

**Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize**  
**By Katelyn Johnson**  
**Year 9**

**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’ (reference unknown).**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1915, over sixteen thousand men from Australia and New Zealand landed in what is now known as ANZAC Cove, Gallipoli.<sup>1</sup> For over eleven months they fought against the Turks, until December 1915, when they finally evacuated the peninsula. The mission to knock Turkey out of the war was a failure. Today, ANZAC Day, celebrated on the same day as that first ANZAC landing, is a day to pause and reflect on what those who have given their lives in wars have done for us. It brings hope and a national pride to many and helps keep the spirit of mateship alive throughout the generations. But should our focus really be this narrow? Gallipoli was just one campaign in a much bigger war, and a failed British-led one at that. This essay will discuss both reasons for and against focussing on Gallipoli as a nation of Australia, and whether or not those serving in other theatres of World War One have been recognised as they should have been.

It can be argued that an emphasis on commemorating Gallipoli is justified because the campaign helped to unite Australia into the nation we know today. When the 'Great War' began in 1914<sup>2</sup>, Australia was a very young nation, and although we had been federated in 1901, the country was still largely divided, as it had been in the time of the penal colonies. World War One, and the time spent at Gallipoli in particular, brought us together in a way nothing else ever had before. This idea comes through strongly in Banjo Patterson's famous war-time poem, 'We're all Australians now'<sup>3</sup>.

"The old state jealousies of yore  
Are dead as Pharaoh's sow,  
We're not State children any more —  
We're all Australians now!"

Men went to the war from all walks of life, and while many entered the battle of Gallipoli loyal to the British Empire, and to their individual states, those that came back, came back as Australians. Gallipoli was the baptism of fire that started us on the path to being the cohesive, inclusive country we are today<sup>4</sup>, and that is something well worth focussing on.

Even though ANZAC day has been criticized by many veterans, politicians, and historians for its glorification of war<sup>5</sup> since it was first commemorated in 1916<sup>6</sup>, to many this day represents much more than just the failure and horrors that were

---

<sup>1</sup> National Museum of Australia 2021, *Gallipoli landing; defining moments*, Canberra, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/gallipoli-landing>

<sup>2</sup> Royde-Smith, J 2021, *World War I 1914-1918*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Chicago, IL, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I>

<sup>3</sup> *We're All Australians Now (A B Banjo Paterson)* n.d., All Poetry, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://allpoetry.com/'We're-All-Australians-Now'>

<sup>4</sup> BHARADWAJ, J 2018, *You made the right move*, "Australia is one of the world's most inclusive country", Australia, viewed 11 August 2021, <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/audio/you-made-the-right-move-australia-is-one-of-the-world-s-most-inclusive-country>

<sup>5</sup> Wright, T 2008, *A nation reborn at Anzac Cove? Utter nonsense: Keating*, Australia, viewed 11 August 2021, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/a-nation-reborn-at-anzac-cove-utter-nonsense-keating-20081030-5enw.html>

<sup>6</sup> Australian War Memorial n.d., *History of ANZAC Day*, Australia, viewed 15 August 2021, <https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac-day/traditions>



experienced on the battle front. Instead, the Gallipoli campaign has come to represent and symbolise the very values that Australians pride themselves on, and it is here that the true worth of this legacy lies. Men and women willing to risk their lives for their 'mates', and to endure great suffering in the hope that something good will come out of it, even in the middle of a war.

"The ANZAC legend today serves a particular purpose... one is to reinforce those values which court the Australian legend such as endurance, sacrifice, mateship."<sup>7</sup>

Today, Gallipoli is so much more than a battle on the other side of the world. It symbolises a way of life centred around friends and family, and one that rewards those who are courageous, determined, and resilient. Remembering Gallipoli is not a glorification of war. It is simply a way of showing both Australia and the world the qualities that we value above all else.

While these arguments are definitely valid, it should also be remembered that Gallipoli was only one small part of a much bigger war. Even though this was one of the first places that Australia fought as a nation, it was not the most important of the First World War, nor was it where we experienced the greatest loss. 8,709 Australian soldiers were killed during their time spent at Gallipoli, but compared with the Western Fronts of France and Belgium, where over 46,000 Australian soldiers were killed, the loss is much smaller in comparison.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the battles on the Western Front were much more significant than those fought at Gallipoli in many different ways. Over 250,000 Australian soldiers fought there throughout the War, five times as many as the fifty thousand that attended Gallipoli.<sup>9</sup> They fought in more battles, many of which were won by the bravery and resilience shown by the ANZACs, and although Australian troops made up only 10 percent of the fighting force used in the First World War, we seized almost a quarter of all land and goods acquired by the Allies during that time.<sup>10</sup>

Gallipoli was not an ANZAC Campaign. It was not planned, executed, or won by Australian and New Zealand troops, and yet our blood was shed.<sup>11</sup> Compare this with the battle of Beersheba, known for being the last great cavalry charge in history.<sup>12</sup> This push was led entirely by an Australian commander, and was made up of almost all ANZAC men. It was planned and executed by ANZACs and succeeded in capturing an area of enemy land that the British had tried and failed to capture for

---

<sup>7</sup> Department of Veteran's Affairs, 2014, *We remember ANZAC*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, p.58.

