



LADIES IN THE HOUSE  
PODCAST SERIES

**MOAD**

Museum of Australian Democracy  
at Old Parliament House



# LADIES IN THE HOUSE EPISODE 1: HAZEL CRAIG

## Lesson Plan

### Learning Intention:

Understand the role of the people working behind the scenes in politics and how important people who work behind the scenes are in a democracy.

### Success Criteria:

Reflect on the unsung heroes in your life and take action to thank the unsung heroes in your life.

## Before Listening:

### Activity One:

Pre-Listening  
Vocabulary

Write up or project the following words on the board:

- democracy
- public servant
- discreet
- allegiance
- apolitical
- coronation



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## Activity

### One:

#### Pre-Listening Vocabulary

In groups ask the students if they can put the words into one of the 4 categories.

- Don't know it at all
- Have seen or heard, but don't know the meaning
- I think I know the meaning
- I know the meaning and can explain it

If any of the students are in the 3rd or 4th category, see if they can explain it to the people in your group or to the class.

Share the following definitions for the vocabulary.

#### Definitions:

- **Democracy** is a system of government in which people choose their rulers by voting for them in elections.
- A **public servant** is a person who is appointed or elected to a public office, for example working for a local or state government.
- If you are **discreet**, you are polite and careful in what you do or say, because you want to avoid embarrassing or offending someone.
- Your **allegiance** is your support for and loyalty to a particular group, person, or belief.
- If you are **apolitical**, you are not linked to a particular political party.



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## Activity Two:

Before listening  
discussion  
questions

1. What do you know about what kind of work that Prime Ministers do?
2. What kind of help do you think they need to get their work done?

## After Listening:

## Activity Three:

After listening  
reflection  
questions

1. What surprised you about Hazel Craig's story?
2. List some of the qualities that made Hazel an excellent secretary to the Prime Ministers.
3. Explain why it is important for a secretary to the Prime Minister to need to be discreet.



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### Activity Four:

Celebrating  
unsung  
heroes

Make a list of all of the people in your school community that work behind the scenes.

Here are some examples to think about:

- Is there someone who does the school photography or posts on the social media account?
- Is there a person that makes sure all of the teachers get paid?
- A person who orders the food for the tuck shop, or who makes sure all of the new student have a uniform on the first day.
- Is there a someone who writes the newsletter or the yearbook?
- What about the cleaners who make sure you have enough toilet paper and clean the toilets for you?
- Does the school principal have a secretary?
- See if you can come up with your own examples.
- Ask your teacher who is the person who does this job.



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## Activity Four:


Celebrating  
unsung  
heroes

In groups, think of a way that you can celebrate this person and let them know that you appreciate the work that they do.

- Some suggestions could be:
- making a social media post on Canva that the school could publish to thank your unsung hero.
- Writing a letter or email to thank them
- Creating a thank you video
- Making an origami heart or other paper craft to give to them.



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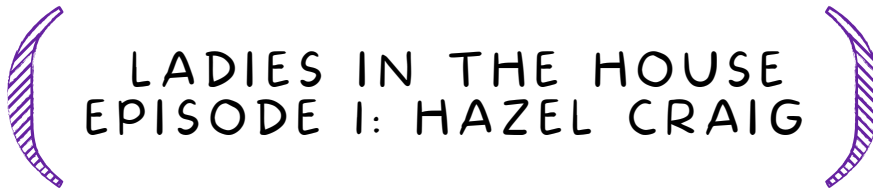
## Episode Transcript:

Hi, this is Kelly Chase and you are listening to a Museum of Australian Democracy and History Detective Collaboration: Ladies in the House. In this 3-part series we are going to celebrate the lives of three incredible women who worked in Old Parliament House- the building that now houses the Museum of Australian Democracy- and we will explore how these significant women contributed to Australian democracy.

In this episode I would like to introduce you to Hazel Craig who served as a secretary for five different Prime Ministers and worked in the Old Parliament House building for more than 40 years! Those Prime Ministers were, Joseph Lyons, Robert Menzies, Arthur Fadden, John Curtin and Ben Chifley.

I know that most people can type these days, but in 1935 when Hazel was in her 20s and applying for a job as a public servant- that is someone who works for the government- she had to do an exam to prove she was good at typing. Of course, Hazel passed, and it was printed in the newspaper that she was appointed to work in the Prime Minister's office in Canberra. Hazel was one of only a few women who were working in Parliament House in 1935. Many of the ministers in parliament had private secretaries, but they were always men, so to have a woman in this job was very unusual. The duties of a private secretary were to look up references for speeches, type and prepare the bills and notices that the ministers might need in parliament and take shorthand notes. Shorthand is a kind of special abbreviated written language secretaries used to use; it is not very common today. To be a private secretary, you had to be very competent.

One thing that is abundantly clear when reading about Hazel is that she was excellent at her job. Efficient, hard-working, dedicated and discreet. It did not matter what political party that the Prime Minister in power belonged to, she faithfully worked for the Prime Minister in office so that Australian democracy could run smoothly. "When you were appointed to the public service you took an oath of allegiance and a secrecy oath and you were apolitical. You took the oath that you would serve whatever government was in power at that stage, faithfully." She was private secretary for three different the Prime Ministers who were in power during the Second World War and I can only imagine that working in Parliament House during a world war would have been a hectic and stressful experience.



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For 25 years Hazel worked as private secretary for Australia's longest serving Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies and this opened up opportunities for both travel and incredible experiences. Hazel got to attend the of Queen Elizabeth the second. A coronation is the ceremony where a queen or king is crowned.

Speaking of the Queen, when the Queen visited Australia in 1954, Hazel was one of only two women to receive a medal from the Queen. She was awarded an MBE which stands for 'Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire'. Then in 1960 she was upgraded to an OBE, the O stands for Officer and 5 years later she was awarded a CBE. Which, of course, stands for 'Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire'. A most excellent adventure indeed! As a part of her job she attended functions at Windsor Castle in England – that is the royal residence of the Queen- and the White House in America, where the American President of the day lives.

For 42 years Hazel worked tirelessly as a public servant at Old Parliament House. An article about her retirement published in the Australian Woman's Weekly described her as, "an oasis of calm in the daily panic, [she] would lend you her dictionary, fix an interview, tell you whom to see about some strange query. But she would never tell any secrets." At this retirement party she was gifted with an engraved silver tray from the ex-Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies and his wife Dame Pattie Menzies, it simply said, "A splendid secretary and faithful friend."

Call to action (music)

An unsung hero is someone who perhaps is not praised or appreciated as much as they deserve to be, and Hazel Craig, who worked tirelessly to support five of our Australian Prime Ministers, is a name only remembered by a few and is definitely an unsung hero. What I would like you to think about is, who are the unsung heroes in your school or local community? Who are people the working behind the scenes to help and support others but do not get all of the fanfare? How might you celebrate or acknowledge their work? Maybe today would be the perfect day to say thank you to an unsung hero.

This is Kelly Chase, on the case.