

My focusing question: What different experiences did New Zealanders have in the RNZAF during World War Two?

Source Reference:

SOURCE 2: Royal Air Force Bomber Pilot and the French Resistance

Royal Air Force bomber pilot, John Morris from Cambridge, New Zealand, describes Lucienne Vouzelaud, one of the French Resistance workers who helped him to safety after his plane was shot down in France.

Oral Interview Transcript

"Lucienne was a very strong person. She spoke some English or good English really, but she tended to negate the idea. She said she didn't speak English, but in fact she did. She was a very able person, very strong personality; she had these two little boys and she was still prepared to take tremendous risks for the likes of me. And I discovered after the war that she had something like 40 airmen through her house, mostly Americans, and been in grave danger all the time. But she survived ... And so the two of us got on our bikes, she'd got two bikes.

You and Lucienne? Yes. And she was taking me on to somebody else, now I forget where to, but the big thing was that we're riding on the road and came round a corner, and here are a lot of German soldiers right across the road, and they were obviously digging defences or doing something like that. Well, it was too late to turn round, and quick as a look she fell off her bike, she fell off deliberately and fell so that she got grazed, you know, and all of these young German soldiers rushed to help her because she was a really attractive young woman, and I just rode on so nobody sort of noticed me. And after a while when I got about 100 yards up the road, I turned round, and I thought, God, I'd better go back, and she was lying on the ground at this stage, and she saw me and saw what I was doing, and as soon as she saw me starting to come back, she jumped up, you know, and made a sudden recovery and jumped on her bike to join me and off we went. So lucky really.



Royal Air Force bomber pilot, John Morris (right).

Source: 'John Morris and the French Resistance', URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/sound/john-morris-and-french-resistance>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 18-Dec-2014

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Key ideas that are in the source:

This is an oral interview transcript of previous RNZAF bomber pilot John Morris. He is telling his story of what happened after his plane got shot down. In this story he describes how once he was shot down he was helped by a French resistance worker called Lucienne. John Morris's story shows the key ideas of luck and other people's bravery. It shows luck because of how he survived once for his crash, but then again after narrowly escaping the German soldiers. It shows others bravery because Lucienne went out of her way to save one soldier. She was willing to do anything to save airmen, and that shines through

in this source.

How does this source answer the focusing question:

This source answers the focusing question because it shows a New Zealanders non-combat experience. By having the information from this source, we can understand the emotions and feelings that bomber pilot John Morris must've been having at the time such as danger, and fear, but then also a sense of comfort from Lucienne's presence and actions. It also gives us information on what the civilians helped with during the war, and it expands our knowledge to post crash stories.

Strengths of this source:

We can see that this source is reliable because the website looks secure, and it comes from a trusty source. This source is a first hand oral account of Morris' story. It gives us a detailed enough explanation of a lucky story that took place during WWII, which broadens our understanding of how some pilots survived after being shot down. Another strength of this source is that it shows us another perspective outside of combat, and it also shows a cross-national experience because it is the French helping the Kiwis. This piece of evidence also provides a strong emotional connection because it makes us empathise and sense the fear and danger.

Limitations of this source:

The main limitation is that we only hear from one person's perspective (the NZ pilots). This source could've been made better by hearing from Lucienne's perspective as well, this would've given us a more rounded understanding because we would've heard from two perspectives. Some other key limitations include; the interview being decades later, doesn't represent Māori or Pacific roles, needs background knowledge, lacks wider context of airmen, and we only hear one dramatic moment. Because this interview took place decades after the event some information could've been changed or forgotten. The result of this is that it makes us question if everything in the interview is 100% correct. It also doesn't represent Māori, Pacific or other airmen's roles, which are a key part of NZ's involvement. This limits our knowledge, and doesn't give us all the perspectives we need to make this one source fully answer the focus question. This account also needs a bit of background knowledge to fully understand what's going on. Without this we may presume things. This story also only covers one dramatic moment, it doesn't cover for instance how the pilot was shot down, and what happened after he narrowly escaped.

