



# KOKODA

PETER FITZSIMONS

TEACHER'S NOTES

A story of young Australians'  
bravery against all odds in WWII

TEEN EDITION



# KOKODA BY PETER FITZSIMONS

## TEACHERS' NOTES BY ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT

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# INTRODUCTION

'This was like no place they had ever been before, or even heard of. For many of them, particularly those from the often long, low, featureless plains of western Victoria, it was beyond their imagination. The mountains and ranges continued to the far horizons. To all points of the compass, valleys, crevasses and creases sprayed out seemingly at random, many of them filled with thick mist and most of them, the men knew, entirely uncharted by Europeans.' (p 44)

Peter FitzSimons recalls the experiences of the young Australian soldiers of the 39th Battalion who were engaged in an impossible conflict, as were their Japanese, US and PNG counterparts in Papua New Guinea during what became known as the Kokoda conflict. They battled a murderous terrain, were commanded to advance when moving forward was impossible, threw their lives into a merciless abyss, and yet some miraculously survived.

He tells the dramatic story here of these young Australians' experiences of the Kokoda conflict with facts, but also with creative license. He imagines the feelings and the words of some of his players in a work which traverses the border between fact and fiction. This brings the story vividly to life for young readers, in this abridged version of his bestselling work for adults.

Australians regard Kokoda as the iconic campaign of World War II, and to this day many undertake the trek as a form of homage to the soldiers who fought there. But do they really know what happened? The conditions they endured were hellish; supplies were practically non-existent and the men constantly battled dire illnesses whilst pitting themselves against the more experienced Japanese troops. How did they defeat them?

The grand tragedy of war is laid bare here in a work which, whilst a tribute to their bravery and endurance, would also leave many relatives wondering how and why their loved ones were lost.

'Never in the course of the whole New Guinea campaign would Rowell's previous words to Osmar White—"We need a victory in the Pacific and a lot of poor bastards have got to get killed to provide it"—prove more tragically prophetic.' (p 222)

## BEFORE & AFTER READING THIS TEXT

- Examine the cover of the text. What does it suggest about the themes?
- After you have read the text, examine the cover again: what does it suggest to you now?
- After you have read the text, read about Peter FitzSimons in reviews and articles and use the notes below to examine the text more closely.

## THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes relevant to curriculum topics (Studies of Society and History, Science, and English Language and Literacy) might be identified in this text:



# STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND HISTORY (SOSE)

## • WORLD WAR II & THE KOKODA CAMPAIGN

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What events led up to and created the conflict in the Pacific? Why did Australia find itself fighting Japan in Papua and New Guinea? (See Bibliography.)

**DISCUSSION POINT:** On 19 February 1942 the bombing of Darwin took everyone by surprise (p 19). Why?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Many military events which took place in the Pacific during WWII are mentioned. eg Battle of the Coral Sea (p 31); Battle of Isurava (p 87); Invasion of Milne Bay (p 154); war on the island of Guadalcanal (p 187). Research any particular battles or encounters which are included in this text.

**ACTIVITY:** Research Bert Kienzle and Doc Vernon's role in the building of the Kokoda Track.

**ACTIVITY:** The fate of Father James Benson and the nuns he travelled with (p 65) is typical of many such incidents. We meet him again later (pp 192-3) Research the role that clergy played in PNG and how they fared. (See Bibliography.)

**ACTIVITY:** Examine the maps (pp ix and x) carefully to determine the terrain being described in this work.

**ACTIVITY:** 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' is the term used to describe the PNG villagers who assisted the foreign soldiers on the track. Research the term and the part they played in the war. Visit sites such as: 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' Wikipedia <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuzzy\\_Wuzzy\\_Angels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuzzy_Wuzzy_Angels)> and 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angel' Kokoda Historical <<http://kokodahistorical.com.au/history/fuzzy-wuzzy-angel>>

