

CHAPTER 2

Historical empathy: Walking in the shoes of a historical character

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At the start I was like ‘I don’t know how she [a mother saying goodbye to her son in 1915, as he heads off to war] is feeling, how do you expect me to know that? – *Helen, studying Year 10 social studies* (Davison, 2013a, p. 97)

Defining historical empathy

Historical empathy is popularly thought of as the vicarious experience of walking in the shoes of someone from the past. As such it is an attempt to imaginatively leap back in time to feel what things might have been like from the standpoint of a historical character. This is not, however, simply a fanciful act of make-believe, because it is constrained by evidence. That historical empathy is about the imagination and the use of evidence reflects the notion that it is an affective (imaginative/feeling) and cognitive (thinking/understanding) concept. On this point there is a broad consensus within the history education literature (Brooks, 2009). The relationship between historical empathy’s affective and cognitive dimensions, however, is unclear insofar as they may be interconnected or quite separate. Dulberg (2002) sees them as interconnected when she describes students’ endeavours to develop historical empathy as involving “a back and forth rhythm between affect and cognition” (p. 11).

In contrast, Foster (2001) argues that the two are separate and, in terms of what historians do, the affective is unhelpfully about sympathy and over-identification and the cognitive is the more promising realm of understanding evidence, context, and perspective.

Historical empathy can also be interpreted from the perspective that its affective dimension may impede cognitive understanding and that its cognitive dimension may blunt affective responses, such as care. Schweber (2004, 2006) has argued in her case-study research about teaching the Holocaust that when a teacher places the affective first it “supplant[s] any chronology or almost any information being taught at all” (2004, p. 57). However, Bardige’s (1988) study looking at the journals of students who were also learning about the Holocaust found that nearly the opposite could be true. As students developed cognitive skills, such as recognising multiple perspectives, they found it harder to hold on to their “moral sensitivities and impulses” (p. 109).

Furthermore, rather than seeing them as equally worthwhile, many researchers privilege *either* the affective *or* the cognitive. For instance, Barton and Levstik (2004) emphasise the affective dimension because it motivates students to sufficiently care, so that they want to find out more about the past. In contrast, Wineburg (2007) highlights the cognitive, arguing that, foremost, historians should not be in a rush to judge and that history requires critical, evidence-based thinking.

In regards to teaching and learning historical empathy, the key point is that both the affective and cognitive dimensions are taught and that some attention is paid to their sequencing. In the classroom, teachers may be regularly switching between the affective and the cognitive. However, Davison’s (2013b) comparative case study of two social studies classes in a New Zealand secondary school suggests that in planning instruction there is merit in keeping the two dimensions apart. Davison argues that by teaching the affective dimension before the cognitive, student enjoyment and interest is higher than if the reverse were to happen—i.e., the cognitive is taught first, followed by the affective. This is significant because achieving sophisticated historical empathy is challenging for secondary school students, and therefore they must care sufficiently if they are to do the hard cognitive work of exploring evidence and building contextual knowledge (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

Why teaching and learning historical empathy is worthwhile

Historical empathy has the potential to contribute to democratic society as it requires students to not only identify the points of view of others, but to at least temporarily attempt to understand them. This notion of historical empathy serving the common good originates from three places. The first stems from history being linked to the teaching of citizenship and the belief that it is the ideal place to develop in students political literacy, moral responsibility, and community participation (Crick, 1998). The second is psychotherapy (McWilliams, 2004), and the third, moral philosophy (Hoffman, 2000; Noddings, 2005; Slote, 2007, 2010). In the latter two contexts, empathy is seen therapeutically as a mechanism for helping people. Of course, left to our own devices nearly all of us can show concern, and empathise with those who are similar to ourselves. However, training in psychotherapy and empathy teaches us to do something harder but equally worthwhile: to empathise with those who are different from us. It does this by affectively tuning in to our shared human traits and by cognitively comprehending why another person holds a different set of beliefs. Hoffman's (2000) point that "children [who have learnt to empathise] will be more aware of the impact of their actions on others who differ from them in obvious ways" (p. 294) is a compelling reason to study how students get better at historical empathy.

