

# 'Finding Smithy'



## Reflecting on images and reality of heroes

**Sir Charles Kingsford Smith** died in 1935 during an attempt with Tommy Petherbridge on the England-Australia flying record. The *Lady Southern Cross* disappeared off the coast of Burma. All that was ever found was a wheel from the plane.

**18** Smithy was skilled as a pilot, yet he was also frequently reckless. Does his war experience help explain and justify this recklessness?

**19** Consider the strengths and weaknesses of character that you have discovered about Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. Which do you think are relevant to the way young people today should regard and remember him?

**20** Why did Smithy become an Australian hero? Discuss to what extent it might have been:

- his feats and achievements
- his character
- the Depression period (1929–1930s) in which many of his flights were carried out
- the need for Australians at the time to have Australian heroes?

**21** Who would be the most similar hero to Smithy today? How is that person represented in the media? How do you think Smithy might have been represented if he were achieving his feats today? Do you think the media treats popular heroes fairly today?

**22** The quote at the start of this article said: 'I hope you're not going to dig too deeply. Just remember – he was our god.' How would you reply to this statement?

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## Your museum exhibit

Now it's time for you to design your museum exhibit.

**23** What decision have you made about the issue raised at the start – to emphasise the feat, or the legend, or the whole person?

**24** Compare your museum representation with others in your class. Identify the similarities and differences. What does a comparison of different people's exhibit of the same person tell you about how people are represented in museums and history texts?



(Robert Lewis)



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