



THE SIMPSON PRIZE



SIMPSON PRIZE COMPETITION

for Year 9 and 10 Students

2024 Winner | Northern Territory

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DARWIN MIDDLE SCHOOL

“Commemoration of the Anzac tradition has widespread support in Australia despite different historical interpretations about the nature of the Anzac Tradition”

To what extent does your research support this?

Anzac Day is a commemoration of the anniversary of the landing of Australian and New Zealand troops (ANZAC) at Gallipoli, Turkey on 25 April in 1915¹, to support Britain in the Great War. Throughout history, many debates have surrounded Anzac soldiers for their participation and contribution in WWI. Despite these debates, Anzac Day commemoration has received widespread support from the Australian community. Originally established for the purpose of remembrance, Anzac Day commemoration has since evolved to recognize the efforts of all Australian servicemen and women, both past and present. In addition to that, it is regarded as an event which the embodies Australian identity and national pride because the soldiers who fought in the war exemplify the Australian values of mateship, courage, and endurance. Anzac Day becomes more than just a commemoration of sacrificed soldiers; it is also a celebration of what it means to be Australian, attracting more support and attendance from people who are not interested in war but are proud to be Australian. Nonetheless, despite the importance of Anzac Day, there have been times in the past and present when it has not been supported and valued for a variety of reasons.²

The commemoration of Anzac Day receives extensive support in Australia, primarily due to its evolving and inclusive nature. Initially established to honor the Anzac's for their sacrifices during WWI, Anzac Day has evolved over time to acknowledge the efforts of all Australian servicemen and women past and present. Before this change has taken place, the crowd was small, consisting of only men and women that were supportive of conscription in Australia (Source 1). By broadening the scope of the commemoration to include the acknowledgement of a more extensive groups of people, Anzac Day creates a profound sense of connection and obligation among the Australian population. It reflects a collective appreciation for the nation's military heritage and acknowledges the sacrifices made by different individuals in Australia no matter their race or gender. For example, depicted in Source 5, the commemorative window at Raukkan, South Australia was built to commemorate indigenous participation in WWI, showing respect to the sacrifices of the Aboriginal community without discrimination against their race. As more individuals are included in the commemoration, more people feel connected and obligated to participate in commemorative events³. This sense of connection and obligation excludes one's background or familial history and encourages a shared understanding of the sacrifices and efforts made during WWI. In present day Australia, although debates of war and peace continue, Anzac Day has become an integral part of Australia's cultural⁴, binding communities with diverse backgrounds and

¹ *Australian Permanent Mission in (2023) Home*. Available at:

https://austria.embassy.gov.au/vien/AnzacDay_background.html#:~:text=ANZAC%20stands%20for%20Australian%20and,on%2025%20April%20in%201915. (Accessed: 03 August 2023).

² *Anzac Day – lest we forget the wrong things (2018b) Sustaining Community*. Available at:

<https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2015/04/20/anzac-day/> (Accessed: 27th July 2023).

³ Does Participation in National Commemoration Increase National Attachment (2017)? Association of the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/sena.12237> Accessed (26 July 2023)

• ⁴ *History Of Anzac Day (2022) ClickView*. Behind The News. Available at:

<https://online.clickview.com.au/libraries/videos/50251007/the-history-of-anzac-day> (Accessed: 29 July 2023).

ethnicity together with a shared connection to commemorating all the sacrifices made by all service man and women from past and present.⁵

