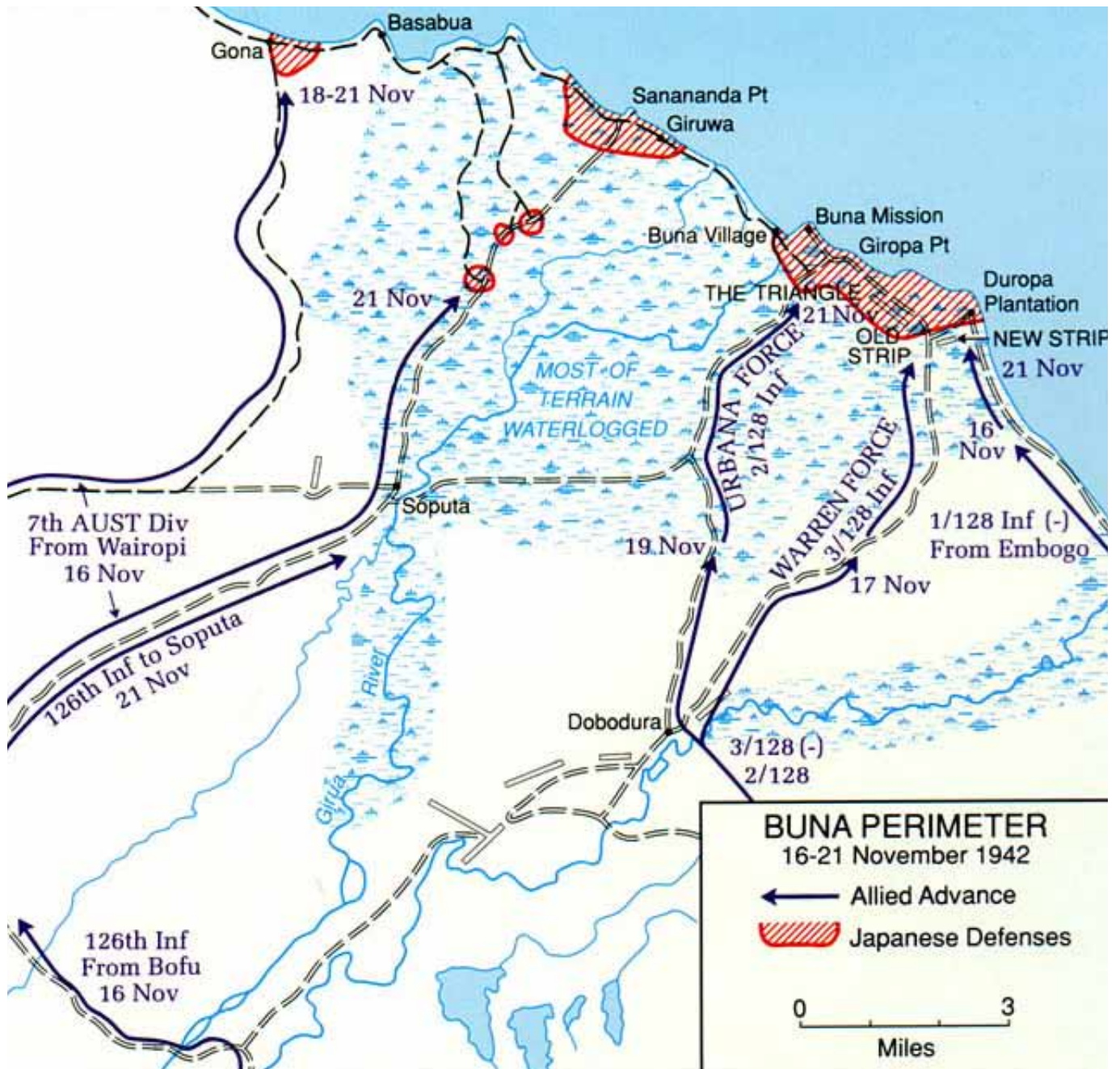
4. A film like *Kokoda* can tell us much about big ideas. Discuss and summarise what you learn from *Kokoda* about:

- the nature of war
- leadership
- the Anzac spirit
- the brutality of war
- human qualities shown in war – both positive and negative