Historical empathy

Pouwhenua 2:1

Historical empathy is often thought of as walking in the shoes of a character from the past. By occupying this standpoint, the beliefs, choices, and actions of historical characters begin to make sense.

Pouwhenua 2:2

Historical empathy has an affective dimension. It includes elements of being open-minded, feeling care, and using the imagination. These motivate students to want to understand the past. It also has a cognitive dimension. It includes elements of exploring evidence, building contextual

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knowledge, finding multiple perspectives, and being aware that past and present beliefs are often different. These help students build evidence-based interpretations of past lives. Both dimensions are important to developing a sophisticated grasp of historical empathy.

Pouwhenua 2:3

Critics of historical empathy argue that its affective dimension leads to: a sympathetic approach to the past; agreement with, or an over-identification with historical characters; and, as a result of an unrestrained imagination, a ‘let’s pretend’ version of the past. By intentionally teaching historical empathy’s affective and cognitive dimensions these issues can be overcome.

Pouwhenua 2: 4

Historical empathy involves three deliberate stages: making the attempt to enter into the past; once there, exploring the record of the past; and, finally, exiting the past and begin to make sense of it.

Approaching historical empathy

Gaddis (2002) argues that historical empathy is a process of “getting inside other people’s minds ... [by allowing your own mind to] be open to their impressions—their hopes and fears, their beliefs and dreams” (p. 124). He goes on to say that once these impressions have been given serious consideration, the student of history ‘bails out’ and begins to critically make sense of what they have empathetically experienced. In other words, the historian is not stuck in the past, over-identifying or merging/agreeing with the values/decisions of historical characters, but has instead emerged from it. Davison (2013a) has drawn on Gaddis to develop a historical empathy pathway designed to be used in the classroom (see Figure 2.1).

| Stages of historical empathy | Historical empathy elements | Teaching purposes |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Entering into the past | Open-mindedness | To identify and foster awareness of students' beliefs and prior knowledge about historical event(s) and/or character(s) and to encourage a willingness to listen to and entertain other views. |
| | Feeling care | To model the attributes of being caring, sensitive, and tolerant towards people. |
| | Imagination | To help students imagine the past, and use resources such as films, photographs, and first-hand accounts. |
| | | |
| Working with the record of the past | Exploring evidence | To develop a willingness to: search across a wide field of evidence; check theories about the past against evidence; build historical knowledge by critically weighing up the reliability and usefulness of evidence; and use evidence to encourage further engagement with the past. |
| | Building contextual knowledge | To build knowledge of the wider setting so that a historical character or event is not set apart from the beliefs and codes of behaviour which were common to society of that time. |
| | Finding multiple perspectives | To encourage students to interpret the past from multiple perspectives. |
| | Becoming aware that past and present-day beliefs are often different | To encourage students to interpret past beliefs as best they can whilst acknowledging that their present-day beliefs are inescapable. |
| | | |
| Exiting the past | Making judgements | To enable students to make judgments (sometimes these may be moral or critical) about past events/historical characters, for instance in the format of an essay. |

Note: = affective = cognitive = affective and cognitive

Figure 2.1 Historical empathy pathway (Davison, 2013a, p. 123)

Davison stops short of calling this pathway a model because this term supposes a “recipe or ideal” (Stake, 2004, p. 29) and he argues this is not the only way to teach historical empathy. The pathway above, however, provides teachers with a planning tool that should ensure study programmes deliberately include the affective and cognitive dimensions of historical empathy and aim to engage student interest/enjoyment by beginning the teaching sequence with the affective dimension.

