



Award winning cartoonist and yarn spinner Warren Brown reveals the emotional lives of Australian Prime Ministers through objects they used every day or even adored.

A **STUDYGUIDE** BY ROBERT LEWIS



www.nfsa.gov.au



www.theeducationshop.com.au



OVERVIEW

In history and politics we tend to study power, but how much more immediate and engaging is it if we can see powerful people as real and interesting?



The Prime Ministers' National Treasures presenter Warren Brown on location at the National Library of Australia in Canberra. Photograph by Marcus Filingier. © NFSA.

In *The Prime Ministers' National Treasures* award-winning cartoonist and yarn spinner Warren Brown reveals the emotional lives of ten Australian Prime Ministers through objects they used every day or even adored.

After months spent foraging through the nation's archives, Brown unearths an array of extraordinary objects with countless secrets to tell:

- a soap advertisement based on an Act of Parliament passed by Edmund Barton;
- Andrew Fisher's tin lunchbox which he used when he was just a poor gold miner in Gympie;
- William Hughes and the 'vote "yes" for conscription' badge;
- the gold cigarette case presented to Stanley Melbourne Bruce by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk;
- a British imperial decoration awarded to another man, but now associated with James Scullin;
- hundreds of passionate love letters Joseph Lyons wrote to his wife;



Presenter Warren Brown's watercolour caricature of Prime Minister Robert Menzies.

- the wind-up camera Robert Menzies used to make home movies during the London Blitz;
- John Curtin's Australian Journalists' Association badge, worn every day whilst he was in office;
- Ben Chifley's trademark pipe; and
- Harold Holt's last days as revealed in the items he kept in his briefcase.

These reveal the nation's leaders as you have never seen them before, and provide possible starting points for students to enter into more detailed studies.



CURRICULUM APPLICABILITY

The Prime Ministers' National Treasures is a resource that can be used with secondary students in:

- History
- Politics
- Art
- Discovering Democracy
- Civics and Citizenship
- English
- Australian Studies

The episodes can be used to create starting points for a study of the relevant period, or for preparing a biography of a Prime Minister.

The series can also be used to engage students in researching particular issues and topics, including:

Barton	The White Australia policy
Fisher	The early Commonwealth welfare legislation
Hughes	The conscription issue of 1916-17
Bruce	Stanley Melbourne Bruce and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at Gallipoli in 1915
Scullin	The role of Governors-General in Australian politics
Lyons	Dame Enid Lyons
Menzies	The Fall of Singapore in 1942
Curtin	The massive arrival of American servicemen during World War Two
Chifley	The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme
Holt	The home front in the Vietnam War



BEFORE WATCHING THE PROGRAM

PRIME MINISTERS QUIZ

The program you are about to watch is about Australian Prime Ministers. Here is a quiz to help you put them in a context and an order. Here are the dates of service of Australia's 25 Prime Ministers and their names.

- 1 See how many you can match to the correct place in the timeline.
Gain one point for every one you get correct.

Period	Name	Period	Name
1901-3		1941-45	
1903-4		1945	
1905-8			
1909-10			
1904		1945-49	
1904-5		1966-67	
1908-9		1967-68	
1910-13			
1914-15			
1913-14		1968-71	



PRIME MINISTERS QUIZ ... continued

Period	Name	Period	Name
1915-23		1971-72	
1923-29		1972-75	
1929-32		1975-83	
1932-39		1983-91	
1939		1991-96	
1939-41		1996-	
1949-66			
1941			

Edmund Barton
 Stanley Melbourne Bruce
 Ben Chifley
 Joseph Cook
 John Curtin
 Alfred Deakin
 Arthur Fadden
 Andrew Fisher
 Francis Forde

Malcolm Fraser
 John Gorton
 Robert Hawke
 Harold Holt
 John Howard
 William Hughes
 Paul Keating
 Joseph Lyons
 John McEwen

William McMahon
 Robert Menzies
 Earle Page
 George Reid
 James Scullin
 John Watson
 Gough Whitlam



THINKING ABOUT PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

The film you are about to watch is also about favourite personal possessions and what they tell us about a person.