THE KOKODA CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

21 July 1942	2000 elite Japanese troops land at Gona on the northern shores of Papua New Guinea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did the Japanese land there? • What was their mission? • Why did they want to take Port Moresby?
29 July 1942	900 Japanese advance troops attack 77 soldiers of the 39th militia battalion defending Kokoda .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who were the 'militia' troops? • Why were they defending Kokoda?
12 Aug 1942	Kokoda falls and the 39th militia withdraws to Isurava .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the conditions like in the area?
16 Aug 1942	1200 experienced Australian Imperial Forces troops move up the track to reinforce the 39th militia at Isurava.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where did these troops come from? • Why did it take them so long to arrive? • Were they good troops? • How were they to be supplied?
18 Aug 1942	10,000 Japanese reinforcements begin landing on the northern shores of Papua New Guinea and move up towards Isurava.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What problems did the Japanese forces have with their supply lines?
26 Aug 1942	At dawn, 6000 Japanese troops attack the 39th militia at Isurava.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tactics did the Japanese use?
26 Aug 1942	During the evening, the first 600 AIF troops arrive at Isurava to reinforce the stranded 39th militia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the nature of the fighting here? • What attitude did the troops have towards the fighting?
30 Aug 1942	The Japanese take Isurava.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the significance of this victory?
30 Aug –8 Sept 1942	Australian fighting withdrawal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is meant by a 'fighting withdrawal'?
8 Sept 1942	Japanese take Brigade Hill (near Efogi).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How had the Australian withdrawal become a rout?
16 Sept 1942	Japanese take Ioribaiwa Ridge 40 kilometres from Port Moresby .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the significance of this position?
24 Sept 1942	The Japanese are ordered to retreat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why were they ordered to retreat? • What was the impact of this order on the Japanese soldiers?
24 Sept 1942	Australians commence a counter-attack.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What advantages did the Australians now have?
28 Sept 1942	Australians re-take Ioribaiwa Ridge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What disadvantages did they have?
7 Oct 1942	Australians reach Brigade Hill (near Efogi).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did they find here? • How did this change the nature of the fighting?
13 Oct 1942	Australians arrive at Templeton's Crossing .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did they find here? • How is cannibalism justified in the film?
22–28 Oct 1942	Australians re-take Eora Creek after a bitter six-day battle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did this battle reveal about the Australian and American military leaders?
1 Nov 1942	Australians enter Kokoda unopposed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the significance of Kokoda for the rest of the campaign?
8–12 Nov 1942	The reinforced Japanese make a stand at the villages of Oivi and Gorari .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose of this stand? • What would have happened if the Japanese had won? • Why did they lose?
15 Nov 1942	3,000 American troops arrive at North Coast.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why were these troops largely ineffective?
9 Dec 1942	The Australians capture Gona .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why might this battle be considered a waste of lives?
1 Jan 1943	The Australians and Americans capture Buna .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tactic was now used to defeat the Japanese strongholds and bunkers?
12 Jan 1943	The Australians and Americans capture Sanananda .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the significance of this victory?
19 Jan 1943	The remaining Japanese are ordered to evacuate from Sanananda.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the concept of 'senjinkun'? • How does it help explain the Japanese conduct? • How does it help explain the savage nature of the fighting in Papua?
22 Jan 1943:	The campaign ends with the defeat of the Japanese.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the losses to both sides? • What was the significance of the victory for Australia's position?



ITEM 5: http://www.reisenett.no/map_collection/historical/Papua_Buna_1942.jpg



- continuing damage after a war
- the impact of war on a community.

5. One of the characteristics of the Kokoda campaign was its brutality. Several soldiers are asked in the film about their attitude towards their former enemies. Should there be forgiveness? Explain your ideas.

6. There is a memorial to the campaign at Kokoda. The memorial comprises four black obelisks, set as corners of a square. Each has one of the four words: courage, endurance, mateship, sacrifice. Do you think these are appropriate words to use on the memorial? Are there other words that you might add?

7. *Kokoda* challenges some myths about the Kokoda campaign. Look at these commonly held ideas, and discuss how *Kokoda* challenges them.

- Australians are 'natural soldiers'

- All Diggers were brave fighters
- The 'fuzzy wuzzy angels' were all heroes and patriots
- Australian soldiers always fought fairly.

8. We hear in *Kokoda* that soldiers believed they were fighting to protect Australia. Were they? Was there really a Japanese plan to invade Australia? This issue has aroused controversy recently. You can explore the issue further in a classroom unit 'Understanding 1942 and the Battle for Australia' in the educational resource kit *Defence 2020: Is the Australian Defence Force a Responsible Citizen?*, a copy of which was sent to every Australian secondary school during 2009.

Kokoda is based on the book by Paul Ham. He is also the chief commentator in the film. Here is an extract from a review by Paul Ham of a book about the Japanese soldiers, *The Path of Infinite*

Sorrow: The Japanese on the Kokoda Track, written by Craig Collie and Hajime Marutani. Read it and answer the questions that follow.

