

CHAPTER 1

Teaching historical empathy and the 1915 Gallipoli campaign

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Introduction

This chapter explores the concept of historical empathy and how it can foster a greater understanding of a significant episode in New Zealand and Australian history, the 1915 Gallipoli campaign.¹ In doing so, it draws upon my experience of teaching historical empathy to Year 10/11 (14-

1 The Gallipoli campaign in 1915 is sometimes described as a side-show in the larger history of the First World War. For the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) it was a defeat which foreshadowed worse losses on the Western Front. However, 8,709 Australians and 2,721 New Zealanders lost their lives in the campaign, and as a place where the ANZAC spirit was forged it has found a significant place in the narrative of New Zealand and Australian history.

to 16-year-old) students and from trying to make sense of the extensive literature on the concept.

The chapter is divided into three sections. I begin by defining historical empathy and justifying why it is worthwhile pursuing in the classroom. The second section outlines a sequence of learning activities that deliberately engage with historical empathy's cognitive (thinking) and affective (feeling) dimensions. It also briefly describes the problems and successes I experienced as students engaged with these activities. The final section explores the assessment of historical empathy and the different ways of thinking about how to plan for student progression. It makes the case for trying to exemplify what being good at historical empathy looks like.

What is historical empathy?

Historical empathy is often thought of as vicariously walking in someone else's shoes in order to interpret how that person feels about things, and to understand why they might have travelled down one road and not another. As a definition this is a good start, but it doesn't tell us much about exactly how we go about stepping into the shoes of an historical character.

According to historian John Lewis Gaddis, the way to do this is to begin by "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" (2002, p. 124). This sometimes requires temporarily taking seriously views that might seem strangely different to our own. This doesn't mean having to agree or identify with these views. As the philosopher M.L. Hoffman makes clear, "empathy doesn't deprive the empathetic individual of her sense of being a different person from the person she empathises with" (2000, p. 14). In other words, historical empathy does not remove the ability to think critically about an historical character's beliefs. This is because once an empathetic person has taken in the views of an historical character they, to use Gaddis's phrase, "bail out" and then begin to critically make sense of what they have experienced.

This process of historical empathy is both cognitive and affective. It is cognitive because it requires thinking about how pieces of evidence fit together. It is affective because it attempts to imagine what an historical

character might have felt. Based on the different ways in which various researchers—notably Lee (1984), Shemilt (1984), Downey (1996), Foster (2001), Dulberg (2002), and Barton and Levstik (2004)—think about historical empathy, I have outlined in Table 1.1 what these cognitive and affective dimensions might look like.

Table 1.1. The cognitive and affective dimensions of historical empathy

Cognitive (thinking)	Affective (feeling)
Building historical contextual knowledge	Using imagination to recognise appropriate feelings
Being aware of the past as being different from the present	Listening to and entertaining other points of view
Tying interpretations of the past to evidence	Being caring, sensitive and tolerant towards other people

This outline helps to de-mystify the meaning of historical empathy, something that may be helpful to teachers because the wider literature abounds with definitions (Brooks, 2009). Put simply, through open-minded observation and paying attention we can come to know something of others. When we do this for people who lived in the past, this mindfulness is based on what the historian J.H. Hexter (1971) called the “record of the past”, which is often referred to as historical evidence.

Having established that historical empathy requires students to enter into the past, but also to remain somewhat aloof from it, and to work both cognitively and affectively, it can be defined as:

Enter[ing] into some informed appreciation of the predicaments or points of view of other people in the past ... it is simply a word used to describe the imagination working on evidence, attempting to enter into a past experience while at the same time remaining outside it. (Department of Education and Science [UK], 1985, p. 3)

Why teach historical empathy? In the last 30 years it has sometimes been more tempting to think about the reasons why *not* to teach historical empathy. This is because it has often been associated with sympathy, unrestrained imagination and over-identification, leading to the claim that it produces a ‘let’s pretend’ version of history. The counterargument is to see

historical empathy as a key component of what is meant by doing history, and to link it with the wider goal of developing the civic values of students.