- Think about your own favourite possession. What does it tell somebody else about you—not just your likes or dislikes, but more serious aspects such as your past, or your values, or even your hopes or fears?
- Try the same exercise with some family members or friends.

What you have started to do with this exercise is to create an autobiographical or biographical portrait—analysing and commenting on and understanding a person through evidence. You will be able to start doing this with several of Australia's Prime Ministers through this film.

Here are the ten objects:

- 1 Edmund Barton and a Velvet Soap advertisement
- 2 Andrew Fisher's lunchbox
- 3 William Hughes and the 1916 conscription badge
- 4 Stanley Melbourne Bruce and the cigarette case from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk
- 5 James Scullin and Isaac Isaacs' GCMG
- 6 Joseph Lyons' love letters
- 7 Robert Menzies' movie camera
- 8 John Curtin's Australian Journalists' Association badge
- 9 Ben Chifley's pipe
- 10 Harold Holt's briefcase

Decide which of these aspects you think the object will tell you about the Prime Minister. For example, Joseph Lyons' love letters (#6) might tell us about his background, his qualities, his values and attitudes, personal details and so on.



The Prime Ministers' National Treasures presenter Warren Brown with Prime Minister John Curtin's Australian Journalists Association Badge. On location at the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library in Perth. Photograph by Brad Rimmer. © NFSA.



THINKING ABOUT PERSONAL POSSESSIONS... continued

Mark what aspects you think each will reveal about its owner.

Aspect	Prime Minister and object									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Birth										
Background						X				
Period as PM										
Achievements										
Failures										
Qualities						X				
Values/Attitudes						X				
Key moments										
Personal details						X				
The times										
Crises										



Movie camera belonging to Sir Robert Menzies. Photograph by Dean McNicoll. Photo courtesy of the Dame Pattie Menzies collection No.1, National Museum of Australia.



EXPLORING IDEAS AND ISSUES

One of the main things that watching this film will do is to help you start thinking about each of the ten Prime Ministers featured.

A good research task is to prepare a brief biography of each one. You might allocate the Prime Ministers among small groups and have each group present a single page summary of their Prime Minister, using this table. Start by filling in what you can about the Prime Minister from the film, and then use the references at the end of this study guide to fill in the gaps in the table.

Prime Minister Biography Summary Sheet

Name	Photograph
Birth (date, place)	
Background	
Personal details	
Period/s as PM	
The times	



EXPLORING IDEAS AND ISSUES ... continued

Key moments	
Crises	
Achievements	
Failures	
Qualities	
Values/attitudes	
If you met him what you would ask	
Most interesting thing about him	
Most significant thing about him	
Your assessment	



EPISODE 1 – EDMUND BARTON AND THE VELVET SOAP AD

The Velvet Soap advertising campaign is a tongue-in-cheek reminder of Edmund Barton's hand in formulating the White Australia policy. Barton also helped draft the Federal Constitution, created the High Court, and presided over the formulation of federal industrial relations and the legal system. Without him the wayward states may never have federated.

Edmund Barton was Prime Minister of Australia from January 1901 to September 1903. The Velvet Soap ad is held at Old Parliament House in Canberra.

- 1 What was the 'White Australia policy'?
- 2 Why might most Australians at the time have wanted it?
- 3 The presenter, Warren Brown, mentions the White Australia policy – which almost every Australian today would disapprove of. Do you think there might be some ideas or values that we hold today in our society that later generations might think are terrible? For example, might later generations condemn us for eating meat? Or for keeping pets? Or for drinking alcohol? Or enjoying sport? Discuss this idea.
- 4 Barton's nickname was 'Tosspot Toby'. What does this refer to?
- 5 Do you think a person's private life is relevant in deciding if he or she should become a Prime Minister? Discuss your views.
- 6 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....
 : This object is
 :

: It helps us realize that
 :

- 7 Look at how Warren Brown portrays Edmund Barton in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Barton that could be used with this episode.
- 8 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:

- his official portrait at <http://www.portrait.gov.au/people/edmund-barton-1849>
- a photograph
- Warren Brown's caricature of him
- the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/>
- a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

- 9 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.