Within the Australian community, Anzac Day holds significant importance and receives widespread support, as the soldiers who participated in the war exemplify the Australian values of mateship, courage, and endurance. During the Gallipoli campaign that started on 5th April 1905, facing attacks from the Turkish forces, the Anzac soldiers defended while also building and digging trenches, demonstrating teamwork and mateship⁶. Though outnumbered during the entire Gallipoli campaign, the Anzac soldiers highlighted a strong sense of endurance and courage, dragging the battle for about 8 months until finally retreating on the 17th of December 1915⁷. Depicted in Source 3, the soldier who despite losing both legs in war, still attended the Anzac Day commemoration with the help of another soldier, demonstrating a strong sense of mateship and courage. The Australian soldiers demonstrating powerful sense of Australian identity forged in the crucible of war has significantly contributed to the widespread support and attendance of Anzac Day commemoration. Anzac Day is not just an occasion to honor passed soldiers but also a celebration of what it means to be Australian, which attracts more support and attendance of people who is not interested in war but holds national pride for Australia⁸. The Gallipoli campaign's enduring legacy lies not only in the bravery and sacrifices of the ANZAC soldiers but also in the shaping and demonstrating the Australian national identity. The quote by Julia Gillard, the 27th Prime Minister of Australia, reflects the mutual respect Turkish holds for Anzac soldiers despite being opponents, even naming the place Anzac Cove to honor the Anzac soldiers and their Australian spirit (Source 2). As a result of the strong Australian identity displayed by the ANZAC soldiers, Anzac Day stands not only as a remembrance of sacrifices but also as a celebration of the Australian spirit⁹. The demonstrated Australian identity during the Gallipoli campaign has made Anzac Day an occasion that resonates with the Australian community, drawing larger amounts of people from diverse backgrounds to join in paying tribute to the nation's past and celebrating its shared values and heritage.¹⁰

Despite the significance of Anzac Day in relation to WWI, Anzac Day commemorations has not always received support from the Australian community. During the first commemoration of Anzac Day which was held in Brisbane, there were only limited amounts of people who attended the commemoration. This was due to the ongoing conscription debate in Australia. Due to the high casualty rates of 64.98% (Source 6), many people believed that Australia should not persist in participating in the war while others believed that Australia had to support its "Mother Land" which was Britain. This resulted in the Anzac Day commemorations to lose a lot of support and attendance since only the man and women that supported conscription and continuing the war will support the Anzac Day commemorations and attend it¹¹. In contrast, Britain, which had a lower casualty rate of 50.71% (Source 6), implemented conscription as soon as the war

⁵ Anzac Day (2023) *Anzac Day* | Army.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.army.gov.au/our-heritage/traditions/anzac-day> (Accessed: 26 July 2023).

⁶ DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) (2022), *Gallipoli Campaign 1915*, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed 27 July 2023, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/where-australians-served/gallipoli>

⁷ corporateName=Department of Veterans' Affairs; address=21 Genge St, Civic/Canberra City, ACT 2601; contact=+61 2 6289 1133; [email=education@dva.gov.au](mailto:education@dva.gov.au) (2023) *The ANZAC legend, Anzac Portal*. Available at: <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/personnel/anzac-legend> (Accessed: 27 July 2023).

⁸ *Australian attitudes towards National Identity: Citizenship ...* (no date) *A U S T R A L I A N A T T I T U D E S T O W A R D S N A T I O N A L I D E N T I T Y : C I T I Z E N S H I P, I M M I G R A T I O N A N D T R A D I T I O N*. Available at: https://csrc.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/ANUpoll-national-identity-042015_0.pdf (Accessed: 30 July 2023).

⁹ *Acknowledgement of traditional custodians* (2023) *Australian War Memorial*. Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac-day/traditions> (Accessed: 27 July 2023).

¹⁰ Anzac Day (2023) *Anzac Day* | Army.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.army.gov.au/our-heritage/traditions/anzac-day> (Accessed: 27 July 2023).

¹¹ DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) (2022), *Gallipoli Campaign 1915*, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed 27 July 2023, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/where-australians-served/gallipoli>

started did not have an ongoing debate about conscription and war, resulting in larger amounts of crowd when the Anzac soldiers marched on the streets of London (Source 1). Another period in which Anzac Day commemoration did not receive support from the Australian Community is in recent years of 2015 and onwards. From 2015-2019, the amount of people attending Anzac Dawn services have plummeted in states of Australia and Gallipoli. On average of the 4 states in Australia (Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth), the attendance rate reduced by 72% and in Gallipoli, it reduced by 85% (Source 9). This is due to WWI being further in history, social attitudes towards war and peace changing and living in a peaceful time. The significance of events of a century ago becomes less apparent to younger Australians, leading to a decline in emotional connection to the significance of Anzac Day¹². Additionally, the passing of WWI veterans has left an indelible void, making it increasingly challenging to maintain a link to the past and the sacrifices made during that time. Furthermore, changing societal attitudes towards war and conflicts also contributes to the declining support for Anzac Day in the context of WWI. In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on promoting peace, diplomacy, and reconciliation as alternatives to war and conflict¹³. This shift in perspective challenges the traditional narrative surrounding Anzac Day and requests a more nuanced approach to commemoration¹⁴. Some individuals question the emphasis on glorifying military history, creating and promoting Anzac Legends and stories in ceremonies such as the Last Post Ceremony (Source 4) and call for a greater acknowledgment of the human cost of war. This evolving perspective challenges Anzac Day's traditional narrative, making it essential to find ways to adapt the commemoration to resonate with the changing sensibilities of contemporary society.