Historical empathy is frequently included in various models that attempt to describe how history can be taught as a school subject (Seixas & Peck, 2004; Taylor, 2011; Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008). In these models, historical empathy is variously described as a crucial element of historical thinking (Seixas & Peck, 2004), what it means to be historically literate (Taylor, 2011), and as a meta-concept which helps to form a framework of historical reasoning (Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008). In other words, those who advocate the teaching of historical thinking invariably include historical empathy within a framework of how that should be envisioned. As Table 1.1 helps to make clear, historical empathy encompasses attributes and skills closely associated with doing history. Teaching historical empathy, however, is potentially more than simply mirroring the practices of professional historians. It might also be taught to serve the common good, as proposed by Barton and Levstik (2004).

The idea of empathy serving the common good comes largely from the perspective of psychotherapy (McWilliams, 2004) and moral philosophy (Hoffman, 2000; Slote, 2007, 2010), where it is seen as a mechanism for helping people. Empathy is placed at the heart of civic society by Hoffman when he argues that it is “the spark of human concern for others, the glue that makes social life possible” (2000, p. 3), and by Slote when he posits that empathy is a “mechanism of caring, benevolence, compassion” (2007, p. 4). Meier (1996) is no less emphatic, arguing that the informed scepticism of democratic societies is nurtured through empathy. She suggests that as citizens we develop

the habit of stepping into the shoes of others—both intellectually and emotionally. We need literally to be able to experience, if even for a very short time, the ideas, feelings, pains, and mind-sets of others, even when doing so creates some discomfort. (1996, p. 272)

My rationale for teaching historical empathy, therefore, rests on the idea that it enables students to understand the lives of others, past and present, by affectively tuning in to shared human traits and by cognitively comprehending why another person holds a different set of beliefs. This position is reflected in the aims of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry

of Education, 2007). Firstly, historical empathy can be linked to the *Curriculum's* key competency *relating to others*, in so far as it focuses on students' "ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate, and share ideas" (p. 12). Secondly, the *Curriculum* is relevant to historical empathy because it states that a goal of the Social Sciences learning area is to explore how "people ... are shaped by perspectives [and how] others see themselves" (p. 30). The *Curriculum* achievement objectives for history also emphasise interpreting people's perspectives.

Teaching historical empathy

My teaching of historical empathy and Gallipoli takes place across 18 one-hour lessons. It is guided by two historical questions: "In 1914/15, why did so many young men decide to leave New Zealand and Australia and travel half way around the world to fight in a war?" and "What was it like fighting on the Gallipoli peninsula in 1915?" These questions are intended to be genuinely puzzling, although this intention might be undone by the students' prior knowledge of Gallipoli. It is a good idea, then, to gauge students' prior knowledge through something like a source-based pre-task. The results will probably influence teacher decisions about the degree of challenge involved in subsequent learning activities. This exploring of prior knowledge also often provides an opportunity to make connections with students' own lives and thereby foster engagement (Donovan & Bransford, 2005). For instance, when I was completing these steps in 2010, students were interested in why New Zealand soldiers were serving in Afghanistan.

To fit around the inquiry's two historical questions, I devised a sequence of affective and cognitive learning activities (outlined below in Boxes 1 and 2). I started my teaching with the affective learning activities and then moved on to the cognitive because I believe this particular sequence has the potential to best promote student interest and enjoyment. However, this is contestable. As Dulberg (2002) points out, teachers can move back and forth between the affective and cognitive, or they can decide to focus more heavily on the cognitive, as Foster (2001) advocates. The crucial point is that teaching time is devoted to both the affective and cognitive.

Box 1: Affective learning activities

Learning activity 1: Watching the film *Gallipoli* (affective)

This learning activity involves scaffolding the students' watching of Peter Weir's 1981 film *Gallipoli*. It aims to encourage listening to different viewpoints, caring about the film's characters, and helping students enter into the 1915 era.



Figure 1.1. Mark Lee (Archy) and Mel Gibson (Frank) standing together in *Gallipoli* (1981).