Source Reference:

SOURCE 3: Newspapers

New Zealand Herald 6 December 1940 Page 8

A CANADIAN PORT, Nov. 20 Shrill aboriginal cries of "Coo-ee" echoed along; the dismal rain-soaked waterfront soon after daybreak to-day as the largest contingent of Australian and New Zealand airmen yet to reach Canada, trooped down the gangplank of a passenger liner. The men shivered a little in the damn cold of a November morning. But their spirits were raised high by the enthusiasm of the welcome they received. To the stirring regimental strains of "Sons of the Brave," played by the Royal Canadian Air Force band, the airmen from "down under" marched briskly to one end of the sheltered wharf, where they lined up for inspection. "Every airman present will form part of the British Commonwealth air training plan on Canadian soil," said Air Commodore A. E. Godfrey, in welcoming the party, "There is not a man in the contingent who does not have a keen desire in his heart to complete training as soon as possible and go overseas to join his fellow airmen in the Royal Air Force and fight shoulder to shoulder against our common enemy. Some of you have already completed part of your training and are further toward your final goal. You are also about 7000 miles closer to England and well over half your journey."



Flt/Sgt. C. R. Ellis, of Timaru, missing on operations.

Auckland Star 18 November 1944 Page 7

"I can assure you that the New Zealand airmen, for whose training I have had the honour of being partly responsible, have shown great spirit, force of character and leadership. Their ability and keenness have been of the highest order and their discipline exemplary. I only wish I could have had more of them, as they are a type of fellow who calls a spade a spade and is always above board." This tribute is typical of many which have been paid by responsible authorities to the quality of New Zealanders trained in Canada under the British Commonwealth air training plan. It was written by Group Captain A. Ellis, R.A.F., commanding officer of a service flying training school in Alberta, to the New Zealand liaison officer, Ottawa, Group-Captain T. W. White, jun., before the closing down a few weeks ago of the station commanded by Group-Captain Ellis.

Source 3: newspapers

New Zealand Herald 6 December 1940 Page 8

Auckland Star 18 November 1944 Page 7

Key ideas that are in the source:

These newspaper clippings are both reporting about training in Canada. The first one is from an outsider's perspective, and the second is from an officer's perspective. Both articles make the men come across as very happy, proud, and keen. The soldiers are praised for their discipline and determination. This evidence reflects them as having high morales even though they were in cold foreign environments. The main idea that these articles show is that the New Zealanders training in Canada is going very well, and that the soldiers are having a great time. This makes the audience back in New Zealand reading this feel confident that their soldiers are safe and happy.

How does this source answer the focusing question:

This source is useful in helping to answer the focusing question because it shows us the training

experience that New Zealanders had in Canada during WWII. It is providing another experience to take into account when considering what New Zealanders in the RNZAF during WWII had to experience. It also shows the international aspect of the RNZAF because they were all the way across the world in Canada. This material adds an official tone, as it is focusing on the preparation of the RNZAF.

Strengths of this source:

This source is a strong source as it shows us what the training experience was like in the RNZAF, shows the wider commonwealth environment, and the writing is easy to understand. It also provides an insight into how the New Zealand soldiers were viewed by others. They were viewed with pride and they were seen as very determined and keen. These newspaper articles are very relevant, factual, and include formal content.

Limitations of this source:

There are many limitations to this source. It lacks personal detail and emotion. These are just reports, and we don't actually hear from the soldiers. Also, this source is very biased. It was probably written to show the people back in New Zealand that all was well, and that their soldiers are very happy and keen. This means that we can't fully trust them to show us how soldiers truly felt. There is no mention in this source of any failures, or any mental health issues going on, or even fears of the soldiers. This is probably done to make sure that no one back home is worried.

