RUGBY HERITAGE

EdRugby Online Educational Resource

LESSON: Weary Dunlop – Rugby legend

LEVEL Upper primary

THEME: Rugby heritage

DESCRIPTION:

Students are introduced to the purpose and form of a biography. They read Weary Dunlop's biography, list main events and examine and identify language features that order events.

OUTCOMES

This lesson contributes to the achievement of the following unit outcomes:

English

- With teacher guidance, identifies and discusses how linguistic structures and features work to shape readers' and viewers' understanding of texts.
- Draws on knowledge and linguistic structures and features to explain how texts are constructed.

SUGGESTED TIME:

40 minutes

WHAT YOU NEED:

- photos of famous people
- magazines featuring biographical articles
- a range of biographies (your librarian may have some helpful suggestions)
- map of Victoria (featuring the town of Wangaratta)
- class copies of Student handout – Weary Dunlop biography (at the end of this lesson plan)

australian RUGBY

PART 1 COLLECTING IDEAS

Note: You may decide to skip this part if your class is familiar with the ideas related to a biography.

a. Work with the whole class to collect a list of names of well-known sporting heroes both past and present, for example Don Bradman, Cathy Freeman, Ian Thorpe and John Eales.

   Show the class published biographies about some of these people. You may have additional source material such as magazines containing biographical articles or biographical videos. Ask the class some questions about biographies. Prompt questions may include:

   What is a biography?

   What forms do biographies come in?

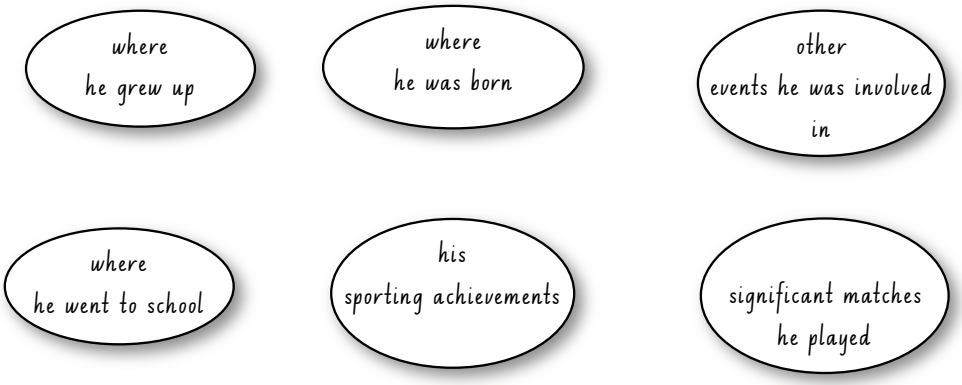
   What information do biographies contain?

b. Choose a Rugby player the students are likely to know about, for example John Eales or George Gregan.

   Ask the class the question:

   What information do you find in a biography?

   Work with the whole class to collect a list of things that may be found in an article about him.



c. Ask the class the question:

Why do people write biographies?

Possible responses may include to:

- remember people
- inspire readers to meet challenges in life
- get a new perspective on a person's life
- tell a story
- reveal the truth.

Discuss why people write biographies about people like John Eales and the other sporting heroes listed. Explain that Weary Dunlop is a significant person in the history of Rugby and that you and the class are going to learn more by reading a biographical recount about him.

PART 2 WEARY DUNLOP'S BIOGRAPHY

a. Show the photograph of Weary Dunlop and discuss his year of birth 1907. Students may be able to relate this to the age of their own relatives. Show students a map of Victoria and locate the town of Wangaratta. Read out the title of the text and ask students to predict the sort of things they may learn about Weary Dunlop.

Ask the class some questions about Weary Dunlop's biography:

What information would you expect to find in this biography?

Why would someone write this biography?

b. Hand out a copy of the text to each student. Alternatively, project an OHT version of the text using an overhead projector.

Read the first paragraph aloud to the students. Discuss the purpose of this stage of the text, establishing its role as background.

c. Read the rest of the text aloud. Ask students to signal when a new period of his life starts (childhood, teenage, adulthood), correlating the paragraph, year, his age and the main events that occurred. Make a record of student responses in a summary table similar to that shown below:

Period of life	Paragraph	Year	Age	Main events
birth	1	1907	0	n/a
childhood	1			schooling at Benalla High School

Alternatively, complete this activity by organising students into small groups assigned to a single period of life or paragraph. Re-group and jointly construct the table.

PART 3 LANGUAGE FEATURES

A key concept in talking about texts is language features. Language features refer to the actual language choices that are made by the author of the text.

Words and phrases that tell when things happened

a. Read out the following sentences:

   'He represented Melbourne University and Victoria in Rugby Union, at a time when the strength of the Victorian team was strong. In 1932 he became the first Victorian-born player to be chosen to play for Australia. He played two tests in 1932 and 1934, both against New Zealand.'

   Ask the class the question:

   Which words or phrases tell you when this happened?

b. Ask students in groups to read through the passage again and circle the words or phases that tell when things happened.