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'So it went. Simply slowing the Japanese advance was, as ever, a victory in itself.' (p 85) What does this quote say about the situation the Australians found themselves in?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Chester Wilmot is scathing in his assessment of General Blamey (pp 116-17), who he believed sent young men pitifully under-equipped to deal with experienced Japanese forces. His view seems to be supported by a later passage in which Blamey is quoted: ' "Tired Australians fight best," he added by way of encouragement, from the comfort of his headquarters in Queensland, with his personal valet always on call.' (p 141) Wilmot later challenged Blamey in a press conference (p 173) and his answer indicated his lack of knowledge of the challenges faced by his soldiers. Wilmot took his complaints to Prime Minister Curtin (pp 199-200) and yet the campaign was waged and 300 lives lost at Eora Creek (p 202). Later, 'In the 2/14th, for example, only 73 men remained of the 550 who set off up the track just under three months before.' (p 209) Blamey's speech (pp 209-11) at the Koitaki sports field was, at the very least, evidence of his lack of empathy and understanding of what the men had survived. Research his role in the conflict.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Wilmot's report on the campaign's management (pp 156-7) was heavily censored and his criticisms were not forwarded to the ABC. Later Blamey had him discredited (p 204). Although the US troops sent in 1942 to 'cut the Japanese off at the pass', were badly disabled by conditions: 'they became known as the 'Ghost Battalion' and were unable to resume any effective action for months after returning. Not that any of this showed up in the press, which MacArthur controlled.' (p 213) 'After losing his accreditation due to Blamey in the spring of 1942, Chester had spent all of 1943 writing a book about the valour of the Australian forces at Tobruk, before the BBC had invited him to join them in early 1944. Even then, General Blamey had tried to block the appointment, sending a cable to the British War Office asserting in the strongest of terms that Wilmot simply was not fit to be a war correspondent anywhere. Eventually though, Wilmot prevailed and joined the BBC, moving his young family to Britain.' (p 241) How typical is this of the censorship of war reportage in general, in the aid of 'national security'?



**DISCUSSION POINT:** Brigadier Potts is removed from his post (p 170) having led his men well but not having taken directions from headquarters. This was bad for morale and an insult to Potts. Research his further life on sites such as: 'Major Arnold William Potts' Australian War Memorial <<https://www.awm.gov.au/people/P10676740/>> or Bill Edgar's Warrior of Kokoda (Allen & Unwin, 1999).

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Bruce Kingsbury's efforts are described (pp 118-19) in a dramatic scene. His Victoria Cross Medal was awarded posthumously. Research his actions.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Butch Bisset's death (p 125) with his brother Stan beside him, is an extremely moving scene. Discuss the emotions it conveys. Stan Bisset was a fighter who even took his ideas regarding strategy to his superiors: 'The brigadier said that he would take Bisset's views into consideration when HQ formed up the battle plan for the next day. And maybe it really did have an effect, for the following day, the 2/14th was not obliged to make a suicide assault and was able to gain a little more valuable ground, this time losing only three dead and two injured. It wasn't great but ...' (p 221) Research Stan Bisset's war career and later life.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Colonel Honner's military 'parade' at Menari to thank the severely depleted force of men (pp 152-3) is another moving scene recorded for posterity by Damien Parer whose photos appear (p 158). Research this further:

'Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway' <<http://www.kokodawalkway.com.au/walkway-tour/menari>>

Parer, Damien 'Kokoda Frontline' [unedited] Australian War Memorial <<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/F01212/>> \

Parer, Damien Kokoda Front Line [Academy Award Winning Documentary 1942] Available Youtube <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WZURx5wOPs>> and

<<http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/asfaras/video/video.html>>

Masters, Chris 'The Men Who Saved Australia' Four Corners ABC Television 27/04/1998 [Transcript] <<http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/s12899.htm>>

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Parer was made by his bosses to 'front' his documentary (directed by Ken Hall) (p 171) which had an enormous public effect (pp 180-1) and caused some tactics to change. Discuss the role that correspondents have in informing the public about the theatre of war.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Japanese losses are described (p 177). Research further.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Potts' letter to his troops (p 203) is masterful in saying only what can be said in his position as a Brigadier who has been transferred. What comments might he have included?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** The re-taking of Kokoda is a scene of triumph and tragedy (p 206). Why?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** A crucial turning point was the order from Imperial headquarters in Tokyo for Major General Horii to turn back. (pp 182-3) The fate of any men left behind (p 186) was brutal. As a sad footnote to this story, General Horii attempted to retire gracefully on rafts, but was overcome by the elements: 'Neither he nor the senior officers with him were ever seen again.' (p 214) What is known of any of the retreating Japanese soldiers' fates?