SOURCE 4: Correspondence Flight Sergeant Charles Raymond "Ray" Ellis

Section C3 783723 To Mrs C.R. ELLIS
11 ANDREWS STREET, TIMARU, NEW ZEALAND

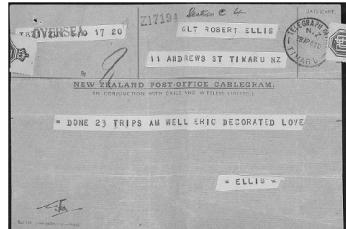
F/L G.I. Ellis
c/o N.Z. House, London
7-4-43.

Dear Mum & Dad,
This airmail service to N.Z. has started off at last so am now going to send them to you instead of letters - surface mail has been taking too long. Haven't received any from you yet but am hoping to before long. I wrote to you few days ago telling you about my leave down in London & Kent - had wizard time on the farm again. Am jolly lucky to have a place like this where I can go - it is almost a home to me. Clare & Tom are such stunning sticks. Have strict instructions from them to take Ray down when he arrives. Have received several letters lately - all fairly ancient - yours 1st Jan & one from Mrs Gunn & Sandy Robertson early Jan - also Tig's Travis has written in Oct. Also had a couple of parcels from Wte Golf Club & the Boultons. Well I'll still very fit on it & piling up the trips and probably you will guess. Done 19 altogether now & quite a few jolly tough ones. Shouldn't be long before I have finished first tour & then a spell. Received airmail from Ray written 14th May - he is OK & doing well with his flying - was afraid of been kept back on instructing. Expect it, will be sometime yet before he arrives here. Had graph from Eric few weeks ago - middle Feb. - he was very fit on it & enjoying a spell back in HQ - hope he is still there while this scrap is going on. Received your cable about my promotion. Have met Frank Scott since he arrived. Very pleased to hear like new home. - that dad is doing OK in Stores. Hoping you are all still fit & well. Cheerio,
Love to all, Ivan.

Sender's address: NZ 422379 F/Sgt Ellis NZ Base, London
11 May 1944

Dear Mum & Dad,

I have just received another one of your airgraphs sent on April 10th, the first & have for about three weeks, but the mail is probably still going to the last station. I am getting plenty of work here and don't get very much time off, just as well as there is very little to do here in Pembroke Dock. The weather this year is getting pretty cold now I bet. Sorry to hear about Mr. Leckie, he went very suddenly. I wonder who will take his place. I had another letter from Mrs Gash and they are looking forward to seeing us again. The crew are due for leave in June so I hope to get down there again. George Chapman is stationed quite close to them but hasn't been able to see them yet. He gets presented with his D.F.C. at Buckingham Palace the end of May and he is asking Mr & Mrs Gash along with him. I haven't met any boys I know so far, might run across Colin C. I wouldn't have minded being back at the Fairlie Show, but lets hope I am back at the next one. How's all my old Fairlie girls getting on. Old Trishiff? must still have a bit of wind left to win again. I seem to be all behind with my mail just now so will have to get busy. How's all the grand children getting on, bet Peter is a hard officer now? Hope Peg sends the photo of them. Haven't heard from Eric or Bob, lately, but expect they are pretty busy. Suppose Dad will be having a very good time just now. Well Mom & Dad, no more room, don't worry.
Lots of Love, Ray



Source 4: Correspondence Flight Sergeant Charles Raymond "Ray" Ellis

Source:

Air Department, Wellington 13th June 1944.

Dear Mr Ellis,

Further to the telegram sent to you by the Hon. the Minister of Defence concerning your son, Flight Sergeant Charles Raymond Ellis, I have to advise the following has been received from the Air Ministry:

"Flight Sergeant Ellis was a member of the crew of a bomber type aircraft which took off on an anti-submarine patrol and failed to return to its base. All the crew including Flight Sergeant Ellis have been classified as missing." It is desired that the above information be treated as confidential. I am enclosing a copy of a memorandum on the steps taken to trace missing air personnel in order that you may see what is being done.

