

Newcastle
Libraries

**1989
NEWCASTLE
EARTHQUAKE:**

**ONLINE
HISTORY UNIT**

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

This Online History Unit includes a range of activities to engage NSW school students in Year 3-4 and beyond. These activities can be accessed via the Newcastle Libraries website or this downloadable PDF.

Linked closely to the Community Histories and Commemorating Shared Events content in Stage 2 Curriculum, this resource is structured around four key inquiry questions:

1. What is Commemoration?
2. What skills do we need to investigate what happened during and after the 1989 Earthquake?
3. What happened during and after the Earthquake?
4. How does the Newcastle community remember the events of 28 December 1989?

Special thanks go to many staff and community members for their support in creating this resource.

Thank you to the teachers and teacher librarians who helped to create the activities and provide feedback on the resources, especially Katie Randall of Inverell Public School for the amazing activities included in this PDF.

Thank you to Alan Sunderland for sharing his knowledge and resources around the Newcastle Earthquake and his My Australian Story novel, *Six Seconds*.

The Local History team at Newcastle Libraries have been on hand every step of the way to answer any questions, provide collection images and to help out with face-to-face engagements.

Please note some video and images show damaged buildings and a few people in the photographs appear distressed. Please be sensitive to student needs – these images may trigger a range of emotional responses. Ensure your students can find their own space or a time to talk through their emotions if they appear distressed or ask for help.

Stage Two History Curriculum (NSW)

The 1989 Newcastle Earthquake is an event of local, state and national significance that sits in many Australians' living memory. This fits the important study in stage 2 of Community and Remembrance.

The Key Inquiry Questions this unit seeks to answer are:

- How has our community changed? What features have been lost and what features have been retained?
- How and why do people choose to remember significant events of the past?

Historical Concepts and Skills Covered in this Unit

CONCEPTS					
Continuity and change	Cause and effect	Perspectives	Empathetic understanding	Significance	Contestability
Students demonstrate an understanding of:					
	reasons for a particular historical development		how and why people in the past may have lived and behaved differently from today	the importance and meaning of national commemorations and celebrations, and the importance of a person or event	
SKILLS					
Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts	Analysis and use of sources	Perspectives and interpretations	Empathetic understanding	Research	Explanation and communication
Students demonstrate an understanding of:					
respond, read and write to show understanding of historical matters use historical terms	locate relevant information from sources provided		explain how and why people in the past may have lived and behaved differently from today	pose a range of questions about the past	use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written) and digital technologies

General Capabilities and other Curriculum areas relevant to this Unit

Critical and Creative Thinking
Ethical Understanding
Literacy
Personal and Social Capability

English
Civics and Citizenship

1. What is Celebration? What is Remembrance or Commemoration? Classroom Discussion

What is a celebration?

Ask the class:

- What events do you celebrate with your family?
- What events do you celebrate with your friends?
- What events do you celebrate with your community?



A **celebration** is the act of showing appreciation. It could be a social gathering for entertainment or fun.

A celebration might include:

- A personal moment of pride or happiness, such as a sporting or school achievement
- A family gathering, such as the birth of a new baby or wedding anniversary
- A party with friends, such as a birthday party
- A school celebration, such as graduation or a carnival day
- A festival or large community gathering, such as a food festival or street party
- A national holiday, such as New Year's Eve or Australia Day

What is commemoration or remembrance?

Ask the Class:

- What events do you commemorate?
- Do you commemorate these events with your school or community?
- Are there any special dates you might commemorate just with your family?



A **commemoration** is a special time for remembering or honouring a person or event. A commemoration usually happens every year on the same date. This is often a serious occasion, where you remember lost lives, tragic events or offer respectful gratitude for sacrifices made by others in the past.

Commemorations in Australia include:

- ANZAC Day (25th April), remembering the Australians and New Zealanders that served in war to protect our freedoms. It is held on the anniversary of the battle in Gallipoli in World War 1.
- National Sorry Day (26th May), remembering and coming together for truth telling around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences of discrimination, especially in response to the Bringing Them Home Report on the Stolen Generations.

- Remembrance Day (11th November), remember those that fought and died in wars. It is held on the anniversary of the end of the First World War.

Time to Sort: Are the following events celebrations or commemorations?