Historical empathy and *The New Zealand Curriculum*

The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007) connects to historical empathy in two ways. First, its five overarching key competencies, which encapsulate the dispositions and skills needed by students to participate as citizens in the 21st century, include the idea of *relating to others*. This competency is about:

... interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts. This competency includes the ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate, and share ideas. Students who relate well to others are open to new learning and able to take different roles in different situations. They are aware of how their words and actions affect others. They know when it is appropriate to compete and when it is appropriate to co-operate. By working effectively together, they can come up with new approaches, ideas, and ways of thinking. (p. 12)

Relating to others requires students to listen to, understand, and care about the different contexts of people's lives. Parker (2010) posits that the classroom is an ideal place for this to happen because it is so diverse—i.e., students are in class with unfamiliar others who are neither their friends nor family. Deliberate discussions with others, he argues, provides students with the opportunity to practise the habits of listening and debate that are at the heart of democratic citizenship. Arguably, historical empathy makes the same connection to democratic citizenship because it also provides students with a bridge to the unfamiliar—to the relative strangeness of the beliefs and actions of historical characters.

Secondly, historical empathy is also connected to the latter part of the NZC, where the curriculum specifies eight learning areas. Here, one of the main goals of the Social Sciences learning area is identified as exploring how “people ... are shaped by perspectives [and how] others see themselves” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 30). Within this learning area, history's achievement objectives at curriculum level 6 also focus on: “understand[ing] how people's perspectives on past events that are of significance to New Zealand differ” (2007, supplement). Historical empathy helps students to make sense of how others see themselves.

Student voice: What does it sound like when students talk about historical empathy?

The TLRI data provides information about how young people talk about historical empathy, and their ideas can be shaped around the pouwhenua or guideposts that indicate the key features of historical empathy.

Pouwhenua 2:1

Historical empathy is often thought of as walking in the shoes of a character from the past. By occupying this standpoint, the beliefs, choices, and actions of historical characters begin to make sense.

While students defined historical empathy as walking in the shoes of a historical character, they also identified why that is difficult to do well. One student reflected on how she had managed the process of conducting her NCEA Level 2 historical inquiry, in regards to the idea of empathy:

I enjoyed listening to my grandma's views and accounts on what happened [in the past] and was interested to know the impact it had on her brother's life as a soldier. It enabled me to develop as a historian because I put myself in his shoes and could understand and feel empathy.

Pouwhenua 2:2

Historical empathy has an affective dimension. It includes elements of being open-minded, feeling care, and using the imagination. These motivate students to want to understand the past. It also has a cognitive dimension. It includes elements of exploring evidence, building contextual knowledge, finding multiple perspectives, and being aware that past and present beliefs are often different. These help students build evidence-based interpretations of past lives.

This pouwhenua alludes to historical empathy's two dimensions: understanding (cognitive) and feeling (affective). This fits the popular view that historical empathy is about making a projection into the life of a historical character by, so to speak, walking in her shoes. In relation to Davison's pathway of historical empathy, 'understand' can be interpreted as the cognitive dimension of historical empathy and 'feel' can be associated with its affective dimension. This is evident in how another participant in the study described the significance of Anzac Day as being about a close emotional relationship with, or caring about, the past:

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... as long as people are still learning about and being affected by the events at Gallipoli then the emotional connection will remain, and people will still care about the death of soldiers and how we can prevent this in the future.

Students, however, were generally aware that maintaining this link would become more difficult over time and could see that historical empathy may be eroded once students were unable to make an affective connection as a historical topic became more remote in time and/or place. For example, it may become harder to connect with Anzac Day as the events of the First World War fade from memory:

When it becomes “oh my great, great, great, great granddad fought in Gallipoli” then there will be no feeling or emotion or remorse felt because it was so long ago and too distant for people to care about.

You don't see people today holding a day of remembrance for the people who fought in the Battle of Thermopylae.

Pouwhenua 2:3

Critics of historical empathy argue that its affective dimension leads to a sympathetic approach to the past; agreement with, or an over-identification with historical characters; and, as a result of an unrestrained imagination, a ‘let’s pretend’ version of the past. By intentionally teaching historical empathy’s affective and cognitive dimensions these issues can be overcome.

Some students felt that emotion was not to be trusted when exploring the past. Reflecting on his historical inquiry one student felt that he:

... should take into account the fact that [the interviewee] was at times emotional during his interview and this emotion could have potentially blurred the line between the fact and fiction.