On behalf of the Air Board, I desire to express my deep sympathy with you in your great anxiety. You will be advised immediately any further information is received.

Yours faithfully, T.A. Barrow, Air Secretary.

Air Department, Wellington

8th September 1944.

Dear Mr Ellis,

Further to my letter of the 13th June 1944, concerning your son, Flight Sergeant Charles Raymond Ellis, I have to advise that additional information received from Air Ministry states that your son's aircraft took off on an anti-submarine patrol in the Bay of Biscay area, at 8.8 p.m. on the night of the 10th June 1944, and was due back at 9.10 a.m. on the 11th June, but failed to do so. No signals of any description were received from the aircraft after the take off, and it is assumed that it was shot down either by enemy surface craft or by U-Boats. A German broadcast in English was heard the following day claiming that two Sunderland aircraft had been shot down in the Bay of Biscay.

On behalf of the Air Board, I once again desire to express my deep sympathy with you in your continued anxiety, and I am to assure you that immediately any further information is received you will be advised without delay.

Yours faithfully, T.A. Barrow, Air Secretary.

Air Department, Wellington

9th October 1944.

Dear Mr Ellis,

Further to my letter of the 3rd April 1945 I regret to advise that Air Ministry has now officially presumed the death of your son, Flight Sergeant Charles Raymond Ellis, as having occurred on the 11th June 1944.

The Minister of Defence [F. Jones] desires me to convey to you on the behalf of the Prime Minister and the Government his deepest sympathy with you in your great loss.

Yours faithfully, T.A. Barrow, Air Secretary.



https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nzscant/letters_home.htm

https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nzlscant/letters_home.htm

Key ideas that are in the source:

Charles Raymond Ellis was a flight sergeant who wrote home during his deployment in the UK. He described how long the letters took, leave, and homesickness. The second half of the source is official letters about him being missing and presumed dead. A key idea we can get from this source is how his family back home received updates. It reflects the harsh communication limits and the anxiety of families that have been torn apart during wartime. This source also shows us a tragic outcome for one soldier. It makes us realize that there were probably many more who had a similar outcome. These letters also portray the sense of sadness and loss, because a soldier lost his life.

How does this source answer the focusing question:

This source is useful in helping to answer the focusing question because it displays a range of experiences from daily life to tragedy. It also highlights another perspective, what the families of soldiers experienced during the war. This source reflects the danger and emotional impact that war brought. Another thing it shows is how the communication and official systems worked. We also hear from first person, and officers perspectives which gives us a bigger range of experiences.

Strengths of this source:

This source is a strong source. It is very authentic primary source letters that give a deep emotional connection. We also know that it is 100% true, because they are official documents. They give us an understanding of how the processes worked when a soldier went missing, and also what kind of things soldiers wrote home to their families. The letters make us empathize with the soldiers and their family back home, specifically because it shows real people at war. This source also shows us two points of view, Charles Raymond Ellis's, and the officials, which makes it more complete. It gives us closure to what happened to Ellis. This source is very relevant information, has very emotional content, and is a reliable source overall.

Limitations of this source:

This source has many limitations. Firstly, it is only one person's experience so we cannot build the bigger picture. If it included other New Zealanders perspectives, it would be more complete. Additionally, some sections lack context of what's going on and it also lacks the broader RNZAF picture as it is only one person's story. There is also the fact that information may have been censored from the letters because the officials would not want Ellis's family knowing the harsh truth of what went on. Ellis also could've left a lot out of his letters, so that his family would feel more reassured. We can also see the difference between the tone of the two sections of the source. The first half shows feelings while the second is very formal. This shows that soldiers had to stay strong for their families even if things were really tough.

Source Reference:

SOURCE 5: Māori Airmen 1943



Source 5- Maori Airmen 1943

source: Photo from The Weekly News, 17 March 1943, with caption, "A Māori team at a British air station – R. W. Raharuhi (Takara), M. T. Parata (Waikanae), M. T. T. Manawaiti and E. H. Gray (Otaki)."