	Celebration	Commemoration
New Year's Eve		
Birthday party		
National Sorry Day		
School graduation		
ANZAC Day		
Wedding Anniversary		
Australia Day		
Remembrance Day		

2. Historical Skills Toolkit: Learning about the past and important empathy skills

What is the past?

The past is time that is already finished. If something has already happened, then it is in the past!

It could be something from long ago, such as the invention of the steam engine, or more recently, the first-time humans landed on the moon. The past may have just happened, such as having your breakfast this morning.



How do we find out about the past?

There are lots of ways that we can learn more about what has happened in the past. How many ways can you think of?



We can use different types of relevant information called *evidence* to help us piece together what has happened in the past. It is a bit like being a detective. Here are some important types of evidence:

Stories



Listening to or reading stories is a great way to learn about the past. Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of learning about the past, through passing on information from one generation to the next. Fiction helps us become curious and want to know more about events. Non-Fiction helps us to understand the facts of what really happened.

Images



Are there images of the event or the people who were there? These could be photographs, videos, paintings, cartoons, sculptures. We need to think about who made them and why these images were made. For example, video footage from the news is to give us information. An artwork is to create feelings in the audience.

Objects.



Also known as artefacts, objects are a great way to understand what things were like in the olden days. It can be very useful to hold these items and try to use them like people did in the past. Objects could include things like tools, toys, clothing, or jewelry.

Asking questions.

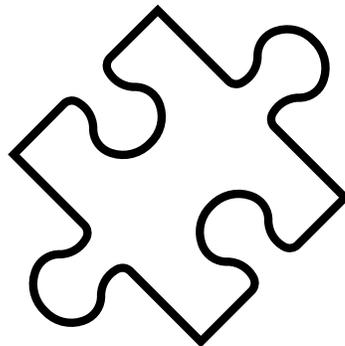
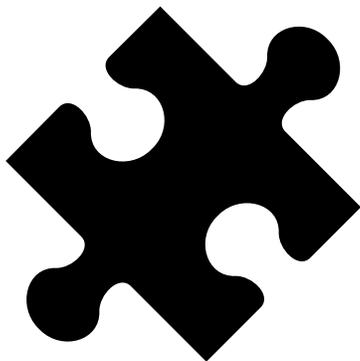


Did you know someone who lived during the time of the event? Were they there? What do they remember? This could be a conversation or it may be an interview.

Historical Evidence Challenge!

Your teacher will bring in a box of **historical evidence** which documents from their past. This will include photos, objects, some written records or reflections such as a diary entry.

1. Handle each of the pieces of evidence, look at them closely, read them, try to think about what is happening in the photos. Do you recognise anyone or anything from this box of evidence?
2. Write down some ideas about what you think these objects, photographs and stories might be about.
3. Prepare some questions to ask your teacher. Remember this is a memory from their life so be kind and sensitive in the types of questions you ask and how you ask the questions.
4. Ask these questions and look back at your ideas to see if they match. Is there anything else you want to know that the evidence cannot answer you on its own?



How to listen and ask questions with empathy

Sometimes it can be hard to listen to stories about the past if you do not understand them or cannot relate to the story or experience. If someone has experienced something difficult, it can be especially hard for us to imagine what that person has been through or how they might be feeling. This is a fantastic opportunity to practice understanding and **empathy**.



Activity: A Walk in My Shoes

Read the following task cards. Discuss the scenarios and share your ideas with a partner.

What would you do in these situations to show empathy (that you understand what the other person is thinking and feeling and you support them)?

You are walking quietly in the hallway when the person in front of you trips and falls to the ground.

How might they be feeling?

What might they be thinking?

What could you do to help?

A classmate has been away for a few days attending a family member's funeral. Today is their first day back at school.

How might they be feeling?

What might they be thinking?

What could you do to help?

One of your friends came to school today and let you know that their dog ran away.

What might they be feeling?

What might they be thinking?

What could you do to help?

In front of the whole school, the principal announces that one of your friends has won an art contest and their drawing will be in a magazine.

How might your friend be feeling?

What might they be thinking?

What things could you say to them?

How can I show empathy while listening?