Director: Peter Weir, National Film and Sound Archive (Australia), title no: 357192.
Reproduced by kind permission of Associated R & R Films Pty Ltd.

The students are asked to identify the different perspectives of the following characters: Archy and his uncle, Frank and his mates, and Frank's father. It is pointed out that the music used as the men come ashore on the beaches of Gallipoli is Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni's *Adagio for Organ and Strings*. Students record their feelings when this music is being played. At the end of the film I use an extract from an interview with Peter Weir, Mel Gibson (Frank) and Mark Lee (Archy), which is included as a special feature on my DVD version of the film. Weir talks about how young men in 1914 had seen the war as an opportunity for change and adventure. Lee and Gibson talk about meeting Gallipoli veterans.

Learning activity 2: The local war memorial (affective)

Students are each given a copy of a name from a wax-crayon rubbing of the local war memorial. (Alternatively, the students can go to their own local war memorial and make the wax-crayon rubbing themselves.) The purpose of this learning activity is to engage the students with an individual soldier—someone they might begin to care about. The students use the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s website (<http://www.cwgc.org/>) to find out more about the soldier, including the details of their military record. The Auckland War Memorial Museum’s website (<http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/cenotaph/locations.aspx>) may also be useful. Next, students’ select 50 words from the soldier’s military record and reorder these to create a poem.

Learning activity 3: Picture response (affective)

Students explore their feelings about Gallipoli by responding to two sets of six A2-sized colour posters, published by Macmillan (Cormack, 2009). The posters are placed around the classroom for the students to visit in turn. A graphic organiser (adapted from Cormack’s teacher notes) helps students to make their responses:

<p><i>Gallipoli Today poster</i> What would this area have looked like in 1915? Why do you think thousands of New Zealanders come to Gallipoli each year on Anzac Day?</p>	<p><i>Map of the journey to Gallipoli poster</i> What does the map tell us about the distance between New Zealand and Gallipoli?</p>
<p><i>Life for the Anzacs poster</i> What do these photographs tell you about life for soldiers and nurses?</p>	<p><i>Dawn Service poster</i> How would an ex-soldier perhaps feel during the dawn service?</p>
<p><i>Anzac Battlefields poster</i> Look at the photo of the cemetery. Describe the setting.</p>	<p><i>Simpson and His Donkey poster</i> What emotions may Simpson have felt as he moved injured soldiers to safety?</p>

Learning activity 4: Freeze-frames (affective)

This learning activity is adapted from material on the *facing history* website: <http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/strategies/living-images-bringing-histor>. It involves drawing the students closer to the events of 1915 by bringing to life what is portrayed in a series of photographs about Gallipoli.

Set A

1. Graduating nurses
2. Nurses on board ship
3. Wounded soldiers
4. Field hospital

1, 3 and 4: Rees, 2008; 2: Donovan, 2005

Set B

1. Embarkation
2. The rum issue
3. Eve of an attack
4. Soldiers charging at the enemy

1: Pugsley, 1984; 2, 3 and 4: Donovan, 2005



Figure 1.2. The rum issue.

Photographer attributed as Sydney Webb, image no: 29496, call number: album 338, p. 4.
Reproduced by kind permission of the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

Students are given the choice of using photographs about the experience of nurses (Set A) or photographs focusing on soldiers (Set B). Working in groups, students re-enact the scenes in the photographs. The students therefore have to physically move into a role, which involves imagining the experiences of the characters in the photographs. Each group is asked to get into exactly the same position as the historical characters in the photograph and then hold this position, like a freeze-frame, for 10 seconds. The freeze-frames are presented to the rest of the class. Discussion follows about the feelings the activity has evoked.

Learning activity 5: Role-play (affective)

The aim of this learning activity is to use role-play to help students look at the particular experience of Bill Leadley, who was a signaller at Gallipoli (Chamberlain, 2008). Six of Bill's diary entries are selected. Each student is given two entries, for a particular month, and asked to learn some of the details before acting out the role of being Bill. Questions are asked of students and they answer these while in role; for example: How do you keep your spirits up? What is one of the most difficult things about being at Gallipoli? By answering these questions the students are acting out Bill's diary. There follows a discussion about what the students have learnt from Bill's diary and how Bill's impression of Gallipoli may have changed over time.