**DISCUSSION POINT:** General Douglas MacArthur's command has been questioned. 'His orders to "cut 'em off at the pass" (p 188) proved to be ill-advised as was the presumption that Japanese troops had been depleted. 'They were in for the shock of their lives. There were 9000. The battle for the beaches would be a bloodbath.' (p 207) MacArthur had moved his headquarters to Port Moresby on 6 November 1942, presumably to be witness to a victory: his orders (pp 217-18) were appalling. 'By 18 December, MacArthur got what he deserved, which was the humiliation of asking for help from the Australian Army and senior officers he had criticised and ridiculed in the past.' (p 234) His ADB biography by David Horner (2000) states that: 'Between 1942 and 1945 he had been the dominant figure in Australia's conduct of World War II. Few figures who have spent less than three years in this country have had such an impact on Australian life.' Research his actions further.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'Extraordinarily, this would be the first time in the Gona campaign that a commander in the field would be executing his own plan, instead of following the orders of someone well away from the action who was only looking at maps.' (pp 228-9) Honner was frustrated by the commands he received and determined to save at least some of his men. What did he risk in doing so?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** On the subject of Colonel Arthur Key, Brigadier Potts wrote to his wife: 'It looks as if Key is gone. Oh hell. And he did such a good job and made his battalion for all times. Makes me want to howl like a kid . . .' (p 242). Potts' quote re the death of Key is laconic and very Australian. Discuss.

**ACTIVITY:** The author pays tribute in his dedication to 'correspondents and cinematographers of both sides who first documented this extraordinary saga, thus ensuring that the story can be told to the generations to come. I cite particularly the greats: Osmar White, Chester Wilmot and Damien Parer from Australia, and Japan's Seizo Okada ...'. (Seizo Okada is mentioned (p 176) and confesses his hatred of militarism to Father Benson (pp 194-5). (Little may be available about him in English.) Research the lives of these men.

## • COLONIALISM

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Prime Minister Curtin's speech is quoted: 'Australia does not accept the dictum that the Pacific struggle must be treated as a subordinate segment of the general conflict . . . Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom . . .' (p 11) How did the bombing of Pearl Harbor impact on Australia's relations with the UK and the US?

**ACTIVITY:** If Australia was beginning to resist its ties to Great Britain, Australia, too, had its own colonial territory in New Guinea. 'Before the war it was understood that the militia would never be obliged to leave Australian shores. Because New Guinea was technically a territory of Australia at that time, though, a law change in August of 1940 meant that the militia could be sent there and still be at 'home'. (p 22) Research and discuss this relationship and how it has developed since the war.

## • PAPUA NEW GUINEA – HISTORY AND CULTURE

**ACTIVITY:** Research the history and culture of PNG.

**ACTIVITY:** Research Australia's relationships with PNG and its history.

**ACTIVITY:** Pidgin English (p 18) is mentioned. Research this further.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Historic events such as the naming of the Owen Stanley Range (p 16) are slipped into the narrative as context to the story. How much have colonial countries appropriated PNG's culture?