In conclusion, despite being unsupported when it was first taken place on the 25th of April 1906, Anzac Day has evolved overtime to target a wider portion of people within the Australian community through developing more inclusiveness towards the acknowledgement taken place during ceremonies and by highlighting the soldiers demonstrated Australian national identity. This common sense of identity brings all the Australian community together despite the diversity in background. However, in present day Australia, many younger generations struggle to develop an emotional connection with Anzac Day, and many others question the decision of glorifying war and depicting Anzac Legends and stories, reducing the amount of people attending and supporting Anzac Day commemoration.

¹² *The evolution of anzac day from 1915 until today* (2023) *Australian Geographic*. Available at: <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2017/04/evolution-of-anzac-day/> (Accessed: 28 July 2023).

- ¹³ Tol, D.V., Ottery, S. and Keith, R. (2012) *Pearson History 9: Student book*. Port Melbourne, Vic., Victoria: Pearson Australia (Pearson History).

¹⁴ Van der Linden, N. *et al.* (2017) *Are attitudes toward peace and war the two sides of the same coin? evidence to the contrary from a French validation of the attitudes toward peace and war scale*, *PLoS one*. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5593180/> (Accessed: 31 July 2023).

Appendix

Source 1

[First Anzac Day | National Museum of Australia \(nma.gov.au\)](http://nma.gov.au)

The National Museum of Australia's webpage, First Anzac Day, outlines the history of Anzac Day and provides links to several related sources.

1916: First Anzac Day commemorations



Men, women and children line the streets in Brisbane to watch the procession of the 41st Battalion on Anzac Day, 1916



Australian and New Zealand troops marching down Whitehall to Westminster Abbey in London, Anzac Day, 1916

Source 2

Prime Minister Julia Gillard's speech delivered at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli, Turkey on 25 April 2012



Julia Gillard was the 27th Prime Minister of Australia, and the first woman to hold the position.

They were strangers in a strange land.

Men who came from "the ends of the earth" in an enterprise of hope to end a far-off, dreadful war.

But it was not to be.

Even at dawn, the shadows were already falling over this fate-filled day.

Here on these beaches and hills, so foreign and yet so familiar, a skilled enemy lay in wait, led by a man destined to become a great leader.

A world of war was described in the mortal struggles of a million men on the narrow confines of this peninsula.

For the allies, this was a battle of nations fought by great powers and the might of their empires for a wider strategic goal.

For the Turks, this was a defence of the soil and sanctity of home, for which Ataturk ordered his men not only to attack but to die.

And the men who fought here from our nation, our allies and from Turkey did die – terrible deaths that spared no age or rank or display of courage.

Over 130,000 men gave their lives in this place, two-thirds of them on the Turkish side and 8700 from Australia. So this is a place hallowed by sacrifice and loss.

It is, too, a place shining with honour – and honour of the most vivid kind. A place where foes met in equality and respect and attained a certain nobility through their character and conduct. Eight months later, this campaign ended as it had begun – at dawn.

At 3.57 on December 20, 1915, the last Diggers quietly slipped away. They did not begrudge the victory of their enemy, which was hard-fought and deserved. They did share a regret greater than any defeat – having to leave their mates behind.

So the Australian and New Zealand commander, General Godley, left a message asking the Ottoman forces to respect the Anzac graves.

But no such invitation was required.

The Turkish honoured our fallen and embraced them as their own sons.

And later they did something rare in the pages of history – they named this place in honour of the vanquished as Anzac Cove.

We therefore owe the Republic of Turkey a profound debt.

No nation could have better guarded our shrines or more generously welcomed our pilgrims.