BOX 2: Cognitive learning activities

Learning activity 1: Building historical context (cognitive)

I begin by looking at people's beliefs in 1914. I use TV One's 2005 documentary *Frontier of Dreams*, 'Episode 8: The price of empire' (Burke & Waru, 2005), to introduce the larger forces at play. I also use a mapping activity to look at the size of the British empire and its trading routes. Drawing on material from <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz>, I ask students to examine sources relating to: the Boy Scouts movement, military training, and HMS *New Zealand's* visit to Wellington in 1913. The students also read relevant extracts from Michael King's *Penguin History of New Zealand* (King, 2003).

Learning activity 2: Historical newspapers (cognitive)

Groups of students are given a collection of short notices, advertisements or news articles from a 1915 copy of the *Waikato Times* newspaper. They are asked to record what they think the material says about the war. Next, they report back to the whole class and describe what they have recorded. I lead a discussion about the limitations and strengths of using newspapers as historical sources. I have been unable to find the origin of this resource, but pages from New Zealand newspapers of this era can be accessed online at: <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast>

Learning activity 3: The voices of veterans (cognitive)

The aim is to use the recollections of World War I veterans to explain why men went to war. Transcripts of veterans talking about Gallipoli are available online (<http://www.abc.net.au/innovation/gallipoli/>) or in print (Boyak & Tolerton, 1990; Cowan, 2011; Shadbolt, 1988). Working in pairs, the students are given a selection of transcripts to read, after which they draw up a table identifying the main reason why each veteran joined up. Once this is completed, students come up to the whiteboard and all of the results are collated. It quickly emerges which reasons are the most common. A whole-class discussion then takes place about the range of perspectives and what this activity might say about using evidence.

Learning activity 4: Building contextual knowledge of the landings (cognitive)

In this learning activity the students are encouraged to explore the wide range of online evidence that is available about Gallipoli. They access the Australian War Memorial website (<http://www.abc.net.au/innovation/gallipoli/>), which draws on a huge array of material containing multiple perspectives about what happened on the first day of the Gallipoli landings (25 April 1915). The students, working independently or in pairs, are asked to build up their knowledge of at least two different perspectives taken from the first day of landings.

Learning activity 5: Overcoming presentism (cognitive)

The aim is to explore the idea of the past being different from the present. The students watch the *ABC* documentary *Gallipoli: Brothers in Arms* (Denton, 2007), which follows a group of present-day Australians visiting Gallipoli. It also investigates what people in 1915 might have felt about Gallipoli and makes links between the past and present through the stories of two families. The students are given a graphic organiser to help them structure their note-taking:

	1915	The present day
Who was at Gallipoli?		
How do they feel about it?		
The physical terrain		
The dead		

Learning activity 6: Using evidence (cognitive)

The emphasis of this lesson is on tying the students' interpretations of Gallipoli to the evidence. Students are given a table of statistics and asked to respond to a single question: How do figures like this help us to understand Gallipoli and the meaning of Anzac? Next, they listen to historian Peter Pederson (Cessford, 2010) talking about conditions at Gallipoli, especially the food and drink. This helps students grasp that the Anzac diet of apricot jam, bully beef and biscuits was pretty wretched, and that dysentery was widespread.

Facts and figures

- The population of New Zealand in 1914 was just over 1 million.
- 120,000 New Zealanders joined up.
- 2,688 Māori and 346 Pacific Islanders served in a pioneer battalion.
- 550 nurses served with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and many others joined up in Britain.
- 7,500 New Zealanders were wounded and 2,721 died at Gallipoli (that's one in four who landed), and 12,500 died in the following 2 years.
- The names of the dead are recorded on 500 war memorials throughout New Zealand.