Research topic: The White Australia policy



Billboard poster, designed by Charles Nuttall, advertising Velvet soap, featuring the first three Justices of Australia's High Court; Sir Edmund Barton, Sir Samuel Griffith and Richard O'Connor, 1903-5. Photo courtesy of the Old Parliament House Collection.



EPISODE 2 – ANDREW FISHER'S LUNCHBOX

Andrew Fisher's tin lunchbox reminds us that humble beginnings informed his formidable political career: leaving school at ten, he was a coalminer throughout his teens, and migrated to Australia at 22. He rose quickly from union organiser to three-time Prime Minister, inventing the Australian ideal of a 'fair go' along the way. Among a host of policies designed for the common good, he advocated maternity allowances and greater political equality for women.

Andrew Fisher was Prime Minister of Australia three times; from November 1908 to June 1909, April 1910 to June 1913, September 1914 to October 1915. Andrew Fisher's lunchbox is held at the Gympie Gold Mining Museum in Queensland.

- 1 Why do you think children like Andrew Fisher were sent down coalmines at such a young age?
- 2 How might this have influenced his later ideas about people's rights?
- 3 Why do you think Andrew Fisher became involved in a union?
- 4 Why would some other people in the same situation as him not have become so involved?
- 5 What was the role of the union?
- 6 How was this different from a political party?
- 7 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....
: This object is
.....

: It helps us realize that
.....

8 Look at how Warren Brown portrays Andrew Fisher in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Fisher that could be used with this episode.

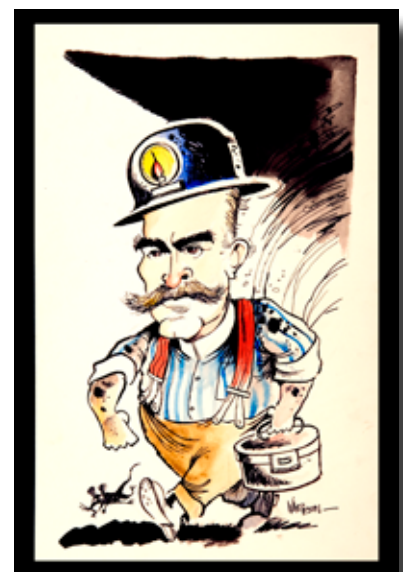
9 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:

- his official portrait at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Fisher
- a photograph
- Warren Brown's caricature of him
- the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/>
- a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

10 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.

Research topic: The legislation passed by the first Australian Parliaments (1901-14) and how this legislation helped create a fair and just society.



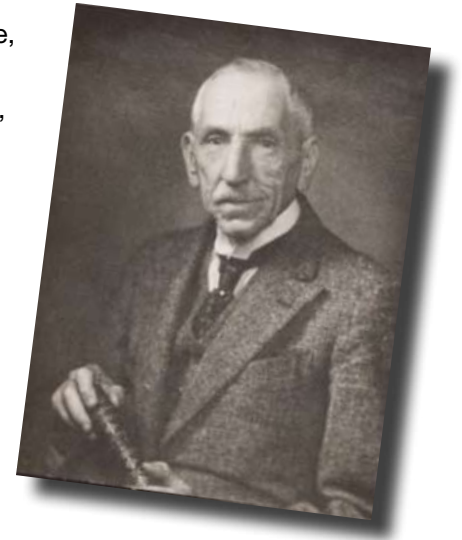
Presenter Warren Brown's watercolour caricature of Prime Minister Andrew Fisher.