A worthy foe has proved to be an even greater friend.

Through Turkey's hospitality, we do today what those who left these shores most dearly hoped:

We come back.

As we will always come back.

To give the best and only gift that can matter anymore – our remembrance.

We remember what the Anzacs did in war.

And for what they did to shape our nation in peace.

In this place, they taught us to regard Australia and nowhere else as home.

Here where they longed for the shape and scent of the gum leaf and the wattle, not the rose or the elm.

Where they remembered places called Weipa and Woolloomooloo, Toowoomba and Swan Hill.

Or the sight of Mt Clarence as their ships pulled away from Albany, for so many the last piece of Australian soil they would ever live to see.

This is the legend of Anzac, and it belongs to every Australian. Not just those who trace their origins to the early settlers but those like me who are migrants and who freely embrace the whole of the Australian story as their own.

For Indigenous Australians, whose own wartime valour was a profound expression of the love they felt for the ancient land.

And for Turkish-Australians who have not one but two heroic stories to tell their children.

All of us remember because all of us inhabit the freedom the Anzacs won for us.

These citizen-soldiers, who came here untested and unknown, and who "founded a deathless monument of valour" through the immensity of their sacrifice.

This dawn will turn to darkness at the ending of today.

But the sun will never set on the story of their deeds.

Now and for all time, we will remember them.

Lest We Forget.

Photograph of an Australian soldier, who had lost both his legs, being carried to a position to view the Anzac Day March through the streets of London, England, on 25 April 1919.



Accession Number: H18643

Source 4

Extract from the Australian War Memorial's Last Post ceremony.

As Charles Bean said, 'Many a man lying out there at Pozières or in the low scrub at Gallipoli, with his poor tired senses barely working through the fever of his brain, has thought in his last moments: "Well – well – it's over; but in Australia they will be proud of this."'

This is the concluding statement of the Last Post Ceremony. The first Last Post Ceremony was held at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra on 17 April 2013. The ceremony occurs 364 days a year. Each ceremony tells the story behind just one of the more than 103,000 names on the Roll of Honour bronze panels that line the walls of the Commemorative Area. It will take nearly 300 years to commemorate every person on the Roll of Honour.

Source 5

Photograph of the commemorative window in the village church at Raukkan, South Australia. This window was erected by local First Nations people in 1925 to commemorate the service of Ngarrindjeri men who served in the Australian Imperial Force during the First World War.



Source 6

Statistics: Comparison of Casualties in the First World War (Casualty = captured, missing, wounded or killed). Based on Selected WW1 Statistics on the Anzac Commemorative Committee website, [Selected WW1 Statistics - ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee](#)

Country	Total Casualties	Total who Embarked for Service	% Casualties of those who Embarked
British Isles	2,535,424	5,000,000	50.71%
Canada	210,100	422,405	49.74%
Australia	215,585	331,781	64.98%
New Zealand	58,526	98,950	59.01%
India	140,015	1,096,013	12.77%

Source 7

Extract from historian Joan Beaumont's Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War, 2013, pp. 551 – 554.

Permission: Allen & Unwin, 83 Alexander Street, Crows Nest NSW 2065

www.allenandunwin.com (Email sent to the company and in process)

The Anzac legend

Open Information

what draws students in, shouldn't this then emphasise an obligation to teach "honest histories", especially at high school level?

Commemoration is in tension with the educational enterprise when it closes down alternative interpretations and perspectives of war and society. Until recently the most significant exclusion in the monolithic white Anzac legend was the role of Indigenous servicemen.



A veteran from Papua New Guinea wears a traditional head dress as he marches in the ANZAC Day march through Sydney, 2016. David Gray

The success of the theatrical production Black Diggers is a welcome example that slowly draws their story into the mainstream, despite forced exclusion of Indigenous service personnel by the authorities in the initial phases of both the First and Second World Wars.

History is one of the most politically divisive fields both in and out of the classroom and the issue of how much weight should be given to war in the teaching of Australian history continues to be hotly contested.

In the official haste to commemorate WWI, are we doing a disservice to those whose memory we are at pains to remember? The recent publication of Bruce Scates' World War One: A History in 100 Stories (2015) was a bold attempt to redress the popular narrative, this time by highlighting the lives of those irreparably damaged by the events of the conflict.

