

1914

By Sophie Masson

- War • International relations • Death
- Family and friendships • The role of women



Synopsis

It is June 1914 and Louis and his brother Thomas are enjoying summer in a small town in Sarejavo. The brothers were born and schooled in Sydney, their mother's hometown. However, being the sons of a French Diplomat who's posted between various locations across Europe, their life is very different to their old school mates back in Australia. Louis's travels so far have inspired him to explore the whole world, "capturing astonishing sights with the truth of a camera lens". He is also a talented writer, so when he is caught up in the front row of Archduke Ferdinand's assassination, Louis begins his journey as a young and brave war reporter.

The world erupts into war around them, and Louis' life is changed forever. Old Europe is torn apart and he finds himself in the midst of his own battle. Sometimes fighting for the truth in war means that even your own side is against you...

About the Author

Born in Indonesia of French parents, Sophie Masson was sent to France when she was a baby to live with her grandmother, and came to Australia with her family when she was five. Educated in Sydney, she also spent a good part of her childhood in France during family visits.

A dedicated bookworm as a child, Sophie also loved writing stories to entertain herself as well as her younger sisters and brothers.

Sophie is now the author of more than 50 novels for young people including *The Phar Lap Mystery*, *My Father's War*, *The Understudy's Revenge* and *Ned Kelly's Secret* and is published in many countries across the world.

Sophie won the NSW Premier's Literary Awards: Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature for *My Australian Story: The Hunt for Ned Kelly* (2011).

She lives in rural New South Wales with her husband and has three grown-up children.

Discussion Points

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF WAR REPORTERS—PAST AND PRESENT

Read pages 232 and 233 of *1914* to your students.

Together brainstorm the following points regarding war reporters.

- The greatest dangers of reporting at war
- The everyday challenges of a war reporter
- How long have people tried to tell the ‘truth’ of war
- Why do we need war reporters?
- Why might some people in power want to stop the reporters?

What has changed between then and now? Wars are still going on, conflicts continue to worsen in troubled regions. We still need to know what is happening in troubled regions of the world—reporters continue to give their lives to tell the story of those suffering to the rest of the world.

Download CM a, War Reporters-Discussion.

www.scholastic.com.au/toolkit

2. THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Visit: <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/women-in-wartime>

Ask your students what their perception of women during WWI is after reading *1914* and researching WWI. It wasn’t really until WWII that women stepped into the jobs that were typically carried out by men. In *1914* we see the role of women as:

- Mothers losing their sons, wives losing their husbands, sisters losing brothers
- Managing the home, looking after children and dealing with the shortage of resources
- Nursing the injured in battle and at home.

Who are the main female characters in the book?

Louis and Thomas’s mother, who, despite her distress over her sons being in the middle of battle, supports their decision and lets them know how proud she is of them.

Then, of course, there is Marina, who cannot see why her being a woman would stop her going to war, getting herself as close to the frontline as she could in her role as a nurse:

“I don’t see any reason why I can’t do what Sergey is doing,’ she cried, turning to face her mother. ‘There’s only one reason, and that’s I’m not a man. I have arms don’t I? Eyes? A brain?...’

Madame Kozlova sighed. ‘Women can’t be soldiers.’ ”

What are your thoughts on this? Do you think it was fair?

Download CM b, A Day in the life of Marina EXTENSION.

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Activities and Copymasters

ACTIVITY 1:

With your students, read the information about Life in the trenches for the soldiers during WWI.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25626530>

Recap on Louis’ report on page 147.

It was a horrendous experience for the men, and it’s hard for us to understand the true horror soldiers endured in the trenches.

Imagine that you are a war reporter, and like Louis, you are writing a special report on the truth of life in the trenches for the rest of the world to read about.

Use the copymasters below to complete this writing activity.

Download CM c, Special Report: Life in the Trenches

Download CM d, Writing Planner: Life in the Trenches EXTRA SUPPORT

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ACTIVITY 2:

It is so important for us to understand the many aspects of past wars, so that we can better understand the present conflicts that threaten peace.

As a class, read the historical notes at the back of *1914* before asking your students to complete a fact file about WWI.

Ask:

- What were the main causes of WWI?
- Which countries were involved?
- How many lost their lives?
- What was Australia’s role in WWI?
- How did the world change after?
- What brought the war to an end?

Download CM e, Fact File WWI

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**p56, 1914, written by Sophie Masson, published by Scholastic Australia 2014.*



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