Another sensed that the emotional or the affective dimension of empathy may impede cognition:

A lot of people will react emotionally to things, so even if they do know what happened in the past and they know what is wrong they don't think logically about what they are doing now, they still just do it. Afterwards it's really easy to look back and go “well, we should have noticed in the past this happened and the same thing was going to happen”—stupid but in the time they got caught up in the emotion.

One participant talked about the emotional ‘rush to judge’ and then the standing back and getting some cognitive distance to be able to make sense of the past:

I think that when you look at something you have your emotions and your feelings so you make up on the spot your perspective and once you really internalise it and look at it deeply, you pick up things that you didn’t necessarily learn then, so I think as time goes on you get a little bit more knowledge so your opinion changes a little bit.

Wineburg (2001, 2007) argues that mature historical thinking deactivates or switches off the emotional response to the past. Although Davison agrees historical thinking is a cognitive act, he argues that switching off emotion or the affective is undesirable insofar as it promotes a connection with the past, which is important for students if they are going to ‘care enough’ to want to do the hard cognitive task of working out historical context, finding perspectives, using evidence, and coming to realise the strangeness of the past. Instead the affective can be used as a way in to the past.

Using film to develop historical empathy about the Second World War: A case study

The Second World War can be a challenging subject in regards to historical empathy because the experience of war may appear incomprehensible, and therefore the inner lives of those in wartime unknowable. In his 1939 novel *Man Alone*, John Mulgan alludes to this difficulty in the context of an earlier war. When the book’s main character, Johnson, is asked to talk about his experience of the First World War, he replies: “You wouldn’t understand it unless you saw it. If you did see it, you wouldn’t understand it” (Mulgan, 1939/2010, p. 6). Many of those who experienced the Second World War have said something similar about how easy it is to misunderstand or mythologise war (Fussell, 1996). In teaching historical empathy using the Second World War, I am therefore mindful to try and look at a small part of wartime experience in depth and to pay attention to how I can help students enter into the past and adjust to its strangeness. Below I describe three stages that, when taught in sequence, can be thought of as a pathway to develop historical empathy.

Stage 1: Entering into the past

In this first stage, I am trying to engage students and foster in them a sense of care—so that they want to find out more. In the context of the New Zealand experience of the Second World War, using Gaylene Preston’s film *Home by Christmas* (2010) is one way to do this, as it offers a first-hand account of the war. More generally speaking I would recommend using film as a means of transporting students into the past. This is because film provides students with an ‘establishing shot’ of what the past might have looked like (Levstik, personal communication, 12 March 2013). That is not to say that caution be forgotten. Film, as Seixas (2007) points out, might try very hard to look realistic, but it is not necessarily accurate. Put another way, film might lead to students being duped, of them literally being *taken in* (Zinn, 2007). This concern, however, can be addressed later on as students move into the second and third stages of the teaching sequence.

At the beginning of *Home by Christmas*, Gaylene Preston, the film’s writer/director/producer, is interviewing Tony Barry, the Australian actor playing the role of her father, Ed Preston. As we watch a steam train moving along the Christchurch to Greymouth line, Gaylene, as narrator, tells the audience: “I was born into a world where there were three times: there was before the war; after the war; and a secret place that nobody talked about: during the war.” The film, as it unfolds, lets us into this secret place.

Activity 1: Watching the film

Students watch *Home by Christmas* (Preston, 2010) and are asked to identify the feelings and motivations of the film’s two main characters, Ed and Tui. The students use simple spider diagrams to record their thoughts. The intention is for the students to be receptive to imagining and caring about the hopes and fears of Ed and Tui; of Ed’s wartime experience in North Africa and Italy; and of Tui’s life, left behind in Greymouth, New Zealand. I do my best to imitate the cinema-going experience by keeping the daylight out of the classroom, projecting the film onto the whiteboard in a large format, and playing it in its entirety without interruption. My aim is to treat the students rather like a cinema audience and hope



Figure 2.2 Gaylene Preston's 2010 film *Home by Christmas*

Home by Christmas can be used as a means of affectively entering into the past. It may open the door to the past by providing students with what Linda Levstik calls an “establishing shot” of an unfamiliar historical context, and motivate them to want to understand it more deeply. It recreates the world of 1940s New Zealand, and what happens to two young people, Ed and Tui, as they respond to events and are faced with dilemmas. Later on students can engage in the cognitive dimension of historical empathy and interpret the film’s tagline: *A true story of love, war, and secrets*. Poster reproduced by kind permission of Gaylene Preston.