- ✓ Pay attention to what the person is saying to you. Give them eye contact, sit face to face with them, and show them that you care.
- ✓ Try not to fidget or be distracted. Body language says a lot about whether you are actively listening or not.
- ✓ Don't judge what the person is telling you. Try to keep your opinions to yourself.
- ✓ Ask questions if you need more information or if you are not sure what is being said - try not to interrupt.
- ✓ Be patient and allow the speaker the time to speak freely.
- ✓ Sometimes saying nothing is not a bad thing. Silence can help both the speaker and listener to think about what is being said and how to move forward.

3. The 1989 Newcastle Earthquake

Facts and figures

- The earthquake claimed 13 lives: 9 people died at the Newcastle Workers Club, 3 people were killed in Beaumont Street Hamilton, and one person died of shock
- 160 people were hospitalised
- 50,000 buildings were damaged (approximately 40,000 of these were homes)
- 300 buildings were demolished
- 300,000 people were affected and 1,000 were made homeless
- It left a damage bill estimated to be about \$4 billion
- The effects were felt over an area of about 200,000 sq. km, with isolated reports of movement up to 800km from Newcastle
- Damage to buildings and facilities occurred within a 9000 sq. km region
- The earthquake epicentre was at Boolaroo
- One aftershock (M 2.1) was recorded on 29 December 1989

Watch the NBN News Broadcast from the night of the Earthquake

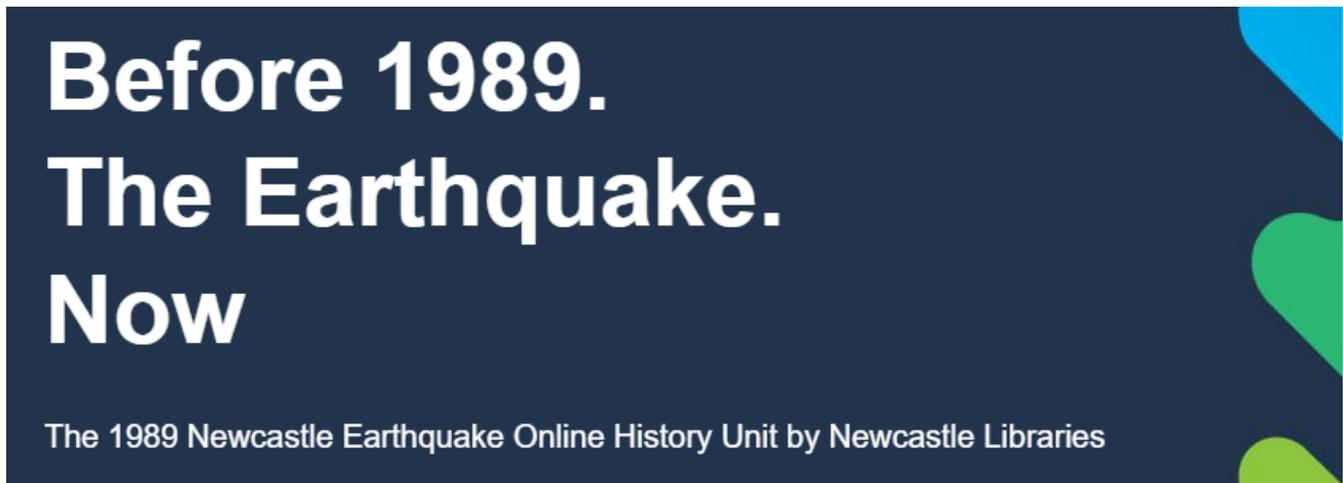


<https://youtu.be/MlpbdclDKzE>

PowerPoint using photographs as evidence

The PowerPoint below is a great place to look at photographic evidence of different earthquake sites in Newcastle.

Look, think, discuss - each of the slides has a lot of information to investigate and will help you understand what each place was like before the earthquake, immediately after the earthquake and what the place is like now.



[Before 1989. The Earthquake. Now](#)

The power of helpers

There were many **emergency workers, or first responders**, involved in the aftermath of the earthquake.

Activity: Draw a line to match the emergency workers with the jobs they were doing below (hint: there is more than one correct answer for each).