Many of those individual stories were declined for inclusion in the wider national commemorative programme because they sat outside the traditional framework of heroism and mateship. Yet many who returned from the war were physically or psychologically shattered, and reflected what historian Joan Beaumont considered a "broken nation".

Critical and reflective ABC documentaries like Lest We Forget What? (2015) and Why Anzac with Sam Neil (2015) have also challenged contemporary mainstream perceptions.

Half a century ago historian Geoffrey Serle coined the phrase "Anzackery" to describe the sentimentality surrounding the popular reception of Anzac. Spurred on by a centenary commemoration budget now in excess of half a billion dollars, the heroic narrative has become an unshakeable article of faith in the national psyche.

Herein lies the root of the conflict between the business of commemorating and education about war and society; an important distinction explored at the University of Newcastle's public symposium. To quote a popular aphorism, the truth is always the first casualty in war. It requires determination and courage to tell the truth in the face of resolute forgetting.

Source 8

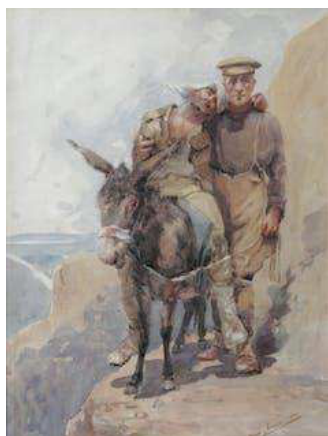
Article: Leah Riches and James Bennett, 'We can't see the war for the memorials: balancing education and commemoration', Conversation, 25 July, 2016

We can't see the war for the memorials: balancing education and commemoration (theconversation.com)

Published: July 25, 2016 6.04am AEST

One of the key vehicles for communicating the history of the first world war has been the classroom. But in this, the WWI centenary period, have the lines between education and commemoration been distorted?

In Australia the national fervour surrounding the Anzac centenary has made it easy to get lost in the "celebratory" nature of our remembering and this has frequently been at the cost of critical analysis. This was one of the major concerns raised at a public symposium held earlier this year by the University of Newcastle where academics from the UK, Australia and New Zealand debated the issue.



Horace Millichamp Moore-Jones, Private Simpson, D.C.M., & his donkey at Anzac, 1918. AAP

Educators are fighting an uphill battle on two fronts. History, especially Australian history, is widely perceived by high school, and some tertiary, students as "boring". This is not helped by the fact that the total annual allocation for history education in NSW is approximately 50 hours. In some states and territories that figure may be much lower. And if, to borrow the phrase, young people are being drawn into commemoration as "vessels of memory", is this a problematic ideal?

In the 21st century, as the living memory of the war fades, new questions arise as to how to teach these cataclysmic events. Yet the dominant popular narratives that crowd the commemorative landscape leave little room to engage with the complex and challenging histories of war.

Images of war weary veterans and heroic stories trade in emotion and empathy, yet this commemoration shuts out cognition and critical remembrance. Now widely perceived to be the stuff of myth, the story of Simpson and his donkey is the common entry point for primary school children learning about WWI. But if empathising with personal stories of war is

Source 9

Statistics: Number of attendees at Anzac Dawn Services, 2015-2020. Figures selected from Romain Fathi, 'Crowds at dawn services have plummeted in recent years. It's time to reinvent Anzac Day', Conversation, 21 April 2021. [Crowds at dawn services have plummeted in recent years. It's time to reinvent Anzac Day \(theconversation.com\)](https://www.theconversation.com/crowds-at-dawn-services-have-plummeted-in-recent-years-its-time-to-reinvent-anzac-day-2021-04-21)

Place	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2015-2019
Canberra	120,000	55,000	38,000	38,000	35,000	Only officials	-70%
Melbourne	85,000	45,000	30,000	35,000	25,000	Only officials	-70%
Adelaide	20,000	10,000	5,000	6,000	5,000	Cancelled	-75%
Perth	75,000	40,000	40,000	30,000	20,000	Cancelled	-73%
Gallipoli	10,000	1,200	1,000	1,178	1,434	Cancelled	-85%

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