**ACTIVITY:** What effect did WWII have on the country? Research further.



## • COMBAT CONDITIONS AND TACTICS

**DISCUSSION POINT:** The primitive camp for the 39th Battalion in Port Moresby (p 16) was short of all essentials and the presence of mosquitoes threatened malaria. Was this typical of conditions in the region?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Osmar White reports: 'Most of them . . . were youngsters between nineteen and twenty-three. They had lost an average of twenty pounds [ten kilograms] in weight. They were scrawny, yellow, wild-eyed, and listless in their movements. Their skins were pocked by infected insect bites.' (p 24) and later Lieutenant Colonel Honner observes the men with dismay: 'By burning day and freezing night these boys—for that was pretty much what most of them seemed to be—had been lashed by rains, stunned by sun, shot at, bombed, starved and bitten by bugs unknown. They had hollow eyes, rotting boots and foul, ragged uniforms, most of which had not been washed for the full forty days since they had last seen Port Moresby.' (p 86) These are shocking quotes. How prevalent was such poor health and why would a country send such feeble troops into conflict?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Japanese combat strategies (p 53) made them formidable opponents. How were they different to Australian soldiers and their strategies?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'And he was also appalled that as a company they had continued to fall back in the face of the Japanese. The officers knew there had been no choice but to fall back if the men were to live to fight another day,' (p 73). Combat tactics often deny soldiers the right to retreat even in the face of inevitable defeat. Is this a sensible strategy, or one founded on unrealistic ideals of bravery?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'After everything they had been through, this was their reward? To be badmouthed by a bloke who didn't have the first clue about what had happened?' (pp 73-4) Often commanders like Major Cameron criticised the men and asked the impossible of them. What does this suggest about the overall leadership during the PNG campaigns?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'Both sides knew it, and acted accordingly. No prisoners. No mercy.' (p 76) Were you shocked by this attitude? It seems a direct contradiction of the Geneva Convention promoted by the Red Cross that the wounded be treated with compassion? Read and discuss also the following quote: 'Sure, correspondents were meant to be unarmed and it totally contravened the dictates of the Geneva Convention that they had a few hand grenades with them and a rifle, but it made them feel a little better that they possessed something with which to defend themselves should it come to it.' (p 126)

**ACTIVITY:** 'Brigadier Arnold Potts was the Commanding Officer of the 7th Division's 21st Brigade' (p 78) and with WWI behind him was a man of vast experience and good sense. Research his history on sites such as: 'Major Arnold William Potts' Australian War Memorial <<https://www.awm.gov.au/people/P10676740/>> or Bill Edgar's Warrior of Kokoda (Allen & Unwin, 1999).

**DISCUSSION POINT:** The terrible hospital conditions were described (pp 108-10) and recorded by Damien Parer, Chester Wilmot and Osmar White. Many soldiers who might have survived died as a result of the lack of adequate medical facilities. The fatalities suffered by both sides (p 236) are appalling. Research this topic further.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'As Australian war correspondent George H. Johnston took notes, one of the army doctors reported to the battalion command that many of them had died 'because hunger had forced them to eat the poisonous fruits and roots of the jungle.' (p 190) George Johnston is an important literary figure. What role did he play in PNG?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'In July 1943, the word came that the 39th Battalion was to be disbanded, with its survivors broken up and scattered to units of the AIF. For two years they'd withstood everything the Japs and the jungle could throw at them, never buckled and always given more than they got, and now they were wiped out by the stroke of some bureaucrat's pen.' (p 239) This may have been the cruellest blow of all for men who had fought and lost so many comrades. How must these men have felt to be broken up and sent to other engagements to fight with strangers, after having endured such extreme conditions together?

## • DEALING WITH TRAUMA

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'He thought of Elaine waiting for him at home, focused on her and felt calmer. Something just told him that he and Elaine were meant to be and that he was destined to live. Christ, he hoped so, anyway.' (p 68) Joe Dawson gleans comfort from thoughts of, and letters from, his girlfriend, Elaine. How important were family and friends as incentives to survive in such desperate circumstances?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'They also now had the luxury of being able to feel and to grieve... what had happened.' (pp 167-8) Discuss this quote and what it indicates about suppressing feelings?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) must have troubled many of these men, but this was before the term was coined (said to be in 1980, although other words were used to describe it earlier). See: 'Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A History and a Critique' [brainline.org <http://www.brainline.org/content/2011/01/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-a-history-and-a-critique\\_pageall.html>](http://www.brainline.org/content/2011/01/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-a-history-and-a-critique_pageall.html) For example, the injuries and loss of weight described (pp 168-9) are horrific. (Fruit cakes from home could only offer some minor comfort!) In the Epilogue, it is mentioned that Smoky Howson never felt at peace after the war. (pp 244-5) How much psychological treatment did the men receive later, if any? Research the lives of veterans of the conflict in PNG.

## • MORALITY

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Many acts of bravery feature in this work. 'Colonel Owen seemed to have no fear at all. There was no doubt he was "as game as Ned Kelly"—as the men said—but one soldier couldn't stand the risk he was taking.' (p 69) Was Owen a hero, or foolish in his bravado?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** The retreating Australian soldiers decide to leave food deliberately spoiled for the Japanese to discover and eat (p 147). Was this a noble action?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** 'Here were the Japs trying to bomb them out of existence on a daily basis, and yet they still had enough humanity to think of doing something like that!' (p 29)

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What other moral dilemmas do the soldiers face?