Thought to have been taken at Mildenhall. – Photo: The Weekly News, from Air Force Museum of New Zealand.

Key ideas that are in the source:

In photo, we see four Māori men being photographed in Britain, 1943. They are inside a British air base. Their names and hometowns are listed below, and it visually confirms Māori service in the RNZAF overseas. It shows the men in their uniform, looking proud and united. This photo captures a moment of recognition for Māori servicemen in the RNZAF during WWII. This photo is important because it shows the Māori involvement in the RNZAF. Often history skips Māori involvement, so this photo makes us more aware.

How does this source answer the focusing question:

This source is useful in helping to answer the focusing question because it provides more proof of another New Zealanders experience in the RNZAF, in this case it is 4 men. It proves that Māori men were involved overseas, and it also introduces a cultural perspective, which makes us question topics such as inclusion, equality, and recognition within the RNZAF. This source is a strong source that works well with other detailed sources. The photo is also highly relevant to the topic, and it's a real historical photograph.

Strengths of this source:

Because this source is a photo, it's a piece of evidence that helps us quickly understand the snapshot in time. It visually proves that these men were there, at the airbase in 1943, and that Māori men did serve overseas. By having the men's names and hometowns listed below, it makes it more personalized, and makes us connect more. It's a representation of Māori service during a time when non-Pākehā voices were often excluded. This source is also very reliable because it comes from the weekly news, from the Air Force Museum of NZ.

Limitations of this source:

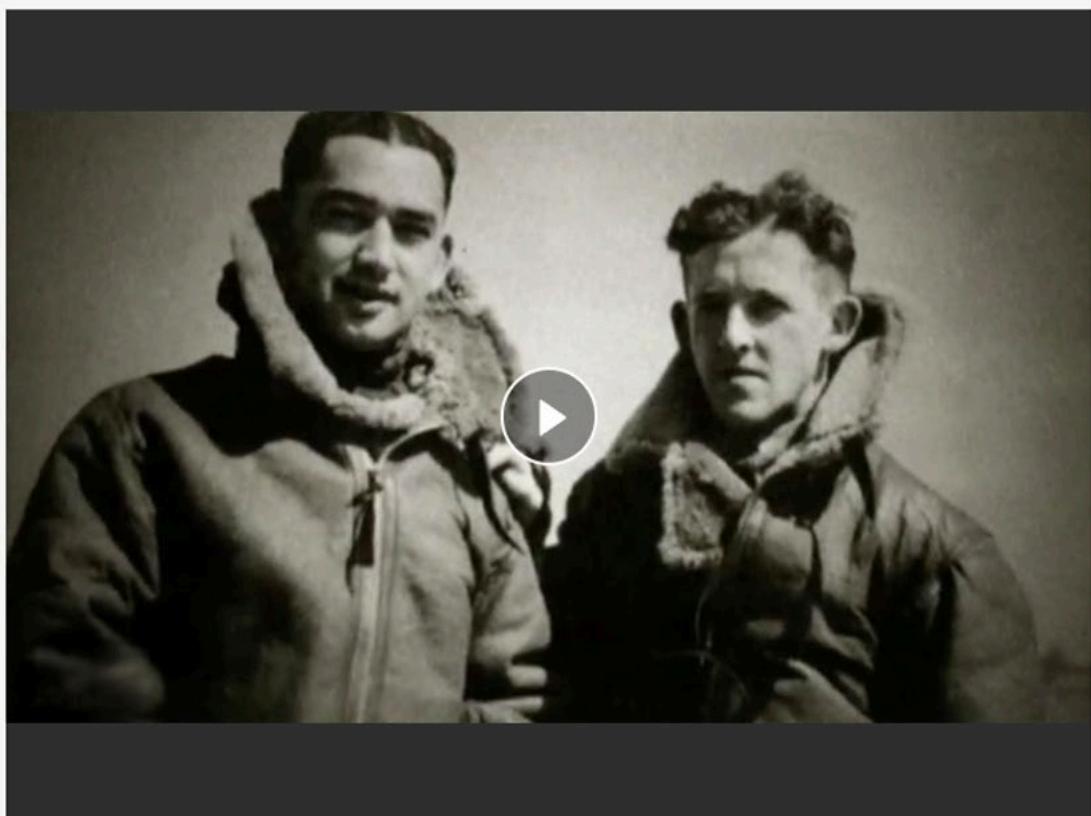
This photo is limited in content. It doesn't give us much information on what the men did, what they were feeling at the time, or what challenges they had to overcome. They also may have been told where to stand and told to smile by the photographer – we can't be sure of this. Without other sources it's impossible to know their daily routines or what their experiences were like. It also doesn't show the broader picture of Māori involvement, because we only see 4 men. We also don't hear from any female or Pacific roles.