EPISODE 3 – WILLIAM HUGHES AND THE 1916 CONSCRIPTION BADGE

The irascible William Hughes was a popular and dynamic politician despite a tendency to feud. He burned through 100 secretaries during his term in office, helped found the Labor party, the Nationalist Party, and the United Australia Party and was ousted from all three. ‘The Little Digger’ as he became known, campaigned twice for the deeply unpopular concept of national conscription in order to boost an Australian army decimated by some of the bloodiest offensives of World War One. He formed the Commonwealth Police Force after a dissenter socked him with an egg and the state police force did nothing.

William Hughes was Prime Minister of Australia from October 1915 to February 1923. The 1916 conscription badge is held at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.



Portrait of William Hughes. Photo courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

- 1 Describe what ‘conscription’ is.
- 2 At this time only men were conscripted. Suggest why. Do you think it would be different today?
- 3 Why did Hughes hold referendums on this issue?
- 4 Look at the wording on the badge. Do you think this badge would have been a persuasive thing? Explain your reasons.
- 5 Imagine that you had to design a badge for those opposed to conscription. Create some slogans that would be powerful and persuasive.
- 6 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....

This object is

.....

It helps us realize that

.....

- 7 Look at how Warren Brown portrays William Hughes in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Hughes that could be used with this episode.
- 8 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:
 - his official portrait https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Hughes
 - a photograph
 - Warren Brown’s caricature of him
 - the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/>
 - a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

- 9 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.

Research topic: The conscription issue 1916-1917

‘Yes’ World War One referendum on conscription, tin plate and celluloid, Australia, 1916. Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. Photographer: Ryan Hernandez





EPISODE 4 – STANLEY MELBOURNE BRUCE'S CIGARETTE CASE

Until the day he died, Stanley Melbourne Bruce kept two photographs in his study – one of his wife and one of Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkish state. As young men they were enemies at Gallipoli, but during the post-war years of international reconstruction, they forged a mutual admiration as passionate advocates of secularism. After the League of Nations Montreux conference in 1936, Atatürk presented Bruce with a gold cigarette case, which he treasured for the rest of his life.

Stanley Melbourne Bruce was Prime Minister of Australia from February 1923 to October 1929. Stanley Melbourne Bruce's cigarette case is held at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra.

- 1 Describe the connection of Bruce and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at Gallipoli.
- 2 Bruce was given the cigarette case well after he had been Prime Minister. Why did Atatürk give it to him?
- 3 Why was it important to Turkey to have naval access to the Dardanelles Straits in the 1930s? (You may need to refer to a map to answer this question.)
- 4 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....
: This object is
:
: It helps us realize that
:
:

- 5 Look at how Warren Brown portrays Stanley Melbourne Bruce in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Bruce that could be used with this episode.
- 6 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:

- his official portrait at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanley_Bruce
- a photograph
- Warren Brown's caricature of him
- the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/>
- a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

- 7 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.

Research topic:

- Bruce and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at Gallipoli 1915



The Prime Ministers' National Treasures presenter Warren Brown holding Bruce's gold cigarette case. On location at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra. Photograph by Sam Cooper, National Archives of Australia. © National Archives of Australia.



EPISODE 5 – JAMES SCULLIN AND THE GCMG

When Labor won the 1929 election, at the height of the Depression, the new Prime Minister, James Scullin, refused to take up residence in The Lodge. Instead, he offered to rent it out to defray the costs of the Prime Ministership—an act which would be unthinkable today. Scullin had backbone, and even when his mission to appoint an Australian-born Governor-General met with furious opposition and public disapproval, he insisted on appointing one—Sir Isaac Isaacs. King George V was not amused, but the precedent had been set and Isaacs was anointed to the Order of St Michael and St George as Knight Grand Cross (GCMG) and presented the insignia chain.

James Scullin was Prime Minister of Australia from October 1929 to January 1932. The GCMG is held at the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

- 1 This argument took place during the Depression. What was the Depression?
- 2 Why was the Governor-General of Australia traditionally a Briton?
- 3 Why did Scullin want to change this?
- 4 Why do you think a popular vote was a ‘trump card’ for Scullin?
- 5 Do you think it matters now which nation the Governor-General is from? Explain your views.
- 6 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7 Look at how Warren Brown portrays James Scullin in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Scullin that could be used with this episode.