[See also **Visual Literacy** below.]





# ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Study the writing style employed in this narrative, and examine the following sub-topics:

- **FACTION**

**DISCUSSION POINT:** This work is based on historical fact but imagines the feelings and attitudes of the characters in a fictional manner. FitzSimons writes: 'In essence, what I have tried to do in Kokoda is to take established points of historical fact and then join the dots, before taking out my colouring pencils, fleshing this into a story that hopefully reads at least a little like a novel.' (p 257)

- **NARRATIVE PERSON AND TENSE**

**DISCUSSION POINT:** This is told in third person but often from a very personal or subjective perspective. The author has imagined the feelings and responses of key players and made the reading a very immediate experience.

- **LITERARY DEVICES**

**ACTIVITY:** Creative non-fiction histories or factions like this one employ language which is vividly enhanced by literary devices. Find examples of the use of these devices in this text, using the table below to identify them.

SIMILE	eg 'like cats on a curtain, the 39th were only just managing to hang on.' (p 89)
METAPHORS	
PERSONIFICATION	
REPETITION	eg 'They who had fought so valiantly against a force that had outnumbered them by at least six to one. They who had marched forward with impossible loads on their backs, ...' (p 211)
OTHER	

- **HUMOUR**

**ACTIVITY:** Laconic Australian humour is one of the hallmarks of this text. eg 'It was so cold that they reckoned the local wolves were killing the sheep for their wool.' (p 13) Discover other passages like this one.





**ACTIVITY:** Identify techniques by which humour is provoked. Add quotes to the following table:

SARCASM	eg 'Not even the fact that the trucks which were meant to have been waiting for them at Iloilo were not there. (They had gone to help with the more urgent matter of bringing fresh troops up from the dock.)' (p 166)  'The great American leader, General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the whole Southwest Pacific Area, arrived in New Guinea to inspect the terrain over which he had gained such intimate knowledge—from Brisbane. Well, it wasn't quite the highlands where all the action had taken place, but it was as close as he could comfortably get.' (p 195)
IRONY	
EXAGGERATION	
BLACK HUMOUR	

## • STRUCTURE

The structure of the narrative can be analysed in terms of the key narrative features used to engage the reader's attention:

a) Strong beginnings and endings to chapters are one way of structuring a narrative, for example:

Beginning: Ch 7: 'The tenth of August 1942 had been another terrible day on the plateau at Kokoda, with still no sign of the hoped-for reinforcements.' (p 80)

Ending: Ch 2: 'either they would cop it next, or their families at home would . . .' (p 20)

b) Suspense is the key to any narrative's structure. How is it created in this text?

c) Using a 'framing story or idea' makes a narrative more cohesive. Here it is the characters of individual soldiers such as Joe Dawson, Stan Bisset and Ralph Honner and others which give a personal focus to this creative history of the war.

## • SETTING

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Choose a passage which really describes the locale vividly for you. Discuss the passage with students.



## • CHARACTERS

This work focuses on **Major characters** and **Minor characters** in the conflict including soldiers and commanders.

**ACTIVITY:** Draw up a character chart and find key quotes which give a clear picture of any of these characters, and isolate events which demonstrate their natures. Then write a brief character study of the person using the quotes and events to illustrate the points made in your summary.

**QUESTION:** Which character was most intriguing and why? Which character would you like to have heard more about?

## • WAR POETRY

**ACTIVITY:** Investigate poetry about Kokoda and WWII engagements in the Pacific.

**ACTIVITY:** Read Geoff Page's 'Kokoda Corrective' Australian Poetry Library <<http://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/page-geoff/kokoda-corrective-0440036>>

What point is he making in this work? Discuss in relation to Australian ideals of mateship in war, and the history of European settlement/ invasion of Australia. Page's 'Dry Run' <<http://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/page-geoff/dry-run-0436020>> also questions national attitudes to war.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Read Sapper Bert Beros's 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' Australia's War 1939-1945 <<http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/asfaras/angels.html>>. What is the tone and intention of this poem?