Source Reference:

SOURCE 14: Turangaarere: The John Pohe Story (Documentary 12mins)

NZONSCREEN
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Rārangi Matakitaki



An excerpt from this documentary film.

The credits from this documentary.

Turangaarere: The John Pohe Story

Television (Excerpts) – 2008

 Add to watch list  Share

Video: 12mins

(Time Stamps: 2.22min-4.05 and 9min -12min)

<https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/turangaarere-the-john-pohe-story-2008>

Key ideas that are in the source:

This primary sources within the documentary help tell us of the experiences of John Pohe, who was a

Māori pilot in the RNZAF. It follows his journey from training to flying bombing missions to his capture and great escape plans. The documentary uses interviews, photos, and videos to highlight his bravery, loyalty, and the tough challenges he faced. It displays Pohe as both a soldier and a symbol for hope, and Māori contribution to the war.

How does this source answer the focusing question:

This source answers the focusing question because it shows the diversity within the RNZAF and honors the contribution of Māori New Zealanders. This story adds depth to our understanding of the RNZAF experiences around identity, bravery, and sacrifice- in particularly the work ethic, skill, and attributes of Pohe. It also shows us experiences beyond combat – this especially delves into capture, and escaping elements. This is a very relevant source because it focuses on a New Zealander in the RNZAF during WWII.

Strengths of this source:

It covers a wide range of John Pohe's experiences from training, to combat, to capture, to escaping, while also emphasizing his identity through interviews with those related to him. It highlights an underrepresented group in New Zealand's military history. This source is very factual, reliable – it is based on records, and it is relevant to the topic. The artefacts such as his letters home, and the interviews with those who escaped with him, are highly reliable sources due to their primacy to the event. The interviews with the survivor in particular also allows for other elements of the documentary such as the photographs to be contextualized and corroborated.

Limitations of this source:

It also only focuses on one individual and the event it focuses on- an escape from a POW camp, is not typical of the RNZAF experience, therefore very little can be extrapolated from this to the wider experience RNZAF soldiers experiences. There are also no direct interviews with Pohe (due to his death), and it requires some background knowledge to understand his role in the great escape fully.

Connections:

Ideas specific to Primary Source 1 only (John Morris)	Common ideas between one or more sources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on a shot down pilot and his rescue by a French resistance worker Involves civilians bravery and willingness to save pilot Emotional storytelling in first person Not about combat but still very dangerous Relies on human memory rather than official documents/records 	<p>Commonalities/Themes:</p> <p>Even though these sources are different in type, and tone, they have overlapping themes. Some sources also show different sides of the same story. For example, the newspapers report that the soldiers are keen and happy, whereas the letters from Ellis reveal sadness and stress. This helps us view both public and private parts of war.</p> <p>Danger and risk – this is evident in sources 1,3, and 5. In source 1 Morris very narrowly escaped capture by the German's, in source 3 Ellis went missing on a mission, and in source 5 Pohe was planning and executing a dangerous escape.</p>
Ideas specific to Primary Source 2 only (newspapers)	