Source: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz>

Learning activity 7: Using evidence (cognitive)

This learning activity is about using a rubric to analyse a series of World War I cartoons. I model how a historian might approach these cartoons, using four questions:

- Where is the cartoon from?
- What can I see in the cartoon?
- What doesn't the cartoon tell me?
- What questions does the cartoon raise?

The students use these questions to analyse different cartoons. The National Library of New Zealand website (<http://www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>) is an excellent place to search for New Zealand cartoons of the First World War.



Figure 1.3. W. Blomfield [cartoonist]. (1915, 2 October).
The shirker—Is he to be the father of the future?
New Zealand Observer, XXXVI(4), 1. Reproduced by kind permission of the
National Library of New Zealand.

Two problems emerged from these learning activities. Firstly, students rarely considered the provenance of sources. For instance, the provenance of Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli* was not questioned by the students. Despite the film's characters being fictional, their feelings were used by the students in the same way as the reflections of men who had actually served at Gallipoli in 1915. Admittedly I had used the film to help students imaginatively enter into the past, but I had hoped that by practising the cognitive dimension of historical empathy they would not have been so taken in, in the sense of uncritically accepting everything at face value. Alan Marcus's (2007) work on history and film may be useful here in terms of getting students to exercise greater caution in the context of watching films. As well as promoting film as an engaging re-creation of the past, Marcus explores how students can develop ways to critically interpret film.

A second problem was students not always contextualising the beliefs and actions of historical characters. This is perhaps not surprising, in so far as Wineburg's (2001, 2007) research has shown that even history undergraduates and history teachers find this difficult to do. This is because of the counterintuitive nature of historical thinking. The building of contextual knowledge takes a great deal of practice, and the strangeness of past contexts frequently means they are hard to make sense of from the perspective of the present. As Wineburg argues, our default setting is to rush in and make connections with the past rather than remain coolly detached from it. What is perhaps needed in the classroom is for history teachers to balance the aims of drawing students into the past, against explaining how they might comprehend what others have experienced by standing back and looking at events from another vantage point.

The successes that emanated from the learning activities included student enjoyment and interest in what they were doing, and many students developing a relatively sophisticated grasp of historical empathy. There is not the scope in this chapter to delve deeply into the reasons for these successes, but I would tentatively argue that they were based on engaging students in both the cognitive and the affective dimensions of historical empathy. I would also argue that by carefully planning a broad variety of learning activities, which allowed time for in-depth inquiry, and

developing my own pedagogical knowledge of teaching historical empathy the outcomes for the students were enhanced.

Student progression and assessing historical empathy

At the end of the teaching sequence I assessed the students' grasp of historical empathy by asking them to write an essay focusing on the questions that had guided their inquiry. They were given two 1-hour periods to plan and write their essays. Lucy's² essay is reproduced here as an exemplar.

Box 3: Lucy's essay about historical empathy and Gallipoli

Why did a huge number of young men leave New Zealand in 1914/15 to fight a war thousands of kilometres away? And what were the effects of this decision upon these young men up until the end of 1915?

In 1915, over 120,000 New Zealanders travelled by sea to Gallipoli, Turkey. They went to stand for their country, to see the world, to support their friends, and because they felt it was their duty. The result of this decision was not the glory that they had expected but the death of many young soldiers.

The most common reason for soldiers to join the army was the hope of adventure. Most of the men settled in New Zealand during the time of the First World War had grown up on the isolated islands [New Zealand], and so the thought of adventure appealed to them. "It was more high adventure than anything else" (Vic Nicholson, ex-Anzac soldier). Soldiers felt it was their duty. Posters were put up which shunned the idea of not joining the army, calling those people "slackers".

Eventually, most of those people who didn't think it as being their duty and thought it "wasn't their war" (Frank's character in the 1981 film *Gallipoli*) were blackmailed into either joining up or being sent to prison when the need came for more soldiers. "I joined up because it was my duty" (Russell Weir, ex-Anzac soldier). Joining the war was "the thing to do at the time" (Vic Nicolson). Soldiers also joined up because it was popular, and most of their friends were doing it. "I knew my mates would" (Joe Gasparich, ex-Anzac soldier). They also thought it would be fun to join up together.

