

Teaching Resource: The Staff, The Serpent and the Sword

100 Years of the Royal New Zealand Army Medical Corps

Author: Ken Treanor

Foreword: Brigadier (Rtd) T. Brian McMahon

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Level: Years 11–13

Book Overview

Ken Treanor's *The Staff, the Serpent and the Sword* chronicles the century-long history of the Royal New Zealand Army Medical Corps (RNZAMC) from its inception in 1908 to its deployments in regions such as Timor Leste, the Solomon Islands, and Afghanistan. The book incorporates personal diaries, official documents, and firsthand accounts, offering a rich narrative of the RNZAMC's evolution and contributions.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

Understand the development and role of the RNZAMC in New Zealand's military history.

Analyse primary and secondary sources to explore the experiences of military medical personnel.

Evaluate the ethical considerations and humanitarian aspects of military medical service.

Develop research and presentation skills through inquiry-based learning.

Key Themes

The evolution of military medical services in New Zealand.

The impact of global conflicts on medical practices and personnel.

The intersection of military obligations and humanitarian responsibilities.

The role of medical personnel in shaping New Zealand's national identity.

Lesson Plan

“Healing in the Line of Fire”

Duration: 3–4 class periods (50 minutes each)

Curriculum Links: New Zealand Curriculum – Social Sciences, Health and Physical Education, English, Military.

Lesson 1:

Introduction to the RNZAMC

Objective:

Familiarise students with the origins and functions of the RNZAMC.

Activities:

Discussion Starter: Pose the question, “What roles do medical personnel play in the military?”

Reading Assignment: Distribute selected excerpts from the book’s early chapters detailing the RNZAMC’s formation.

Assessment:

Students submit a brief reflection on the significance of the RNZAMC’s establishment.

Lesson 2:

RNZAMC in Global Conflicts

Objective:

Analyse the RNZAMC’s involvement in major conflicts and its impact on medical practices.

Activities:

Case Study Analysis: Examine the RNZAMC’s role in World War I, focusing on the Gallipoli campaign.

Primary Source Evaluation: Review diary entries and letters from medical personnel featured in the book.

Class Discussion: Explore how warfare influenced medical advancements and the challenges faced by medical staff.

Assessment:

Students write an analytical essay on the RNZAMC’s contributions during a selected conflict.

Lesson 3:

Ethical Dimensions of Military Medicine

Objective:

Evaluate the ethical dilemmas encountered by military medical personnel.

Activities:

Debate: Organise a debate on topics such as prioritizing care for soldiers versus civilians.

Role-Playing Exercise: Simulate scenarios where students must make critical medical decisions in wartime settings.

Guest Speaker (Optional): Invite a veteran or medical professional to share experiences and insights.

Assessment:

Students compose a reflective piece on the ethical responsibilities of military medical staff.

Lesson 4:

Legacy and Contemporary Relevance

Objective:

Connect the historical role of the RNZAMC to present-day military and humanitarian efforts.

Activities:

Research Project: Students investigate a recent deployment of the RNZAMC and present findings.

Creative Assignment: Develop a multimedia presentation or exhibit showcasing the RNZAMC's legacy.

Class Discussion: Discuss how the RNZAMC's history informs current practices in military medicine.

Assessment:

Evaluate students' presentations and their ability to synthesise historical and contemporary information.

Additional Resources

Royal New Zealand Army Medical Corps Museum: Explore artifacts and exhibits related to the RNZAMC's history.

kotuia.org.nz

National Army Museum, Waiouru: Offers extensive collections on New Zealand's military history.

NZHistory – Medical Units: Provides detailed accounts of New Zealand's military medical services.

NZHistory