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that like “any [film] audience, they want to come into the dark and be transported and when they come out they want to feel that they’ve been somewhere worth going and they got plenty to think about” (Preston, 2010, DVD special feature— the director/producer/writer talking about oral history and making films).

Activity 2: Socratic seminar

Students take part in a Socratic seminar. For this activity students sit in a large circle and the teacher sets out a series of pictures and quotes from the film in the middle of the circle to act as a way of promoting conversation. Students may also use their spider diagrams as an aid. This activity provides an opportunity for students to not only reflect on the film but also to air their prior knowledge. The focus of the seminar is for students to explore questions that the film has raised.

Activity 3: Further reflection

The students watch an interview with Tui Preston from the documentary *War Stories Our Mothers Never Told Us* (Preston, 2005). Alternatively, they can read a transcript of the interview with Tui (Fyfe & Preston, 1995). This presents Tui’s side of the story, which in *Home by Christmas* is often eclipsed by Ed’s retelling of what had happened. The students are asked to record what Tui felt about Ed, and why she stayed with him after he returned from overseas. This is also a point where time can be set aside to discuss with students what they would like to investigate further in the second sequence of teaching. Ideally these questions (such as the examples below) should emerge from the students as it is they who have entered into the past of Ed and Tui, and their questions will more accurately reflect their interest than those introduced by the teacher.

Examples of students’ questions for the second sequence of teaching

- a. How did Ed Preston and other New Zealand soldiers feel about their time in the army during the Second World War?

- b. How did Tui and other women feel about staying in New Zealand while loved ones departed?
- c. What does Tui's decision to stick with Ed and end her affair tell us about the values of New Zealand society in the 1940s?

Discussion

At the end of stage 1 it is intended that students are imagining what it would have been like to be Ed Preston: fighting the Germans in North Africa, surviving a prisoner-of-war camp, and eventually escaping into Switzerland. Or, they may be picturing what it was like for Tui, having been left at home and angry that Ed had joined up without discussing it with her. They might also be imagining why she ended her affair and what it was like persevering with her marriage to Ed while keeping her secret.

Teaching these activities, I have noticed that some students have found it difficult to entertain Tui's motives and simply see her two-dimensionally, as someone who cheats on her husband. This perhaps reflects a tendency to see Tui from the perspective of present-day values, and to find it incomprehensible why she does not simply leave Ed. It also signals the importance of the second stage of developing historical empathy. As students begin to work with evidence and build their contextual knowledge, they realise that past and present-day beliefs are often different, and that both Ed and Tui's version of events are complex. To foster a heightened sense of open-mindedness and sensitivity in this first stage of the teaching sequence, teachers may want to discuss the nature of history in terms of requiring a willingness to care about, listen to, and entertain other views.

Stage 2 Working with the record of the past

Activity 4: Building contextual knowledge and an awareness that past and present-day beliefs are often different

To build contextual knowledge students are given short extracts from the introduction of Alison Parr's book *Home: Civilian New Zealanders Remember the Second World War* (2010). Pairs of students are given two or