8 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:

- his official portrait https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Scullin
- a photograph
- Warren Brown’s caricature of him
- the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/index.html>
- a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

9 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.

Research topic: The role of the Governor-General in Australian government



The Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George (Sir Isaac Isaacs’ Governor-General collar). Photograph by Marcus Filinger. © NFSA



EPISODE 6 – JOSEPH LYONS' LOVE LETTERS

Joseph Lyons came to power during the Depression years. Lyons and his adored wife and confidante, Enid, presented a genuine picture of domestic harmony and security to the Australian public despite the many separations they endured as he commuted from the family home in Tasmania to the Australian capital. Politics rarely produces impassioned romantics, which is just what makes the hundreds of letters Joseph Lyons wrote to Enid as fascinating as they are unexpected. He died in office and Enid went on to become the first female member of the Federal House of Representatives and the first woman in Federal Cabinet.

Joseph Lyons was Prime Minister of Australia from January 1932 to April 1939. Joseph Lyons' love letters are held at the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

- 1 The love letters in this episode were sent by Joseph Lyons, but kept by his wife. Why do you think the Prime Minister might not have kept his wife's letters to him?
- 2 Several of the letters stress the loss that the Prime Minister felt being away from his wife and family. Why do you think people are prepared to sacrifice personal needs for politics?
- 3 People at the time would not have been told about these letters. If similar letters of a current Prime Minister to his wife were discovered do you think newspapers today would publish them? Should they? Discuss your ideas.
- 4 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....
: This object is
:
: It helps us realize that
:
:

5 Look at how Warren Brown portrays Joseph Lyons in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Lyons that could be used with this episode.

6 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:

- his official portrait
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Lyons
- a photograph
- Warren Brown's caricature of him
- the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/>
- a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

7 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.

Research topic: Dame Enid Lyons



Portrait of Joseph & Enid Lyons. Photo courtesy of Peter Lyons.



EPISODE 7 – ROBERT MENZIES' CAMERA

Robert Menzies served his first term as Prime Minister during World War Two. In 1941, he travelled to England and witnessed the bombing of London first-hand. He was shocked. He also believed Singapore would fall if the Japanese entered the war, which strained his relationship with Churchill. Menzies took his wind-up film camera everywhere he went, and his very personal record of the visit includes strikingly informal footage of a young Princess Elizabeth.

Robert Menzies was Prime Minister of Australia twice; from April 1939 to August 1941 and December 1949 to January 1966. Robert Menzies' camera is held at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.

1 What was the situation facing Australia when Robert Menzies was Prime Minister for his first term?

2 What did Menzies film?

3 There is a lot of film from the time – why is Menzies' film considered so important?

4 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....
: This object is

.....
: It helps us realize that

5 Look at how Warren Brown portrays Robert Menzies in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Menzies that could be used with this episode.

*Portrait of Robert Menzies.
Photo courtesy of the
National Library of Australia.*

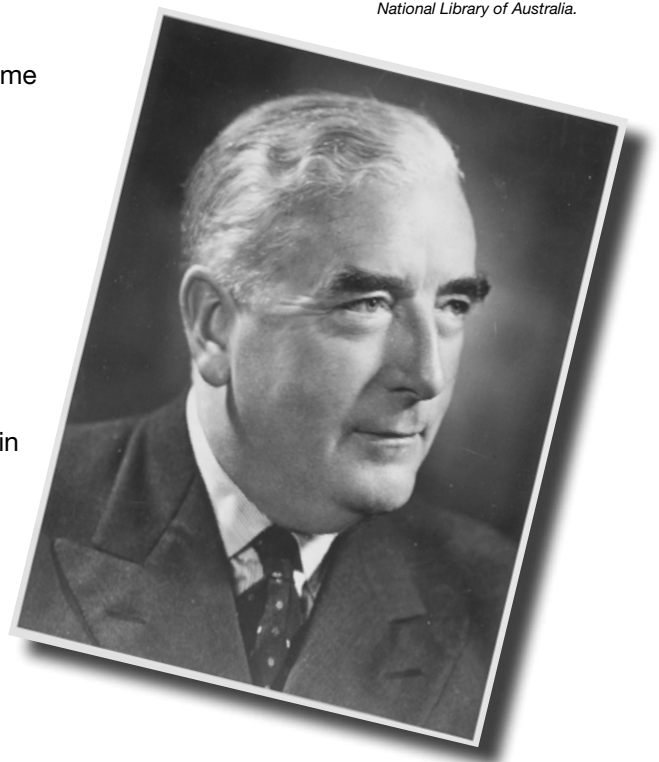
6 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:

