The conscription debate

### Australian Curriculum: Stage 5 – The Making of the Modern World – Depth Study 3 (World War I)

**Australian Curriculum - Content**

ACDSEH096: The impact of World War I, with a particular emphasis on Australia (such as the use of propaganda to influence civilian population, the changing role of women, the conscription debate)

**Australian Curriculum – Historical Skills**

ACHHS165: Use historical terms and concepts

ACHHS170: Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument

ACHHS172: Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past


**NSW Syllabus – Outcomes**

HT5-1: Explains and assesses the historical forces and factors that shaped the modern world and Australia

HT5-9: Applies a range of relevant historical terms and concepts when communicating an understanding of the past

HT5-10: Selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual and digital forms to communicate effectively about the past for different audiences
### Assumed knowledge

ACDSEH021: An overview of the causes of WWI and the reasons why men enlisted to fight in the war.

### Key Inquiry Questions

What were the main arguments for and against conscription during World War I?
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| Approx. 80 mins + homework time (40 mins + homework time for preparation, 40m for presentations) – Not including additional exercise | Students read the ‘Conscription referendums, 1916-1917 – Fact sheet 161’, ‘Arguments over conscription’ resource, and ‘Conscription, World War I, 1914-1918’ page and watch the ‘Conscription Referendum Campaign’. A brief table of arguments for and against conscription is drawn up on the board, and filled out during a class discussion facilitated by the teacher. Students are then placed in groups, and allocated the role of:  
   - Women  
   - Members of the Peace Society  
   - People opposed to World War I on religious grounds  
   - People opposed to conscription/WWI on socialist grounds | Dictionary of Sydney articles:  
   - Recruiting for World War I - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/recruiting_for_world_war_i](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/recruiting_for_world_war_i)  
   - Women and World War I - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/women_and_world_war_i](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/women_and_world_war_i)  
   - World War I and the Peace Society in Sydney - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/world_war_i_and_the_peace_society_in_sydney](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/world_war_i_and_the_peace_society_in_sydney)  
   - Religious Opposition to World War I - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/religious_opposition_to_world_war_i](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/religious_opposition_to_world_war_i)  
   - Socialist Opposition to World War I - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/socialist_opposition_to_world_war_i](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/socialist_opposition_to_world_war_i)  
Dictionary of Sydney stubs:  
   - Hughes, William Morris - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/person/hughes_william_morris_(billy)](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/person/hughes_william_morris_(billy)) |  
Within each group, students divide into pairs. Through a group-based decision making process each pair of students take on a ‘character’ based on the information provided in the relevant Dictionary of Sydney articles (on right). Students use the resources provided (articles, stubs, images, and other resources) to prepare an oral
or written submission by their character to the Federal Parliament and Billy Hughes. Students then present their submission to the class.

Students should consider the following:

- Why did your character hold their view?
- What events impacted on this opinion?
- What conscription required young men to do?
- What do you know of Billy Hughes’ opinion on the matter? How would you appeal to him in your argument?

**Additional exercise:** The class is divided into two, with one half compiling arguments for conscription, and the other half compiling arguments against conscription. The teacher then allocates roles for a debate, and sets the rules.

**Conscription referendum 1916** - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/event/conscription_referendum_1916](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/event/conscription_referendum_1916)

**Conscription referendum 1917** - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/event/conscription_referendum_1917](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/event/conscription_referendum_1917)

**Industrial Workers of the World** - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/organisation/industrial_workers_of_the_world](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/organisation/industrial_workers_of_the_world)

**Australian Freedom League** - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/organisation/australian_freedom_league](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/organisation/australian_freedom_league)

**Dictionary of Sydney images:**

- ‘Vote No Mum, they’ll take Dad next’ 1916 - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113468](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113468)
- Mr Hughes great conscription meeting at Sydney Town Hall 14 November 1917 - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113145](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113145)
- The Blood Vote 1916 - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/112879](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/112879)
- Vote No: Conscription takes the Bread-earner of the poor mother and sister, but never the bread-earner of the rich mother and sister, etc 1915-1917 - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113415](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113415)
- Crowds at public meeting in the Domain discussing the conscription issue October 1916 - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113151](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113151)
- The IWW Twelve 1916 - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113304](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/113304)
- IWW Members Charged with Treason – Sensational Revelations 1916 - [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/116898](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/image/116898)

**Other resources:**

Australian Dictionary of Biography article: Hughes, William Morris (Billy) -
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