

# Studying a Campaign: **KOKODA 1942**

## Milne Bay – KB Mission Battle 27/28 August 1942

### Inquiry Questions

1. What happened at KB Mission on the night of 27/28 August 1942?
2. What factors led to the defeat of the Australian force there?

## Case Notes

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Relevant Progression Points

#### Level 10

- Students sequence events and developments within a chronological framework, and identify relationships between events across different places and periods of time.
- They process, analyse and synthesise information from a range of primary and secondary sources and use it as evidence to answer inquiry questions.

#### Level 10.5

- Analyse interpretations of events and the evidence for them
- Identify and interrogate a range of sources about events

## A note about analysing Primary Sources

French historian Marc Bloch said once that 'a document is a witness, and like most witnesses it rarely speaks until one begins to question it.'

In this activity you will be exposed to both Primary and Secondary evidence as a means of discovering what happened at **KB Mission, Milne Bay** on the night of 27/28 August 1942.

## Reading and Writing about Primary Sources

**What are primary sources?** They can be defined as "materials produced by people or groups directly involved in the event or topic under consideration." Primary sources can include not just written documents (e.g., letters) but also the material remains (e.g., furniture, art, architecture, music) of a specific time and place. Primary sources are the essential building blocks for the historian's reconstruction of a moment in time. The historian's task is to assemble these blocks into a coherent structure.

### **Reading Primary Sources:**

Reading a source critically is one of the historian's most fundamental skills. First read the document(s) for content. What is the document saying? Examine the source(s) for the essential information about the main characters, events, ideas, and arguments. It is helpful to write a short summary of the document in your own words.

Think about the following questions as you critically examine the source(s):

**Authorship:** What do you know about the author's background? Why did the author write the document? What motives did he or she have in putting pen to paper? What personal, class, ethnic, religious, gender or cultural beliefs and assumptions might have influenced the author's viewpoint and writing?

**Genre:** Does the source fall into a distinct genre? How does the genre shape the author's writing?

**Audience:** For whom was the author writing? Did he or she address any particular person or group? Did the author's audience have any effect on the document's content?

**Language:** What can you tell about a historical period from the language and vocabulary used?

**Reliability:** What can the source tell you about the past? How useful is it for understanding the past? How trustworthy is the source?

**Authenticity:** Are there reasons to doubt the authorship of the document?

**Influence:** How important or influential was the source at the time? Would it have been widely read (e.g., a pamphlet)? Was it more personal (e.g., a diary)? Was it published? When?

## Learning Intention

We are learning to:

- process, analyse and synthesise information from a range of primary and secondary sources
- sequence events and developments within a chronological framework
- identify relationships between events across different places and periods of time

## Contents

### **1) Introduction to the situation under review**

*Resources required:*

- *Case File Milne Bay KB Mission Battle; Notable Features of the Milne Bay Battle*
- *Battle of Milne Bay – Image File*
- *Resource: ‘The Official History’*

### **2) Identifying the events and their significance**

*Resources required:*

- *War Diary – 24-31 August 1942*
- *Map: ‘The 2/10<sup>th</sup> BN at KB Mission, 27-28 August 1942’*
- *Glossary*

### **3) Studying the course of the battle from differing perspectives**

*Resources required:*

- *Case File Milne Bay KB Mission Battle*
- *Infantry Company commander’s reports A-D, Mortar Platoon, and Carrier Platoon.*
- *Map*
- *Glossary*

### **4) Examining other evidence**

*Resources required:*

- *Japanese and Australian rifles*
- *Impression of Japanese tank*
- *S.T. Grenade diagram*
- *“Lessons from Recent Fighting”*

### **5) Establishing a conclusion to the inquiry**

This is the final written task – your Case Notes and this written task will contribute to your results for this inquiry.

## Introduction to the situation under review

Resources required:

- *Case File Milne Bay KB Mission Battle; Notable Features of the Milne Bay Battle*
- *Battle of Milne Bay – Image File*
- *Resource: 'The Official History'*

Read the first handout in your *Case File*.

- 1) What value or significance did Milne Bay have for:
  - a. The Allies (Americans and Australians)?

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- b. The Japanese?

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- 2) Examine the command structure for *Milne Force*.

- a. Who was in command of *Milne Force*? Using internet research, note down any significant facts regarding this person's ability to command at this level.

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- b. What was the difference between the AIF and the Militia? Why is one described as 'experienced and battle ready' and the other as 'inexperienced and untested'?

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- c. Using internet research, find out about the Japanese *Special Naval Landing Force* troops. What can be said about their abilities/training/reputation?

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- d. What happened to the 61<sup>st</sup> Militia Battalion when the Japanese forces first invaded Milne Bay? Use the Kokoda Commemoration website to assist you.

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3) Examine 'Notable Features of the Milne Bay battle':

- a. Explain how geographical factors influenced the battle.

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- b. What strategic advantages did the Japanese have, and how did these affect Australian operations?

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- c. What strategic advantages did the Australians have, and how did these affect Japanese operations?

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- d. What evidence is there in the *Image File* to support the comments you have made regarding questions 3 a, b & c?

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## Identifying the events and their significance

Resources required:

- *War Diary – 24-31 August 1942*
- *Map: 'The 2/10<sup>th</sup> BN at KB Mission, 27-28 August 1942'*
- *Glossary*
- *Timeline of Events: KB Mission Battle*

5) Access the Australian War Memorial website (<http://www.awm.gov.au>). Click on 'War History' > 'Units' > 'Second World War' > and then find '2/10 Battalion'. Discuss the level of experience the battalion would have had by August 1942.

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6) Examine the War Diary of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion (use the Glossary to help with any unfamiliar terms).

a. Consider the comments on Page 2 of this work book. What judgments can you make about the **authorship, audience, language, reliability** and **influence** of this document as a historical source?

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b. What were the most **significant events of the battle**? List at least 5 key moments from the battle and explain why you think they were significant to the outcome.

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