Police Officers	Coordinating search efforts and managing teams of people
Fire & Rescue	Searching buildings and cars for trapped people
Paramedics, doctors & nurses	Providing medical assistance to those injured
State Emergency Services (SES)	Clearing rubble and debris
Search & Rescue	Speaking to media / journalists
	Comforting people / onlookers
	Evacuating buildings / people
	Clearing rubble and debris
	Directing traffic

What did people do to help after the earthquake?

Remember the NBN Footage and the PowerPoint Presentation. Can you remember what people were doing to help? Fill out the table below with some examples and why you think it is important to help during a crisis.

How were people helping?	Why was this important?

The impact of the Newcastle earthquake

There are many ways that natural disasters, such as earthquakes, can affect people and the community. Impacts include homelessness, grief and loss of work – but there are so many more.

You may also see examples in the media of other natural disasters such as floods and bushfires. Discuss as a class what some of the long-term impacts of these natural disasters would be on the community?

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-
-
-

Hamilton/Newcastle West walking tour/site study

Notes to help you plan a walking tour or site study of some key locations damaged by the earthquake in 1989.

Walk through and plan beforehand

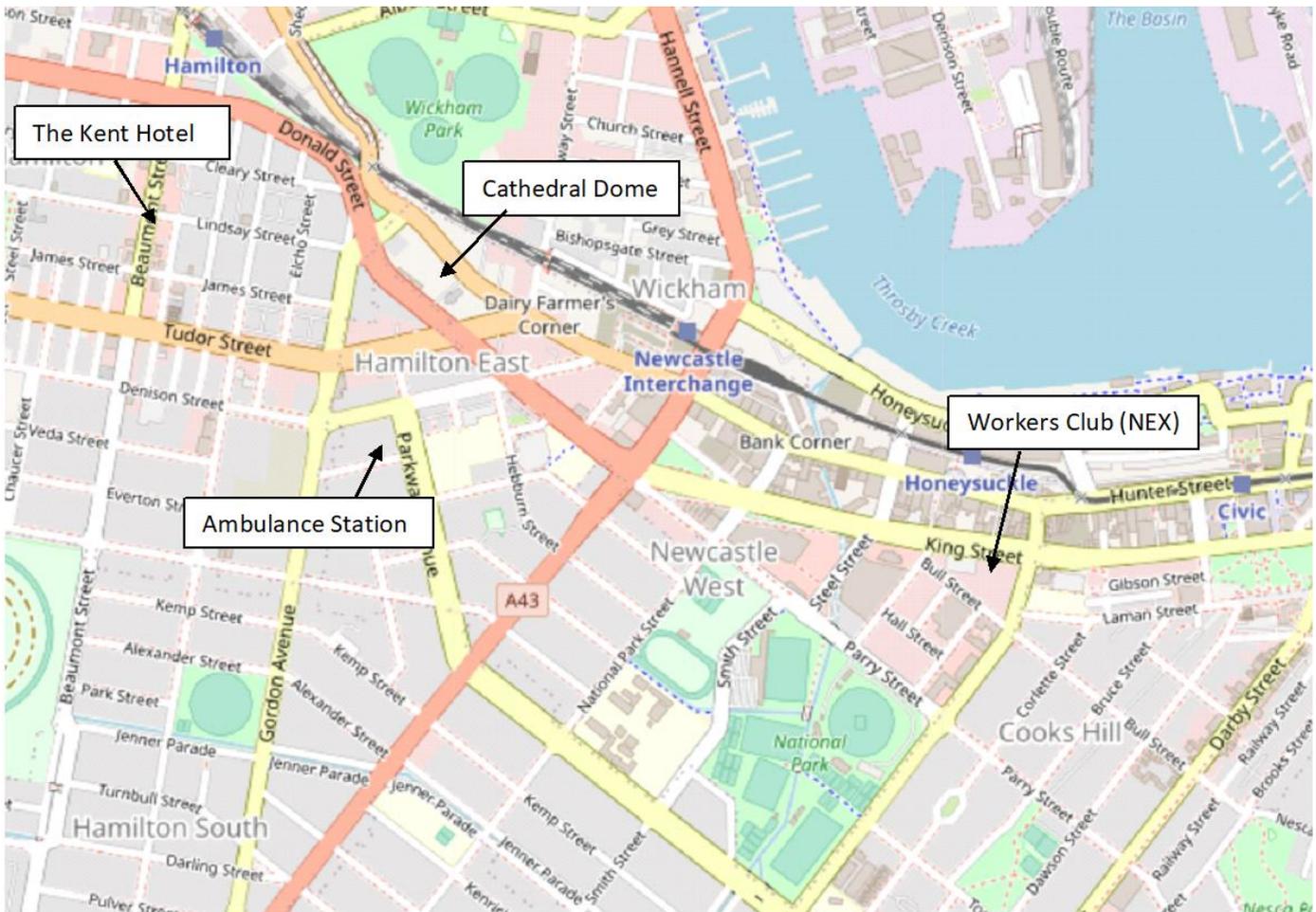
Get a group of teachers together to determine the best route for your group. You will know based on a range of factors, for example the size of your cohort, the best route to take, where you will linger for discussion and where you will break out for snacks. Draw all over the map below to help plan and share this with your team.