A theme of the book is heroism and self-sacrifice. What makes a hero, the authors openly or tacitly ask: self-sacrifice for their mates and mother country, seems to be the answer.

But what is self-sacrifice? Is there such a thing as "self" sacrifice by soldiers whose duty is to kill and, if necessary, be killed? One wonders, observing 14-year-old Hubert Anthony, bound for Gallipoli, whether young men have the faintest notion of self after recruit training has turned them into killing machines. Heroism in combat is less about self-sacrifice than about the unflinching enactment of duty in the line of fire: a war hero does as he's told, and does it well.

The traditional Japanese soldier fulfilled



this definition of heroism to the letter along the Kokoda Track. His sense of “self” amounted to a querulous whisper in his notebooks. He rarely if ever disobeyed the most fanatical orders.

Yet some Japanese soldiers did display a greater self-awareness – and thus a fuller sense of the heroic – than we give them credit for, according to the authors of The Path of Sorrow: The Japanese on the Kokoda Track. “Burma is hell; but no one returns from New Guinea,” Japanese troops said with dread.

This book by Craig Collie and Hajime Marutani certainly traces a campaign from which only about 5 per cent of Japanese soldiers returned. The authors illuminate the Japanese side: the ferocity of the battles; the awfulness of the Japanese retreat over the Kokoda Track; and their collapse into a starving, emaciated shambles.

In New Guinea, the Japanese starved to death or were hunted down, virtually to the last man. Many were reduced to eating “caked earth” and died vomiting blood. Most of the few survivors ate Australian, American and, in the later stages of the war, “friendly” corpses.

We learn too of the nature of the enemy:

not all were the savage jungle warriors of popular myth. It will cause chagrin to defenders of Australian honour to learn that many Japanese troops on the Papuan beaches were non-combatants – “labourers-cum-soldiers” – who fought in their fox holes “with a single-minded ferocity borne of desperation”.

This book’s chief failure is the equanimity with which Japanese atrocities are explained or qualified or, the greater sin, simply omitted altogether. The Japanese have a talent for recasting themselves as victims, not aggressors, but many Japanese troops set a new precedent for brutality in the Pacific War, as they emulated the Samurai phantasms of their imaginations.

The Allied armies in the Pacific did not bayonet prisoners for training, as the Japanese did at Rabaul; the Allies did not behead civilians or starve native carriers, as the Japanese did on an industrial scale. The authors don’t mention the bestial behaviour of the Japanese troops at Milne Bay, either, where local women were mutilated and raped with bayonets (which was documented in the war crimes tribunal).

No doubt the Japanese soldier went, unflinchingly, to certain death; no doubt

he fought bravely, as this book shows with bitter candour. But true heroism, in my view, implies something greater than “selfless” duty: it is an act driven by conscience beyond the remit of duty, a self-willed instant of transcendent courage, to save one’s friends, family, or even the enemy (where the enemy is being treated inhumanely). Heroism is when conscience acts, in line with or against duty, for another’s salvation.

From <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/beyond-myth/story-e6frg8no-1225794423455>

9. Do you think *Kokoda* reflects these ideas? Justify your view.

10. Who, if anyone, was a hero at Kokoda? Why?

11. Look back at your original brainstorm about Kokoda. What would you now change?

12. Look back at the list of ten questions that you created for the imaginary visiting Kokoda veteran. Do you think they have been answered by the documentary *Kokoda*?

13. Are there now other questions that you think you would like to ask?



14. Paul Ham says that Kokoda has not resonated with the Australian people in the same way that Gallipoli has. Why not? You can suggest reasons, and then explore the issue further in the unit 'Understanding Anzac Day – Past, Present and Future' in the education resource kit *Gallipoli and the Anzacs*, sent to every secondary school in Australia during April 2010.

Kokoda as a documentary film

Kokoda is a documentary film. A documentary can have a variety of purposes: to inform in a neutral way, to advocate one particular side in an issue, to present both sides of an issue fairly.

15. What would you say is *Kokoda*'s purpose?

16. Does it achieve this or not? Con-

sider how these key elements of a documentary do or do not help *Kokoda* to achieve its aims:

- editing
- narration
- music
- sound effects
- dramatic reconstructions
- historic film and stills
- interviewees
- use of historical experts.

17. Is *Kokoda* fair to both sides? Is it too fair? Explain your views.

18. Here is one description of the conditions on the Kokoda Track. Read it and, assuming it is accurate, do you think *Kokoda* has captured these conditions? Justify your views.