- his official portrait at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Menzies
- a photograph
- Warren Brown's caricature of him
- the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/>
- a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

7 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.

Research topic: The fall of Singapore in 1942





EPISODE 8 – JOHN CURTIN’S AUSTRALIAN JOURNALISTS’ ASSOCIATION BADGE

John Curtin started out as a copy-boy on *The Age*, working his way up the ladder via the union movement. He joined the Australian Journalists’ Association (AJA) in 1917 and was elected Western Australian President in 1920, before moving into politics. Twenty years later he reached the top, becoming Australia’s fourteenth Prime Minister. His affinity with the press served him well during the arduous years of World War Two, when he kept newspaper editors onside with regular press briefings, even revealing dispatches from Churchill. He wore his AJA badge every day he was in office.

John Curtin was Prime Minister of Australia from October 1941 to July 1945. John Curtin’s Australian Journalists’ Association badge is held at the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library in Perth.

- 1 What was the situation facing Australia when John Curtin was Prime Minister?
- 2 Why was his talking to journalists such a significant thing to do?
- 3 Why did he do it?
- 4 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....
: This object is
:
: It helps us realize that
:
:

5 Look at how Warren Brown portrays John Curtin in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Curtin that could be used with this episode.

*Prime Minister John Curtin’s Australian Journalists Association Badge. Photograph by Brad Rimmer.
© NFSA*

6 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:

- his official portrait at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Curtin
- a photograph
- Warren Brown’s caricature of him
- the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/>
- a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

7 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.

Research topic: The American presence in Australia under Curtin





EPISODE 9 – BEN CHIFLEY’S PIPE

Possibly our best loved Prime Minister, Ben Chifley was a former train driver with a voice like worn out boot leather. He was well aware that his image as the typical bloke next door—he was rarely seen without his tobacco pipe—helped to sell an ambitious raft of post-war reconstruction projects to the Australian public. He was also a gifted treasurer, prone to personal and professional thrift, which allowed him to set the stage for Australia’s economic boom in the 1950s.



Ben Chifley’s pipe. Photographer Linda Coleman. © Bathurst Regional Council. Image courtesy of the Chifley Home, Bathurst.

Ben Chifley was Prime Minister of Australia from July 1945 to December 1949. Ben Chifley’s pipe is held at the Ben Chifley Home in Bathurst NSW.

- 1 Why was the period straight after the war so important for Australians?
- 2 What qualities did Chifley have that were so appropriate for this time?
- 3 What does the political cartoon from the period and shown in the film tell us about the contrast between Chifley’s policies and Menzies’?
- 4 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....

..... This object is

..... It helps us realize that

.....

5 Look at how Warren Brown portrays Ben Chifley in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Chifley that could be used with this episode.

Portrait of Ben Chifley as he was typically sighted with pipe in hand. Photo courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

6 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:

- his official portrait at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Chifley
- a photograph
- Warren Brown’s caricature of him
- the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/>
- a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

7 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.



