

Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize 2021



Chloe Brittain - Year 9

Question 3

Discuss the following statement- 'We, as the nation of Australia, are so transfixed by the Gallipoli Campaign that we have failed to look at what was happening elsewhere during the First World War.'

Word Count: 1045 Words (without Quotes or References)

Anzac Day is a Memorial Day celebrated by all Australians to commemorate the Australian and New Zealand people who served in the world wars. The date of Anzac Day is 25 of April, the day Australians and New Zealanders landed on Gallipoli. Australians focus on the Gallipoli Campaign with these specific dates and services; however, Gallipoli was not the only significant event Australian soldiers fought in. There are other battles that Australians not only sacrificed themselves for but came out victorious making the opposition retreat. These battles of bravery go unnoticed by Australians and should be celebrated just as much as the Gallipoli Campaign, such as the battle of St Mont and Peronne and the battle of the Fromelles.

The Gallipoli Campaign was an allied military attack against Turkey during the WW1. The aim of the operation was to capture the Dardanelles. Australian and New Zealand troops landed on Turkey's Gallipoli peninsula on April 25th, 1915. This was Australia's first major battle of WW1. It was acknowledged by Captain Hugo Throssell's "For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty during operations on the Kaiakij Aghala (Hill 60) in Gallipoli Peninsula."¹ The Australians landed to find thousands of enemies uphill with great advantage on them; it was almost impossible for the Australians to survive the gunshots and bombs being thrown down onto the coastline. The British secretary of state for war ordered a withdrawal, then the allied party planned for their evacuation. Over this period more than 60,000 Australians died and many were injured.

During the Gallipoli campaign Australian soldiers showed enormous amounts of courage and sacrifice, risking their lives for their country and people. The number of deaths caused by the Gallipoli Campaign was something to be recognised by all Australians. Another reason the Campaign was so significant to Australians is how it was one of the first major battles. Australia was in the beginning stages of becoming a nation and establishing its country, and for early Australians to go and risk their lives for the land and people is a great deal. It showed the bravery of its people and brought Australians together during the battle.

However, even though the Gallipoli Campaign is so significant, it should not be the only battle focused on by today's Australians. Australians have good reasons to be so transfixed by the Gallipoli campaign, but this doesn't mean they cannot also look at other significant battles and victories. Australian

¹ *Education services Australia Limited and National Archives of Australia 2010.*
<<https://www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resource-themes/war/world-war-i/notification-captain-hugo-throssells-victoria-cross>>

soldiers should have all their battles commemorated and recognised by the public not just the first and largest battle.

One battle of WW1 that goes unnoticed by the public is the battle of St Mont Quentin and Peronne, Australians, who were very few in numbers, fought against the Germans in harsh and difficult conditions such as the battle being uphill, this made the troops vulnerable to attacks from the Germans with them holding height against them. Hamilton, the newly appointed Commander of the troops spoke Kitchener “This has been a very bad day for us... It looks at present as if the Fleet would not have been able to carry on at this rate, and if so, the soldiers will have to do the trick.”² 1 September 1918, the Australian forces broke into Peronne and had taken most of the town. Over the three days the Australians were successful without the help of tanks or protective gear, which resulted in the loss of 3000 casualties. The disadvantage of weapons, number of soldiers and battle conditions, shows the struggle the Australians went through during the battle and still came out victorious. This was a first major victory for the Australian troops.

The Australians fighting in the St Mont Quentin and Peronne showed extreme bravery and courage during the battles. Sir John Monash stated that of the St Mont Quentin and Peronne that it “furnished the finest example in the war of spirited and successful infantry action conducted by three divisions operating simultaneously side by side.”³ The battle of St Mont Quintin and Peronne was towards the end of WW1 and the soldiers were limited and exhausted, taking over Peronne and fighting against the Germans despite these disadvantages. Therefore, this shows a great sense of bravery and it should be celebrated by Australians today. Instead of focusing on the failure of Gallipoli Australians should be transfixed by the major success of this battle and the accomplishments of the soldiers.

This was one of Australia’s first allied victories during the war, taking over Peronne was a great achievement by the troops and should be celebrated by Australians today. Their immense bravery was something a new country such as Australia should be very proud of. A specific soldier in the St Mont Battle is Private Alex Barclay, who was shot in the head with a sniper bullet during the attack. The bullet passed straight through his skull, and he lived. He then later

² Source 5.31- Merritt, A & O'brien, C 1991, *1914-1918 the world at war*, Unknown, Melbourne, Victoria.

³ Australian War Memorial 2020, *Mont St Quentin and Péronne: Australian Victories*, Canberra, viewed 11 August 2021, <<https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/1918/battles/mtstquentin>>.

re-enlisted for WWII Barclay is a great example of the bravery that had taken place during this fight and is why events like this should be recognised as well as the Gallipoli campaign.

“The worst 24 hours in Australia’s military history”⁴

Another event that should be remembered is the Battle of the Fromelles. On 19th July 1916 it was fought by Australia’s 5th division and Britain’s 61st division the aim was to take over land from the Germans but failed, the German troops were already watching them and had the upper hand in the battle while the Australians crossed the land. This battle was very new for the Australians and with little to no experience, the troops showed immense bravery going into and during the battle. The loss of 5,533 casualties was traumatic for Australians during the time and the families are to be remembered by Australian public today. Because this battle is like Gallipoli, it should be recognised alongside it when celebrating and remembering Anzac Day and the soldiers. Both battles were unfair, fought by Australians and had the loss of many casualties. They should both be spoken and taught to Australians today as they are both significant events in Australian history.

To conclude, Australia is so transfixed by Gallipoli because of its number of casualties, how it caused stress on the new nation, and how it was one of the first battles Australian soldiers fought. Its representations of Australia and the bravery of the soldiers involved. However, there are other battles and events during WW1 that should be recognised alongside Gallipoli Australians should be focusing on victories as well as the losses such as St Mont Peronne and the Fromelles. They should also be aware of other losses in different battles as their lives are just as important as the soldiers from the Gallipoli Campaign. In no way should these battles be recognised instead on the Gallipoli campaign, however, they should be known by the Australian public equally because of their importance to Australia history.

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