

PRISONERS OF WAR
What does POW Mean?
PRISONER OF WAR GALLERY



Teacher's Notes

Name of Object: Button Compass

Category: Prisoner of War, Escape equipment

Physical Location: Prisoner of War Exhibition

Accession Number: 1979.3976/7

Facts

- This very small compass was made in a prison camp during WWII. It fits inside the brass RAF Button
- Many prisoners felt it was their duty to escape. New Zealand had a "citizen's army" which meant a lot of the soldiers brought with them into the army former trades such as carpenters, tailors, fitters, mechanics etc, professional trades which were to prove invaluable when planning escapes.

Possible Activities

- What is the difference between a regular and citizen's army?
- If you were planning to dig a tunnel out of a prison, what kind of tradesmen do you think would be beneficial to your job?
- Write a play with 4-6 main characters, the main scene is to be the escape committee planning meeting. How are you going to get out?, what kind of tools will you need, can you make some from something or steal them off the guards. Who is going to make your clothes, make forged tickets, passes and documents? Can anyone speak the language of the country you are in? Perform your play at a school assembly.
- Get a copy of "The Great Escape" movie. This quite old movie tells the true story of a mass breakout of POW's in Germany. Watch it in class to give the class background learning for the topic.

Links

- www.armymuseum.co.nz

- “With Honour –our army, our nation, our history” by Richard Wolfe ISBN 978-0-67-004565-5

Physical Location

The button compass is in the cabinet opposite the door of the Prisoner of War cell on the upper floor of the National Army Museum.



Teacher’s Notes

Name of Object: Grey Woollen Escape Jacket

Category: Prisoner of War Clothing

Physical Location: Prisoner of War Gallery, National Army Museum

Accession Number: 1980.6556

Facts

- Made from an army blanket by Brigadier Reginald Miles CBE, DSO, MC while a prisoner in
- WWII.
- The jacket was worn during his escape across Italy to Lake Como and from there to neutral
- Switzerland.
- Brig Miles was held prisoner in Castello Vincigliata camp No 12, 5 miles north of Florence.

Possible Activities

- Using recycled materials, make a shirt or jacket to wear.
- Plan an escape route from your classroom without being seen by your teacher.
- Write a list of all the things you will need if you were escaping from prison in a foreign country.
Hint: Where are you going to get everything from, how are you going to carry it without being too noticeable?

Links

- www.armymuseum.co.nz
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Physical Location

Brigadier Miles' jacket is on the wall outside the Prisoner of War cell on the top floor of the National Army Museum



Teacher's Notes

Name of Object: Handmade chess set in a coconut shell

Category: Prisoner of war art.

Physical Location: Prisoner of War Gallery, National Army Museum

Accession Number:1992.6304

Facts

- This chess set was made by Sapper Lancelot Herd whilst a prisoner of the Japanese in Changi Prison during WWII.
- The small wooden hand carved pieces all fit into the coconut shell for safety and storage
- The chief enemy of prisoners was boredom
- The Geneva Convention sets out rules for the treatment of prisoners.
- Many prisoners of the Japanese suffered terribly in the extreme conditions and many returned home with malnutrition, disease and lacking their former "punch".

Possible Activities

- Make a set of draughts and a board and play a game with your friends.
- What are some of the rules of the Geneva Convention?
- The Red Cross supplied parcels to prisoners during the war. What kind of things would you like to receive if you were a prisoner? Hint escape gear would not have got past the guards! Food, articles of clothing might!
- Write a letter to your wife telling her you are ok but would like some home comforts (socks,

cigarettes etc). Remember the guards will censor the letters so nothing about the war or your rough treatment.

Links

- www.armymuseum.co.nz
- "With Honour –our army, our nation, our history" by Richard Wolfe ISBN 978-0-67-004565-5

Physical Location

The handmade chess set is in the Prisoner of War cell, in the cabinet above the escape tunnel on the upper floor of the National Army Museum