To add to the problems of the Australian troops, conditions on the Kokoda Track

were appalling. The narrow dirt track climbed steep heavily timbered mountains, and then descended into deep valleys choked with dense rain forest. The steep gradients and the thick vegetation made movement difficult, exhausting, and at times dangerous. Razor-sharp kunai grass tore at their clothing and slashed their skin. The average annual rainfall over most of the Kokoda Track is about 5 metres (16 feet), and daily rainfalls of 25 centimetres (10 inches) are not uncommon. When these rains fell, dirt tracks quickly dissolved into calf-deep mud which exhausted the soldiers after they had struggled several hundred metres through it. Sluggish streams in mountain ravines quickly became almost impassable torrents when the rains began to fall.

Supply was a nightmare for the soldiers on the Kokoda Track, because every item of food, ammunition and equipment had

to be man-handled along the track or dropped by air. Heat, oppressive humidity, mosquitos and leeches added to the discomfort of the rain-drenched Australian soldiers who were often without adequate food and even a cup of tea.

<http://www.pacificwar.org.au/KokodaCampaign/KokodaOverview4.html>

19. Consider the ending of *Kokoda*. What particular message or impression do you think it is trying to create?

20. How have other documentaries and feature films presented Kokoda? Two accessible ones are Damien Parer's *Kokoda Frontline* (available online at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WZURx5w0Pl>>), and the 2006 feature film *Kokoda*, a study guide for which is available at <www.metromagazine.com.au/studyguides/study.asp>. Compare and comment on how each of these presents the campaign.

21. Here is some information from the makers of the documentary *Kokoda*. Read the information. What special problems were encountered in making the documentary? How were they overcome? What aspects of making a documentary film does this discussion help you understand?

Making *Kokoda*

Though the hardships and hurdles were considerably less gruelling, making the documentary series *Kokoda* took the same length of time as World War Two itself.

It included months of intense training for the film crew, who followed in the footsteps of Australia's legendary 'chocolate soldiers' and troops of the Australian Imperial Forces by walking the treacherous Kokoda Track across the highlands of Papua New Guinea through to the sub-equatorial swamps of Sanananda.

In doing so, the filmmakers have captured, with as much authenticity as possible, the bravery and brutality of the 1942 military campaign, which led to the defeat of the advancing Japanese forces and proved a turning point for the Allies in World War Two.

Producer Andrew Wiseman says while



most Australians have heard of the Kokoda military campaign, few know much about it.

'There's been an upsurge in interest in Australian military history in the last 20 years but most of it focuses on Gallipoli,' Wiseman says.

I personally find that bewildering. Why is it that a campaign fought on foreign soil captures the Australian imagination so readily, when the Kokoda campaign, fought so close to Australia and when Australia was actually threatened, doesn't seem to resonate?

The process began in 2005, when director Don Featherstone read the book, *Kokoda*, by Sydney-based journalist Paul Ham.

Featherstone was captivated by Ham's book, an even-handed account told through the eyes of Australian and Japanese veterans, and immediately referred it to Wiseman, with whom he had previously worked.

'We were attracted to Paul's approach to the work; that he had gone to great lengths to research both the Australian and Japanese perspectives, interviewing Australian and Japanese veterans,' Wiseman says. 'The book was clear and strong and placed the Kokoda military campaign in a broader political and social context. It also goes into some detail about fighting in jungle conditions, a particularly savage environment in which to fight.'

Wiseman, whose credits include the multi award-winning telemovie *Curtin*, and Featherstone, whose credits include a range of award-winning arts documentaries, quickly secured the film rights and spent four years researching and writing a script.

Don and I were really keen to make a documentary series that not only looked at the elements of the military struggle but also looked at what Australians knew about the Kokoda military campaign, both then and now, what the relationship was between the Australian high command and the soldiers on the frontline, and how Australians respond to military campaigns, both then and now.

The documentary includes often emotional interviews with veterans and historians from Australia and Japan, previously unseen battle footage, dramatic re-enactments and, for the first time, high-definition sequences filmed over the entire length of the track.

As well as telling the story of the savage eight-month struggle between two heroic and ill-equipped enemies, *Kokoda* examines the politics behind the campaign and the Australian public's response to military campaigns and the myths that they engender.

'The Kokoda campaign was a brutal, savage campaign which threw up many fine examples of bravery and comradeship,' Wiseman says. 'I hope it deepens the debate about how Australians view their military history and that we don't



just rest easily on simple clichés about our involvement in any war. It's really important to try and comprehend the complexity of our military history.'

A four-man film crew, including Featherstone, cinematographer Brent Crockett, sound recordist Patrick Slater, and camera assistant Gary Scott, trained for several months, walking 'up steep stuff' before leaving for Papua New Guinea.