**ACTIVITY:** Read a selection of war poetry. What are the predominant feelings in poems about war?

**ACTIVITY:** Write an acrostic poem using the letters KOKODA.

**ACTIVITY:** FitzSimons ends his book with a tribute to the fallen: 'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them. We will remember them.' (p 247) This is a direct quote from Laurence Binyon's famous poem 'For the Fallen' penned for those lost in WWI. <<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/poems/laurence-binyon-for-the-fallen.htm>> Why does this poem still resonate for us?

## • WRITING TASKS

**ACTIVITY:** Write a diary entry as if written by Father James Benson while interned.

**ACTIVITY:** Write a letter as if written by Joe Dawson to Elaine, his girlfriend.

**ACTIVITY:** After reading and discussing any of the poems listed under War Poetry above, write some poetry of your own.



## • VISUAL LITERACY

**ACTIVITY:** Activity: Study the photos included in this text and relate them to what you have read in the related text:

- p 21: A photo of the jungle terrain of the Imita Range and another of the Owen Stanley Range where Kokoda was situated.
- p 48: A photo of members of the 39th Battalion and another of Joe Dawson with his girlfriend Elaine.
- p 79: A photo of the 'Golden Stairs'.
- p 107: Two photos of the muddy track.
- p 158: Damien Parer's photos of the thanks given to 39th battalion by Colonel Honner at the 'parade' at Menari.
- p 208: A photo of native porters crossing makeshift bridge and another of Frank Forde, and Generals MacArthur, Blamey and Kenny.
- p 238: A photo of two Australian soldiers emerging at the end of war.

**ACTIVITY:** Create a graphic novel interpretation of an incident in the text. (See Bibliography for resource.)

**ACTIVITY:** Design a new cover for this book.

**ACTIVITY:** Create a book trailer for this text. (See Bibliography for resources.)

## FURTHER QUOTES FOR DISCUSSION

1. 'One young bloke was blind in one eye, another was an epileptic, yet another was a severe asthmatic, while others were reasonably physically fit but had résumés that wouldn't get them a job anywhere else. But here they were, so help them, God.' (p 6)
2. 'But now, and here was the strangest thing of all, once the Japs started firing there was never any time to be frightened. When the attack started it was almost a relief.' (p 83)
3. 'The campaign was so bloody at this point that the natives of Isurava—who had abandoned the village weeks before when the battle had descended upon them and were now gathered at what they thought was a safe point about two kilometres downstream of the creek on the northern side of the village—were horrified to see that the water now ran red. They refused to drink from it, a sanction that would last for generations.' (pp 125-6)
4. 'Yes, there were many Japanese still on the loose along the beachhead, but they were foodless, and fleeing west in the hope of eventual evacuation. They had to be found and killed or captured—mostly killed.' (p 236)
5. 'Blamey died on 27 May 1951, and was accorded a state funeral. Rowell, as the army's chief of the general staff, had the official role of chief mourner at the funeral, and one can only wonder what went through his mind as Blamey was at last laid to rest. ' (p 244)



# FURTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Compare to other fiction and non-fiction texts which deal with Kokoda and/or WWII. (See **Bibliography** for resources.)
2. Design a poster to advertise this book.
3. The title of this book is Kokoda. What other title might it have had?
4. Debate any of the topics covered in these notes, or suggested by the text.
5. Write a newspaper article about any of the events discussed in this text.

# CONCLUSION

This is a sweeping saga of men at war valiantly dealing with unimaginable challenges. The fact that many of the men of the 39th Battalion were so young and inexperienced makes the story all the more incredible. Kokoda is a tribute to those who fought on both sides in this conflict and a stark reminder of the tragic losses incurred by war.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**PETER FITZSIMONS** is well known as a journalist, television personality and author – amongst his bestsellers are the biographies of footballers Nick Farr-Jones and John Eales, the amazing life of Nancy Wake and Charles Kingsford Smith and books on Australians in the World War I campaigns of Gallipoli, Fromelles and Pozieres, and the World War II campaign of Tobruk. He lives in Sydney and loves talking to the media as much as they love talking to him.

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[See Author's Bibliography pp 245-8; Notes pp 249-54.]

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#### WEBSITES RELEVANT TO KOKODA AND WWII:

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