<sup>8</sup> Schultz, J 2015, *How the Great War shaped the foundations of Australia's future*, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://theconversation.com/how-the-great-war-shaped-the-foundations-of-australias-future-38860>

<sup>9</sup> King, J 2011, *Look beyond Gallipoli*, Sydney, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/look-beyond-gallipoli-20111110-1n9fb.html>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Veteran's Affairs, 2014, *We remember ANZAC*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, p.58.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Veteran Affairs. Australian War Memorial London 2021, *Beersheba; the Charge of the 4th Light Horse, 1917*, Australian Government, London, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.awmlondon.gov.au/battles/beersheba>

many hours.<sup>13</sup> This was a fully Australian and New Zealand battle, and a fully ANZAC victory. So why choose Gallipoli to honour above all else? Would it not be better to celebrate Australian spirit and values in a battle that deserves be commemorated?

In conclusion, although our soldiers showed exceptional bravery and resilience during their time at Gallipoli, and deserve our full respect and admiration, we as a nation of Australia have become so transfixed on this one period of World War One that we have failed to properly recognise people and battles in other parts of the world. In these places, as well as at Gallipoli, our soldiers gave up their lives, aided in securing many victories for the Allies, and ultimately helped decide the outcome of the war.

While ANZAC Day should remain part of our Australian culture, more should be done to ensure that all the men and women who fought so hard to give us what we have today are remembered and commemorated. World War One shaped who we are as a nation today, and there are countless people who have shown those values which have come to represent the Australian identity. Gallipoli may be the most well-known of the World War One campaigns, but that does not mean that it should be the exclusive choice for Australia when it comes to preserving the ANZAC legend in the hearts and minds of future generations.

---

<sup>13</sup> Australian War Memorial n.d., *Attack on Beersheba*, ACT, Australia, viewed 15 August 2021, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/beersheba>



## Bibliography

Australian War Memorial n.d., *Attack on Beersheba*, ACT, Australia, viewed 15 August 2021, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/beersheba>

Australian War Memorial n.d., *History of ANZAC Day*, Australia, viewed 15 August 2021, <https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac-day/traditions>

BHARADWAJ, J 2018, *You made the right move, "Australia is one of the world's most inclusive country"*, Australia, viewed 11 August 2021, <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/audio/you-made-the-right-move-australia-is-one-of-the-world-s-most-inclusive-country>

Department of Defence n.d., *The Shell Green Cricket Match*, Australian Government, Canberra, ACT, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.army.gov.au/our-heritage/history/history-focus/shell-green-cricket-match>

Department of Veteran's Affairs, 2014, *We remember ANZAC*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT.

Department of Veteran Affairs. Australian War Memorial London 2021, *Beersheba; the Charge of the 4th Light Horse, 1917*, Australian Government, London, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.awmlondon.gov.au/battles/beersheba>

Imperial War Museums 2021, *The real story of the Christmas truce*, viewed 17 August 2021, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-real-story-of-the-christmas-truce>

King, J 2011, *Look beyond Gallipoli*, Sydney, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/look-beyond-gallipoli-20111110-1n9fb.html>

National Museum of Australia 2021, *Gallipoli landing; defining moments*, Canberra, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/gallipoli-landing>

National Archives of Australia n.d., *The Federation of Australia*, Parkes, ACT, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resource-themes/government-and-democracy/federation/federation-australia>

Royde-Smith, J 2021, *World War I 1914-1918*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Chicago, IL, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I>

Schultz, J 2015, *How the Great War shaped the foundations of Australia's future*, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://theconversation.com/how-the-great-war-shaped-the-foundations-of-australias-future-38860>

Studies in Australia 2021, *Explaining Anzac Day*, viewed 15 August 2021, <https://www.studiesinaustralia.com/Blog/about-australia/explaining-anzac-day>

*We're All Australians Now* (A B Banjo Paterson) n.d., All Poetry, viewed 3 August 2021, <https://allpoetry.com/'We're-All-Australians-Now'>

Wilkinson, C 2011, *Fromelles; Australia's bloodiest day at war*, Black Dog, Fitzroy, VIC.

Wright, T 2008, *A nation reborn at Anzac Cove? Utter nonsense: Keating*, Australia, viewed 11 August 2021, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/a-nation-reborn-at-anzac-cove-utter-nonsense-keating-20081030-5enw.html>