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| | |
|--|--|
|  | <p>"I was born into a world where there were three times: there was before the war; after the war; and a secret place that nobody talked about: during the war." [Gaylene]</p> <p>"We thought we would just get over there and see the world. It would only last 12 months and we would have a free holiday." [Tony Barry as Ed]</p> |
| <p>Ed (Tony Barry) remembering how he signed up to be a soldier</p> | |
|  |  |
| <p>Ed (Martin Henderson) at Maadi camp</p> | <p>Tui (Chelsie Preston Crayford) and her son (William Ackroyd) waiting at the station for Ed.</p> |
| <p>"How did you readjust to family life?" [Gaylene] ...</p> <p>"I just wanted to get on with our lives." [Tony Barry as Ed]</p> | |
| <p>"Anyone who says he wasn't scared was telling lies." [Tony Barry as Ed]</p> | |
| <p>"It has been deeply emotional ... our job in this bit that we are doing [at Ed and Tui's reunion at the railway station] our job is to stay true to the emotional core of it, it is not to tell the story, we have very little dialogue, it is actually just to feel it and just to connect and keep listening and try and bring some element of truth, bring truth to what they must have gone through"</p> <p>Chelsie Preston Crayford talking about recreating Tui and Ed's meeting at Greymouth Station, retrieved from http://www.homebychristmas.com/</p> | |

Figure 2.3 Selected dialogue and film stills from *Home by Christmas* (Preston, 2010) Reproduced by kind permission of Gaylene Preston.

three extracts to read. The subheadings used by Parr and my brief notes give a sense of the historical context that is covered in these extracts (see Figure 2.4).

- *Extract 1: The great unknown, no surprise and where Britain goes ...* Feeling in 1939, at the outbreak of war, of uncertainty of what lay ahead. Also, a sense that events in Europe had been leading to war and that New Zealand's role was to follow Britain.
- *Extract 2: Sign here, Māori support and ballot boys*—gives an overview of numbers volunteering to go to war, how Māori perceived enlistment, and the significance of conscription.
- *Extract 3: Home work and 'the manpower'*—describes what it was like working in essential industries and the pressures on young men who remained in New Zealand. It also explores how civilians, men, and women were directed into work, and who was exempt.
- *Extract 4: Feeling threatened and in short supply*—the tension caused by fear of invasion by Japan and, in the earlier part of the war, from Germany. It also describes rationing and how New Zealanders coped with wartime shortages.
- *Extract 5: From the front and bad news*—how New Zealand civilians found out about what was happening overseas and the role of the telegram in delivering bad news.
- *Extract 6: Yankee visitors and long leave*—tensions and romances between US servicemen and New Zealand civilians, and the return in 1943 of the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force.
- *Extract 7: Friends and lovers and in dissent*—New Zealand attitudes towards sex during wartime and the experiences of those who opposed the war.
- *Extract 8: Peace at last and looking back*—the consequences of the war and reflecting on what it had meant.

Figure 2.4 Summaries of extracts taken from Alison Parr's (2010) book used to help establish the students' contextual knowledge of life at home in New Zealand during the Second World War.

Once the extracts have been read, students—working in pairs—are asked to describe to each other at least two points of interest. Choosing one each, they come up to the whiteboard and write down a point that they feel is significant. The teacher can then lead a discussion that encompasses the information on the whiteboard, clarifying possible misconceptions, and expanding on points where appropriate. Using a simple graphic organiser, students record the information on the whiteboard into their workbooks. Finally, they are asked to highlight those points which would appear strange to someone living in the present day.

Activity 5: Using evidence

Home by Christmas (Preston, 2010), *War Stories Our Mothers Never Told Us* (Fyfe & Preston, 1995), and much of the broader history of life in New Zealand during the Second World War, is based on oral history. The issues of selectivity, interpretation, and partiality play out in a particular way in oral history, and have been summarised by Perks (2009) as “people forget things, their memories play tricks by ‘telescoping’ events together or changing their order. They will occasionally subconsciously repress painful memories or artificially exaggerate their own role in a particular event” (p. 7).

The purpose of this activity is for students to check the selectivity, interpretation, and partiality of Gaylene Preston’s interviews with her father (Ed) and mother (Tui) by watching her talk about the process of interviewing her parents (this is available as a ‘special feature’ on the DVD copy of her film *Home by Christmas*). As they watch, students are asked to think about the questions raised in Figure 2.5.

Critically engaging with oral history and the process of collecting interview-based testimony is a way of students understanding that the stories of Ed and Tui are interpretations of the past. The activity also aims to reveal to students the practical process of interviewing people as part of an oral history project, and to highlight the potential pitfalls and rewards.

