

The Sudden Storm: Context and suggested activities

Before listening...

- Background to the War in the Pacific with the Japanese advance.
- Students complete a timeline of their own. Timeline of major events involving the Japanese, including the mobilisation of Australian nurses from February 1941.
- Political landscape Southeast Asia – colonisation.
Mapping activity to understand locations of Malaya, Singapore and Dutch East Indies with location of Bangka Island relative to Australia (the image PowerPoints that accompany the podcasts include maps). Provide either a hard copy map or use google maps to have students find the main locations, major events/turning points and add a caption with the date and a short description.
- Understand what the Geneva convention is. Recommend this source regarding Japan's contravention:
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/bataan-japan-pows-and-geneva-conventions/>
- Key dates – timeline, particularly from the mobilisation of the nurses from February 1941.
- Context of the war in Asia-Pacific needs to be given.
- Role of women at the time and their role in the war.
- The privilege of the Australian women who were in the AANS.
- Political landscape of Asia – colonisation.
- Why was Singapore strategically important for the British?

While listening

- Listening to the podcast could be a good extension activity for interested students or may be suitable for students with literacy challenges. The podcast might work well as an activity for students to complete when they have finished other set work, or as relief lessons.
- Use the provided image PowerPoints to provide a visual element. Print off the *transcriptions with instructions to move manually through the slideshow* for each Part. As you listen, move through the slides where indicated.
- Some students may benefit from reading through the transcriptions while listening.
- Students complete the comprehension question worksheets for Part 1 and 2. If you would like a copy of the answers, please email schools.program@vwma.org.au
- Refer to the suggested *discussion questions* for Part 3 and 4.

After listening...

Suggested research questions/activities:

- What is the Geneva Convention, what was agreed to by countries and which treaties applied during WWII – how was the convention contravened? Who were signatories of it? What other breaches occurred during WWII? Did the Germans contravene it? How and where?
What was added to the Convention after WWII in 1949 and ratified in 1977? What breaches have occurred in modern conflicts? How influential is this agreement?
- Complete biographies of lesser-known nurses.
- Complete a timeline to explain the escape of Australian service personnel on the Empire Star.
- Where were other Japanese POW camps? How were the prisoners treated?
- Compare the experiences of the nurse POWs with the experiences of men either the camps in Ambon or Rabaul, those on the Thai-Burma Railway
- When did the Japanese attack Australia? Where?
- Attitudes towards the Japanese in Australia post-WWII. What were the opinions initially, how did this change? What led to it?
- Australian attitudes towards Japanese in response to the imagery of the horrific devastation due to the atomic bombs.
- What happened to the surviving nurses after the war? What was their role in Australian society?
- Australia's changing relationship with Britain with a shift to alliance with the USA post-WW2 – why did this happen? <https://vwma.org.au/collections/home-page-stories/australias-shift-from-the-united-kingdom-to-the-united-states>
- Short and long-term impacts of WW2 in building Australia's relationship and engagement with Asia
- Australia's involvement in founding the UN and the roles of HV Evatt and Jessie Street in drafting the charter of the UN.
- The commemoration of WWII including different historical interpretations and debates.
- How are the nurses who served commemorated? Are all nurses commemorated equally? How does it compare to the men?
- Why should we remember the sacrifice of those who served? Why should we understand what happened during the war?

Execution or murder?

The Sudden Storm podcast produced by Megan Spencer and many other sources refer to the nurses as being executed by the Japanese. The VWMA prefers to refer to the massacre of the women as 'murder'.

By definition; execution involves a formal process to punish someone who has committed a heinous crime. Did this apply to the people who were massacred on Bangka Island? This could be an area to debate with your students.

Commemoration: Loxton Street Memorial and the naming of buildings at Renmark High School and the Renmark public library

Can you lobby for similar memorials at your school or in your local area? Perhaps a building, learning space, or major thoroughfare named after an old scholar or significant local who served?

Connections with Art

Inspired by the Paringa Silos, is there an opportunity for students to create an artwork or a wall mural at your school to commemorate old scholars who served, servicepeople from the local area who served, or a more general memorial to all those who have served Australia?

What else?

What creative ways can you think of to commemorate the sacrifice of those who have served Australia? Can you work with your local RSL?