2 Lucy is a Year 10 social studies student. A pseudonym has been used to ensure her anonymity.

The final, but not the only other reason, as it varies with different people, is because they were patriotic and loved their country: “We were very much for the British Empire. When the call came we went” (Bill East, ex-Anzac soldier). The soldiers wanted to fight for their country and its rights, believing they would return to New Zealand as heroes. “I don’t think you could find a more patriotic volunteer than myself” (Joe Gasparich).

When the soldiers finally landed in Gallipoli after their long sea voyage, they found it was not as they expected. With gathered evidence from the diary of a young soldier, Bill Leadley, who was wounded at Gallipoli, we can understand the conditions that the soldiers were living in during the war. Bill Leadley describes the constant sound of war, the lack of hygiene, and the bad food and the dirty water. The heat was above thirty-five degrees Celsius and the men had bad sunburn. The heat was attracting flies, which added to the unhygienic conditions. Many of the soldiers were getting sick, and in June Leadley got dysentery, which got worse in September. He was also wounded in September, and states in his diary “I wish I could get well”.

By the end of 1915 thousands of men had died, having lost their lives on the battlefield or from infected injuries and illnesses for which they didn’t have the necessary medication to properly treat. When the Anzacs realised that there was no chance of possibly winning the battle against Turkey, with so many dead, they made a quick and successful evacuation. However, those lucky soldiers who had survived then travelled to the Western Front, located from the Belgian coast to the Switzerland border. The Western Front was in a worse state than Gallipoli and many of the survivors from Gallipoli died there during the next two years.

1915 is the year we will always remember as the year so many soldiers lost their lives, bravely fighting for what they believed in. As stated by the main character, Archy, in the 1981 film *Gallipoli*, “You just had to be a part of it”. Lest we forget.

Lucy’s essay demonstrates the capacity of a Year 10 student to have a secure grasp of historical empathy. In Table 1.2 I have identified where Lucy’s writing illustrates this point and (occasionally) where it could be developed further.

Table 1.2. The affective and cognitive dimensions of historical empathy displayed in Lucy’s essay

Cognitive dimension	Examples from Lucy’s essay	My comments
<p>Building historical contextual knowledge</p> <p>Being aware of the past as being different from the present</p> <p>Tying interpretations of the past to evidence.</p>	<p>“Most of the men settled in New Zealand during the time of the First World War had grown up on the isolated islands, and so the thought of adventure appealed to them.”</p> <p>“1915 is the year we will always remember as the year so many soldiers lost their lives, bravely fighting for what they believed in.”</p> <p>“Joining the war was ‘the thing to do at the time’. Soldiers joined up because it was popular.” (Vic Nicolson)</p>	<p>Lucy’s grasp of context could be developed further so that she provides a broader picture of why soldiers held thoughts of adventure.</p> <p>Lucy is able to stand back and allude to “we” in the present remembering those in the past who were fighting for a different set of beliefs.</p> <p>Lucy makes a great deal of use of the veterans’ reflections. She takes these at face value but does conclude that there were many reasons why men joined up.</p>
Affective dimension		
<p>Using imagination to recognise appropriate feelings</p> <p>Listening to and entertaining other points of view</p> <p>Being caring, sensitive and tolerant towards other people</p>	<p>“The soldiers wanted to fight for their country and its rights, believing they would return to New Zealand as heroes.”</p> <p>“The final, but not the only other reason, as it varies with different people, is because they were patriotic and loved their country.”</p> <p>“1915 is the year we will always remember as the year so many soldiers lost their lives, bravely fighting for what they believed in. As stated by the main character, Archy, in the 1981 film <i>Gallipoli</i>, ‘You just had to be a part of it’. Lest we forget.”</p>	<p>Lucy does not use imagination as a ‘flight of fancy’ or a ‘let’s pretend’ version of history, but instead ties it closely to the evidence she has selected.</p> <p>The open-mindedness in Lucy’s writing reflects a willingness to accept that the men’s motivations were diverse, and (possibly) a concern not to pre-judge concepts such as patriotism.</p> <p>Here Lucy sensitively refers to the importance of remembering what happened at Gallipoli. However, she does not discuss why using the words of a fictional character such as Archy is problematic.</p>

‘How might we help students get better at historical empathy?’ is a question that is relevant to all history teachers. Here I look at three possible approaches to addressing this question. One way would be to approach progression as a sequence of levels, rather like Ashby and Lee’s (1987) typology, which uses five levels of historical empathy, ranging from the naïve to the sophisticated.