They walked the treacherous 98-kilometre jungle trail from Port Moresby to Kokoda in eleven days, accompanied by Australian tour guide Frank Taylor and twenty-seven local porters carrying 250kg of film equipment, including a full HD camera kit (and a spare in case of a fault).

Each person carried four litres of water a day, and military-style food rations – tinned fish, meat or beans and 'industrial strength' dried biscuits – were air-dropped at points along the way.

Featherstone and the crew wanted to make it as authentic as possible.

'We wanted to capture the visceral nature of the track and the only way to do that was to walk and film the whole length of it,' he says. 'Other crews have

helicoptered in and out at various points along the track and captured bits and pieces, but we knew that wouldn't work for us.'

After arriving at the mountain village of Kokoda, the crew continued to Papua New Guinea's northern beaches, filming on the intense and bloody battlegrounds at Gona, Buna and Sanananda. There also was two days of aerial filming, with the crew flying the same route as the World War Two Dakotas, which dropped rations at Myola.

While they visited during the dry season, it still rained a lot, which proved good and bad.

'It meant that we could get the conditions that the troops faced right throughout the campaign because they were there during both the dry and the wet seasons,' Featherstone says.

It's so treacherous that you've literally got to watch where you put every step because there are roots that stick out of the slippery mud and they are like glass or ice and all it takes is for you to slip and wrench your knee or twist your ankle and you can't go on.

There are logistical difficulties too, with

overnight stops dictated by the harsh terrain.

'You have to keep walking to reach certain points where it's level or where there's water – you can't stop and go "let's spend the night here" – so to achieve that we could only film for about three hours a day,' Featherstone says.

The crew would rise at 5.30am and start walking an hour later, knowing that they had until 5pm to arrive at the next rest spot.

When you come across something that you think is worth filming, you've got to think, 'well it's going to take half an hour for the porters to catch up, put the tripod up, put the jib up. Is it really worth filming this or might there be something else better around the corner?'

Making the film proved a life-changing experience, particularly for those who walked the Track.

It was a terrible place to fight a war – to be shot at, to shoot, to be injured. There was extreme heroism and bravery on both sides and savagery and brutality that hadn't been seen in World War Two up to that point. No prisoners were taken.



Both sides were ill equipped: Australian soldiers arrived with light-coloured desert uniforms, clearly visible in the heavy jungle foliage; the Japanese, who had been told there was a road across the island, arrived with horses and push-bikes.

'The Kokoda Track needs to be treated with reverence,' says Featherstone.

Walking the track you're walking over a battlefield. There are shells lying around, there are unexploded mortar bombs. It's almost a war grave; over 2000 Australians lost their lives in the campaign; most are buried at the Bomana cemetery in Port Moresby but there are still some missing along the track. 13,000 Japanese were killed in the campaign and there's no cemetery for them as there is for the Australians.

Our entire crew was deeply moved by the experience and couldn't imagine what the young men went through in that place. As you walk the track the fallen need to be treated with reverence and respect. I don't think it's the place to go to conquer or get fit. It's not a place to get fit to win a game of football.

The filmmakers hope that *Kokoda* will help viewers to see the campaign in a more authentic light and remind them about the utter savagery of war.

'What I found particularly moving in interviews with the veterans was their distaste for the events,' Wiseman says.

It was clear they felt they were doing a very important job and that they had done their job well, but it's also clear, and they state this quite explicitly, that they believe that war is both

savage and horrible.

They also hope the series will promote reconciliation.

'We have interviewed both Japanese and Australian soldiers,' Featherstone says.

They have talked about each other, what they felt about each other during the war and what they feel about each other now – their feelings today have generally softened a lot. As one Australian veteran says, 'as far as the ordinary soldier was concerned, we were there because we were told to be there and they were there because they were told to be there'.

22. Write a review of *Kokoda*. Do you think it achieves what it is trying to achieve? Do you think it is a good documentary? Justify your ideas by reference to different elements in the film.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Websites

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(enter the search term 'Kokoda')

- Australian Government World War Two website
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Images courtesy of NFSA

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Kokoda

A major two-part documentary series based on the book by Paul Ham
Producer: Andrew Wiseman
Director: Don Featherstone
Written by: Don Featherstone, Andrew Wiseman & Uri Mizrahi
Narrated by: William McInnes
Editor: Uri Mizrahi
Cinematographers: Paul Ree, Brent Crockett ACS
Composer: David Bridie
Year: 2009
Produced with the assistance of the Department of Veterans' Affairs
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Department of Veterans' Affairs

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