Public transport and Bus Drop off/Pick Up

If travelling by train, Hamilton and Newcastle Interchange are your closest stations. If you hire a bus there is space to drop off and pick up near Hamilton Train station as well as Union street alongside NEX.

Use the PowerPoint images while on tour

Print off the images from the PowerPoint so you can reference the changes to each site over time.



4. Interview: Alan Sunderland, author of *Six Seconds*

Alan Sunderland, author of *Six Seconds*, talks about researching the Newcastle earthquake and writing children's historical fiction [here](#).

Timestamp of interview:

0:00 – 0:24 INTRO

0:24 – 2:23 Writing about the Newcastle Earthquake for *Six Seconds*

2:24 – 5:55 Newcastle in 1989 – a Year of profound change around the world e.g Berlin Wall comes down, Tiananmen Square etc. The My Australian Story series covers the life of a year in a child's life

5:56 – 9:03 Building a factual scaffold about the earthquake in which to tell a fictional story

9:04 – 12:05 How to listen to someone remembering events, how to ask questions

12:06 – 15:07 Powerful stories from the earthquake

15:40 – 17:10 The important role of helpers immediately after the earthquake and in the longer term

17:10 – 20:37 Remembrance and Commemoration

20:37 – 20:57 Conclusion

5. Research Task: Collecting Oral Histories

After learning so much about the Newcastle Earthquake it is good to reflect on what you have learned and if there are any areas about which you would like to know more. Conducting an oral history interview and recording it is a great way to do this.

Activity: KWL chart

Complete the following KWL chart – *what you already know, what you want to know, what you have learned* – about the Newcastle Earthquake.

What I already know	What I want to know	What I have learned

Devising Questions for an Oral History Interview

- Use your *WHAT I WANT TO KNOW* points to start writing some questions. Work independently to start with. Take five minutes to come up with five questions you would like to ask someone who lived through the earthquake and can remember what happened. Remember to keep your EMPATHY skills in mind while you put these questions together.
- Pair up! Read your questions to each other. Choose your favourite four questions and add them together – as a pair you now have eight questions. These will be the questions you ask your subject in the interview as a pair.
- Teachers will organize access to individuals with stories about the earthquake – these may be staff at school, parents and grandparents or other community members that can visit the school for the interview phase. Interviews should take no more than fifteen minutes, if they go for two minutes that is OK, too.

The Interview

- Use a device such as an iPad and record using an app such as Voice Memo.
- Both interviewers should have the questions written clearly on paper in front of you and have a pencil in case you want to take any notes or think of any great follow up questions to ask during the interview.
- Press record
- Remember to ask questions, listen and respond with empathy – that you hear what your interviewee is saying, and you understand their point of view.
- When you are done say "Thank you for answering our questions today" and stop recording.

Review

- Listen back to your interview – it is strange to hear your own voice but try to listen to what is being said. Did this help you to further understand what happened during the earthquake?

Share

- Come back together as a class. What is one thing you will remember about conducting an oral history interview on the Newcastle earthquake? Share this with the group.

6. **Additional Resources**

Follow the links below for curated lists from our borrowing collection as well as our Local History collection.

Newcastle Libraries Reading List: [Earthquake themes in Children's Literature and Non Fiction](#)

Local History Collection – [Catalogue search of Newcastle Earthquake](#)

Remember to book in with Local History if you would like to research this topic further via 02 4974 5330.