<p>Ideas specific to Primary Source 3 only (letters)</p>	<p>Diversity: this theme appears strongly in sources 4 and 5 showing that Māori New Zealanders played a huge part in the war effort – in this case in the RNZAF. These sources challenge the assumption that the military was solely for pākehā men.</p> <p>Connection to back home: This is very evident in source 3 because Ellis is writing letters back to his family, but it is also evident in source 2 because it reflects national pride of NZ airmen. These highlight how the emotional ties to home were still important, even while serving overseas. This communication with home, both missing home and wanting to ensure loved ones that they were ok is also a theme in source 5.</p>
<p>Ideas specific to Primary Source 4 only (photo)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides visual representation of Māori airmen Snapshot of nations pride Shows inclusion overseas Makes us question the soldiers roles
<p>Ideas specific to Primary Source 5 only (John Pohe story)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows rare outcomes of combat, capture, and escape Strong focus on identity Represents sacrifice Shows how Māori soldiers contributed at high levels <p>Different stages of RNZAF: These sources give us a broad picture on serving in the RNZAF because source 2 covers the training part, source 1 on post-crash experience, source 3 on active duty and loss, source 4 on visual presence, and source 5 offers a bigger story about a pilot's life from training to capture. Most of the stories are about pilots, we don't hear from other important jobs such as medics, engineers, women, or Pacific islanders did. That means the picture is less complete which is a limitation of the collection of sources.</p> <p>Together these sources build a big picture on a RNZAF life. They show us that service wasn't just about flying, but danger, emotional tolls, cultural pride, and consequences.</p>

Considering the sources as a collection, please consider the following:

- What elements of the focusing question's answer have the sources not addressed?
- Are there missing perspectives or information from the collection of sources?
- How well do the sources work together to provide important insights?
- Think of them as a package—are they effective in helping you fully understand the focus question? Are you left with gaps in your knowledge?

Aim to write 200 words

A major strength of these five sources, is that they work well together to provide a range of different experiences that New Zealanders had in the RNZAF during World War Two. They cover key themes such as danger/risk, diversity, connection to home, legacy, and the different stages of the RNZAF. Each source offers a unique perspective. Source 1 shows the danger after being shot down, source 2 reflects the pride in training overseas – in Canada, source 3 reflects the emotional

toll of service on soldiers and their families, source 4 highlights Māori involvement, and source 5 shows sacrifice and legacy. Some sources reflect memory or legacy rather than lived experience, which reminds us that history is shaped by how people's stories are remembered. Together, they provide an insight into the emotional and personal side of war- with many of the sources capturing the very human emotional response to the situation they found them in- whether it was gratitude, determination, resilience, bravery etc. This is a strength as often secondary accounts fail to capture the human element, and group individual experiences into a collective- which these sources do not, although to some extent, this presents a limitation as we can not with certainty say these experiences reflect and represent similar experiences of the wider group.

However, there are some limitations to the collection. As mentioned above, several sources are based on individual experiences, and lack the broader RNZAF picture. For example, we hear from Ellis and Morris, but their stories won't represent what other airmen might've gone through. There's no mention of other essential roles in the RNZAF such as medics, ground crew, and engineers meaning we don't see the full RNZAF structure. Women's perspectives and Pacific involvement are completely missing, which limits our view further and creates an unbalanced and incomplete answer to the focus question. Seeking sources that better address these perspectives would strengthen the overall collection.

Overall, these sources present a wide range of experiences that New Zealanders had in the RNZAF during WWII. They cover combat, non-combat, training, personal emotions, cultural identity, and loss. They include lots of different source types and time periods giving emotional depth, factual and historical information, and visual evidence. Together the sources provide a strong but incomplete view of the RNZAF service which helps us understand what happened, but more specifically how they were remembered.