Selectivity:

1. Why did Gaylene Preston decide to select her parents as interview subjects?
2. What might Ed and Tui Preston be leaving out of their wartime accounts?

Interpretation:

3. How do Ed and Tui’s interpretation of events differ?
4. What type of story was Gaylene Preston trying to tell about her parents?

Partiality:

5. Did Gaylene Preston have concerns about the fairness of interviewing her parents?
6. In what ways are Ed and Tui’s accounts one-sided?

Figure 2.5 Critically thinking about interviewing and oral history

Activity 6: Finding multiple perspectives

This activity provides students and their teachers with a choice. One approach is to use existing materials to explore multiple perspectives, and the other is to create an oral history project by interviewing people who remember the Second World War. Regarding the former, students can find online¹ a series of 10 interviews recorded for Alison Parr's (2010) book *Home: Civilian New Zealanders Remember the Second World War*. These provide multiple perspectives through which to explore the experience of life at home in New Zealand during the Second World War. There are also brief notes to help students put the interviews into their historical context. Furthermore, students can use material from Patricia Grace's novel *Tu* (2004) to explore men's experiences with the 28th Māori Battalion and the experiences of whānau in 1940s Wellington.²

An alternative approach, however, is for the students to carry out their own interviews. The process of carrying out a small-scale oral history project with students has been described in detail by Edwards (2006), and his account could be used by teachers as a 'how to' guide. As he alludes to, such projects are more likely to be successful when students and teachers can interview friends and family and can draw upon connections; for instance, Edwards was able to bring into the classroom a person with radio documentary and interviewing experience. When I teach this activity there are usually students within the class who are able to interview family members. In 2012, I combined the activity with the United States Embassy's oral history competition to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the arrival of United States troops in New Zealand in the Second World War. This meant linking students' interviews of family members with archive material from Auckland War Memorial Museum and Archives New Zealand that had been posted on the eTV website.³

1 <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/second-world-war-at-home>

2 <http://www.28maoribattalion.org.nz/resources> provides a wide range of digital resources to explore the experiences of the 28th Māori Battalion.

3 eTV (www.etv.org.nz) e-casts television programmes to New Zealand schools for use in the classroom.

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Figure 2.6 The US Marine band

... performing at the Auckland War Memorial Museum in 2012 as part of celebrations to mark the 70th anniversary of the arrival of United States troops in New Zealand in the Second World War. Local events such as this one may provide ways of helping students to make the imaginative leap into the past. Reproduced by kind permission of Martyn Davison.

The result was the creation of a 3-minute film documenting the story of American soldiers being based in New Zealand. The transcript below was narrated over a range of archive footage and was based on the story of Danielle's Great-aunt Gwen; a story that had been passed down to Danielle by her mother.

World War Two: Gwen's story of love and loss

Pain, heartache, blood, and horror lay on those rough days between 1939 and 1945, and the war was not just on the other side of the world but on the shores of New Zealand. Many feared that Japanese submarines would emerge from the Pacific Ocean and take our beloved land. But among this terror lay hope as Americans soldiers arrived as an extra source of protection ...

Well, my Great Aunt Gwen was about eighteen when she met an American soldier during World War Two. The first time she met him was at the cinema with my grand-dad, who was five. This soldier noticed her in the theatre and started smiling at her and offered to push her bike home after the film. So then the two just got to know each other. He used to come around and take her places like the movies, and to dances. And he used to bring around chocolates and pantyhose and things. Things that they couldn't buy during the war. Because at the time American soldiers were paid more money than New Zealand army men ...

Unfortunately, not all of the stories have a happy ending, but the memory is still well remembered. However, the man my great-aunt became engaged to was unfortunately shipped off to war and stationed on the front lines of battle. But he sadly died during combat. I still believe my great-aunt Gwen would have moved to America to be married and to settle down if only he had come back.

Produced June 2012 by Danielle Paaske, Francesca Avery, Jennifer Perry and Cianne Tait

Figure 2.7 Transcript of the 3-minute film *World War Two: Gwen's story of love and loss*