Research topic: The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electricity Scheme



EPISODE 10 – HAROLD HOLT’S BRIEFCASE

The disappearance of our seventeenth Prime Minister, Harold Holt, during a beach holiday sparked countless conspiracy theories and ultimately overshadowed his political accomplishments. At the height of the cold war, with the Vietnam War escalating, he had already started to dismantle the White Australia policy. The items left in Holt’s briefcase are a significant time capsule of his last days as Prime Minister: a pair of socks, theatre tickets, his tax returns and a couple of combs. He is remembered today by The Harold Holt Memorial Baths in Melbourne and a plaque at Cheviot Beach where he took his last swim.

Harold Holt was Prime Minister of Australia from January 1966 to December 1967. Harold Holt’s briefcase is held at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra.

- 1 What were the main achievements that Prime Minister Holt was involved in?
- 2 After his death, there were many wild rumours about how he died, or did not die. Why do you think people start or promote rumours about events?
- 3 One of the memorials to Harold Holt is a swimming pool in Melbourne. How is this an example of irony?
- 4 Insiders at the time knew that Holt had been involved in affairs with several women. Should such personal details be revealed about political leaders if they are known? Explain your view.
- 5 Imagine that you have been asked to create a caption for a museum to display with this object. It can only be a maximum of fifty words. Complete your description:

.....

This object is

.....

It helps us realize that

.....

6 Look at how Warren Brown portrays Harold Holt in his cartoon caricature of him. Design an alternative way of showing Holt that could be used with this episode.

The Prime Ministers’ National Treasures presenter Warren Brown holding Harold Holt’s briefcase on location at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra. Photograph by Sam Cooper, National Archives of Australia. © National Archives of Australia.

7 Try to compare these different representations of this Prime Minister:

- his official portrait at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Holt
- a photograph
- Warren Brown’s caricature of him
- the caricature by cartoonist Rocco Fazzari at <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/mathas/pms/>
- a historical cartoon from the time.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these in helping a person to understand the Prime Minister.

8 Add any details you can to the Prime Ministers biography sheet.

Research topic: The home front and the Vietnam War



FURTHER INFORMATION

The best site for information on Australia's Prime Ministers is at the National Archives of Australia:

<http://primeministers.naa.gov.au>

Other useful sites are:

The Australian Prime Ministers Centre : <http://primeministers.moadoph.gov.au/>

Past Prime Ministers: <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/>

National Library of Australia: www.nla.gov.au

National Archives of Australia: www.naa.gov.au

John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library: <http://john.curtin.edu.au>

Powerhouse Museum, Sydney: <https://maas.museum/>

Gympie Gold Mining & Historical Museum: www.museum.gympiegoldmuseum.com.au/

Menzies Virtual Museum: www.menziesvirtualmuseum.org.au

The National Centre for History Education www.thenhier.ca/en/content/national-centre-history-education-australia

Study Guide for the film *Curtin* (Wain Fimeri and Jessica Hobbs, 2007):

www.metromagazine.com.au in the 'Study Guides' section

Official portraits of Prime Ministers: www.parl.gc.ca/About/House/collections/fine_arts/prime_ministers/pm_thumbs-e.htm

Investigating National Treasures: www.nationaltreasures.com.au

The Prime Ministers' National Treasures

A Film Australia National Interest Program produced in association with Old Parliament House and the Australian



Broadcasting Corporation.

Series Producer - Paul Rudd

Producer - Perry Stapleton

Director - Matthew Thomason

Writers - Paul Rudd, Matthew Thomason

Presenter - Warren Brown

Film Australia Executive

Producer - Penny Robins

ABC Commissioning Editor - Stuart Menzies

Duration - 10 x 5 minutes
2007

For information about Film Australia's programs, contact:

National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Sales and Distribution

PO Box 397 Pyrmont NSW 2009

T +61 2 8202 0144

F +61 2 8202 0101

E: sales@nfsa.gov.au |

www.nfsa.gov.au



ABC

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Television



This study guide was produced by **ATOM**
editor@atom.org.au

For more information on **SCREEN EDUCATION** magazine, or to download other free study guides, visit www.metromagazine.com.au

For hundreds of articles on Film as Text, Screen Literacy, Multiliteracy and Media Studies, visit www.theeducationshop.com.au