   As a group, discuss the students' findings –- to determine if the selected words or phrases do set the time – and the purpose of these words and phrases.

   Prompt questions include:

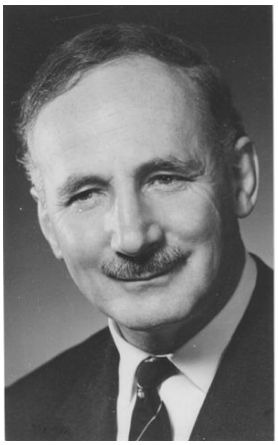
   How important are these words in a biography?

   What would happen if these words were not used?

PART 4 EXTENSION

- Compare Weary Dunlop's contributions with another national hero.
- Ask students to look through magazines and biographies to find examples of words and phrases that tell when things happened.
- Students can begin to complete their own biographical details in a summary table.
- Discuss the features, purpose and audience of this biography.
- Explore the language used in this biography, noting its origin (a book called Australian Rugby Union: the Game and the Players). Compare to biographies from other sources and with different audiences. How might the biography change if it was written for a different purpose?
- Examine a range of biographies and read the text on the back cover. Write a short summary to go on the back cover of a biography for Weary Dunlop.

STUDENT HANDOUT WEARY DUNLOP



Sir Ernest Edward 'Weary' Dunlop CMG, OBE, KS

Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop was born in the Victorian country town of Wangaratta on 12 July 1907. He grew up on a farm where he developed his strength as a young man. One of two brothers, he completed his schooling at Benalla High School and then started work in a pharmacy, but finding this not to his liking he went to Melbourne University to study medicine. At university he boxed, winning the Australian Universities heavyweight title and played Australian Rules, but when he broke an ankle he found it hard to jump for the ball, so changed to Rugby Union. His height and strength made him a valuable second row forward and line-out specialist who always made his presence felt on the Rugby field. He represented Melbourne University and Victoria in Rugby Union, at a time when the strength of the Victorian team was strong. In 1932 he became the first Victorian-born player to be chosen to play for Australia. He played two tests in 1932 and 1934, both against New Zealand.

As much as Weary enjoyed playing Rugby, his career came first and to this end he refused Rugby opportunities offered to him. In the early 1930s he turned down an invitation to captain an Australian University touring team to Japan and he also turned down an invitation to tour with the Wallabies to New Zealand and to be a member of the first Australian team to tour South Africa in 1933.

In 1937 he went to England to further his studies as a surgeon and while there he continued his Rugby in a limited way, playing for St Mary's Hospital, London. He was in London at the start of World War II and as had been the custom in World War I, inter-service teams were formed as a form of recreation for the many serviceman transferred to Europe from all over the Commonwealth. Given his background he was naturally chosen to play for the Commonwealth Combined Services Rugby team.

Having enlisted in the Australian Infantry Force he served in the Middle East and it was during this time that he represented the AIF against the French Army Team on a stony ground in Syria, Australia winning 11–5 in front of a crowd of seven thousand spectators, mostly French soldiers. In 1942 Weary was on his way to take up a new command position in Australia, but when his unit was diverted to Java, they were captured by the Japanese and there he began three years as a prisoner of war in the worst of circumstances.

As Weary had made his presence felt on the Rugby field, he made his presence felt in the prisoner-of-war camps.

The Japanese forced the captured men to build the infamous Thai-Burma railway, stretching 421 kilometres, without the benefit of sufficient nourishment,

medical care or tools. Thousands lost their lives in these terrible conditions. Countless others had their suffering eased or their lives saved by the surgical skills of Weary Dunlop, who had to improvise with the most basic of instruments.

As the commanding officer he also put himself at great personal risk when he challenged the brutality of Japanese prison guards and their decisions to make sick men work. He was often punished for doing so. In one incident the guards planned to kill one of the prisoners but Weary stepped in front of the bayonets, refusing to move until the prisoner's life was spared.

When Weary returned to Australia, he dedicated his life to caring for former prisoners of war and despite all the suffering he had seen and experienced during those dreadful years as a prisoner of war, he practiced forgiveness and in 1975 two players from a visiting Japanese Rugby team stayed as guests in his home. As a surgeon he worked in both Australia and Asia, building a strong relationship between the two. He was a pioneer of cancer surgery, and in 1969 was knighted for his contribution to medicine.

Sir Edward Dunlop died in Melbourne in 1993 and was given a State funeral where ten thousand people lined the streets. He was wearing a Rugby jersey when he died. Typical of the effect this compassionate man had on the wider community, the Melbourne Buddhist community 'sang him up to heaven' because to them he was 'an enlightened soul'.

Today, in memory of Sir Edward and as a reminder of the Rugby Union teams he played with in the past, the Weary Dunlop Trophy is contested between the Australian Universities and the Australian Services teams.

Biography

Pollard, Jack Australian Rugby Union: the Game and the Players, Ironbark, 1994

www.abc.net.au

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