

# Ohlstrom animation – Message in a Bottle learning activity

## Virtual War Memorial Australia

### *Teacher Resource*



#### Overview:

A message in a bottle is referenced at the beginning and end of the film, representing adventure and the wider world. Students will write a message in a bottle (letter home) from Ohlstrom to his mother or his girlfriend, either on the way to the war or home from it. The letter is based on detailed research into Ohlstrom's primary sources.

#### Curriculum links and learning objectives:

- Create an imaginative text in a particular voice.
- Research, process and synthesise information from a range of sources.
- Analyse a perspective from the past using historical empathy.
- Correctly find and report historical details.

#### Resources:

- Patrick Ohlstrom video, available at <https://vwma.org.au/education/ohlstrom-short-film-resources>.
- Patrick Ohlstrom's VWMA profile, including links to his diary and other sources about him: <https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/218858>
- Australian War Memorial: <https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search>
- Anzac Portal WW1: <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1>
- VWMA Resources for Students (including Reading A Service Record): <https://vwma.org.au/education/resources-for-students>

#### Sequence:

1. The class watches the Ohlstrom video and looks at his VWMA profile, including his diary and the link to his NAA Service Record. This is to familiarise students with the sources the video is based on.
2. The teacher introduces the task. Emphasise it must be based on solid research into Ohlstrom's military service and the nature and details of the First World War.
3. Think-Pair-Share: what sorts of things might Ohlstrom talk about in the letter? How would the "after" letter be different from the "before" letter? What details do we need to know to put in the letter?

### Suggested details:

- Names of ships, units, and towns
- Dates
- Names of other soldiers (can be found in 32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion [VWMA page](#))
- Types of food
- Uniform and equipment
- What military hospitals looked like
- Where parents lived and their names.
- Also, the time of the war: Ohlstrom embarked near the end of the Gallipoli campaign, and knew something of what had happened there.

This discussion (or a second discussion) might also cover how Ohlstrom was affected by his war service: his enthusiasm on the journey over, his sadness on the way home, the friends he had lost etc.

4. The result of this TPS should be a list of details for students to research and parameters within which the letter should be written (i.e. what would or would not be discussed, what Ohlstrom would or would not know at a particular time, tone, language). From this list, class creates a checklist of how to write the letter. This checklist helps students structure their work.
5. Students research the details needed. Ohlstrom's profile, diary and Service Record are key sources, as are the VWMA pages on the 32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and battles Ohlstrom took part in such as [Fromelles/Fleurbaix](#).
6. Students choose whether they prefer to write the "before" or "after" letter (the "before" letter should be easier for students with lower literacy).
7. Students write the letter. The teacher should set the length based on class ability, but 1-3 pages is suggested.
8. This is the minimal version of the task. To extend students, try the following:
  - Add a second letter, in which Ohlstrom writes to the family of a friend who had been killed in action.
  - Students to muse on how the experience of the front has changed Ohlstrom.
  - Add further details, such as the hospitals in which Ohlstrom convalesced. This task offers great scope for student creativity.

It is suggested the letter be marked on its adherence to class parameters, the historical research in evidence, and its literary quality. The importance of the research component is very high, and students have to get the obvious details right, such as dates and names of ships and units.