Table 1.3. Ashby and Lee’s stages of historical empathy

Level	Description
1	Students believe the past to be unknowable and that people who inhabited the past were less bright than people today.
2	Students use stereotypes to explain the past.
3	Using everyday empathy, students can imagine what it was like for people in the past but through the lens of the present.
4	Students understand, in specific situations, that the past was different and that people’s values were different.
5	Students understand, in the broader contexts of whole societies, that the past was different and that people’s values were different.

Source: Ashby & Lee, 1987

This typology is a useful planning tool, potentially helping teachers to write objectives. It also signals to teachers what to look out for as students grapple with learning historical empathy. As Lee and Shemilt put it, typologies help teachers to identify “the break points” in students’ thinking (2004, p. 29). However, as Ashby and Lee make clear, typologies are not intended to chart individual progression, largely because students will frequently be at more than one level at any given time. Equally, Culpin (1994) makes a good point by highlighting that in such typologies one level does not always relate particularly well to the adjacent level.

A second approach to progression, which is also linear but used to gauge the progress of individuals, is the achievement criteria used in New Zealand’s public examination system, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). These levels show progression as a relatively straightforward shift from less to more in-depth understanding, as illustrated in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4. NCEA achievement criteria: An example from achievement standard 91004

Achievement	Merit	Excellence
Demonstrate <i>understanding</i> of different perspectives of people in an historical event of significance to New Zealanders.	Demonstrate <i>in-depth understanding</i> of different perspectives of people in an historical event of significance to New Zealanders.	Demonstrate <i>comprehensive understanding</i> of different perspectives of people in an historical event of significance to New Zealanders.

This is useful if the aim is for students to recognise different perspectives and if progress in history is considered to be a matter of fostering greater depth. This could, however, be a too-narrow description of progress if the intention is for students to learn about historical empathy across both its cognitive and affective dimensions.

A third approach has been suggested by Vermeulen (2000), who sees progress as a non-linear process, whereby students become expert at mastering a wide range of concepts and the inter-connections between them. Vermeulen likens this to the “growth of a spider’s web” (2000, p. 36). This approach would mean trying to bring together the cognitive and affective criteria related to historical empathy. For instance, with care, sensitivity and tolerance comes greater understanding of historical context and the ability to make better sense of the evidence. As Vermeulen also points out, the advantage of this approach is that it does not define progression as being solely about students’ learning more and more detail. Rather, like Marshall’s (2004) work in the teaching of English, it promotes progression in terms of students moving towards broad horizons. It also avoids what the Australian educationalist Royce Sadler (2007) calls “decomposition”:

if you break something into pieces, whatever originally held it together has to be either supplied or satisfactorily substituted if the sense of the whole is to be restored. (2007, p. 390)

For those teaching history in New Zealand schools, this may mean trying not to lose sight of history as a whole, or what Sadler (2009) calls a subject’s “guild knowledge”. Progression is made when students acquire this guild knowledge and become part of a history community (the guild), which can judge what constitutes sophisticated historical empathy. This

could be achieved by looking at lots of examples of how students write about historical empathy (as in Lucy's essay). In this way, it is the use of student exemplars, possibly taken at different stages of the teaching sequence, that would provide the best gauge of progression.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to describe how historical empathy might be taught in the history classroom. In doing so, it has made the case for interpreting historical empathy as a concept with both cognitive and affective dimensions. While acknowledging that historical empathy can be a confusing and contested concept, this chapter has put forward a practical model of how it can be taught within the context of New Zealand history. It has also described how teachers might approach the assessment of historical empathy and gauge student progression.

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