

FOR KING AND COUNTRY 1914-1918



**2009 PREMIER'S
ANZAC SPIRIT
SCHOOL PRIZE
BY JUSTIN CLARKE**

The ANZAC Spirit Essay – Written By Justin Clarke

World War 1 was a horrific conflict between the great power houses of Europe, who were split into two different alliances, the Central Powers which included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy and later the Ottoman Empire; and the Allies which included Britain, France, Russia and later the United States. Some of these countries had empires, and the colonies that made up these empires joined the war effort for their mother land. These colonies included Australia and New Zealand who went to the war to support Britain, and made significant contributions to the war effort in terms of lives lost and battles fought.

Australian soldiers first served in conflict at Gallipoli as part of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, where they were baptised with fire, encountering many hardships and tragedies, which included the battle at the Nek, where men were sent to a certain death on a narrow strip of land that was covered by Turkish machine guns. The soldiers there were still willing to charge in the face of death, even after seeing their mates getting shot, and these courageous men were mown down by Turkish machine guns almost immediately after they clambered out of the trenches. Over 300 hundred Australian troops were killed in this short battle, and over 200,000 soldiers died at Gallipoli. After the successful evacuation from Gallipoli, the surviving Australian troops were sent to the Western Front, which was located mainly in France, where they were mostly fighting against Germans.

I have been lucky enough to be able to study a soldier called Private Harrold Glanville George, who was in the 27th Battalion, 12th Reinforcement, but was transferred to the 32nd Battalion of the A.I.F. where he was a runner. He grew up in Wilmington, which is a town near where I live, and his relatives still live in this region. He enlisted on the 4th February, 1916, and embarked for Egypt aged 19. On the way to the camp at Tel-el-Kehir in Egypt, he was left at Colombo in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) as he had contracted measles. After rejoining his battalion, he then left from Alexandria for England, and from there went to the Western Front.

The Western Front was a war front in France that separated the Germans from the Allies, and was fiercely fought throughout the war. Trench warfare was the type of warfare used at Gallipoli and on the Western Front, and it works when two sides dig trenches on either side of No Man's Land to protect themselves from enemy fire. This type of warfare favours defence, and often when an army attacked the enemy would kill them with machine gun fire as soon as they got out of the trench. Behind the "front line" trenches, there was a network of trenches that often extended for kilometres behind the front line, and usually Head Quarters was located quite far behind the front line. This meant that if the Head Quarters needed to communicate with the soldiers on the front line, they had to use runners who ran through the connecting trenches back to the front line. This is what Private George had to do, and would have taken messages from the front line to the Head Quarters and back again.

Private George was killed in action on the 30th September, 1917, and he was turning 21 in just a few weeks. After reading his letters, he was upbeat after spending a couple of weeks in England and Scotland with a mate, and was asking how the family were. He was

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frustrated with the Russians and believed that it would've been better if they hadn't even joined the war.

There are many lessons that can be learnt from the death of Private George, and extremely important ones. He believed that every life should be treasured, and in his last letter before his death he was getting sick of the war. This being said, he exemplified the Australian quality of mateship, being prepared to die so that your mates, your country and your family wasn't in danger. He was often put in danger, and he never wanted to let his mates or country down. When he contracted mumps, he wanted to get back out to the front line and do his job. He was a typical soldier that hated warfare, but was doing his job like so many other Australians, just so that his mates could come home safely. He also learned very quickly that war wasn't a game, and seeing your mates getting killed wasn't very much fun at all.

The Australians had a great sense of mateship, and as they didn't want to let their mates down they were willing fighters and were often instrumental in fighting back German offensives. They were courageous enough to get out of trenches and charge where other soldiers would've mutinied and refused to go. Due to this, Australians were considered brave and great fighters, but they also had quite a high percentage of soldiers killed compared to the nation's population in comparison to other countries. This proved Australia as a country to the outside world and to the nation itself, it proved that it wasn't just a British colony; it was a country worth taking notice of and being proud of.

Private George is now buried at Hooge Crater Cemetery, located 4 Kilometres East of Ypres, after being exhumed from another cemetery near Zillebeke, which is a village also near Ypres. He was a great Australian, and I am proud to be Australian when men like him have sacrificed their lives for our magnificent country.

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The ANZAC Spirit is something that all Australians are instilled with from birth, and it is this spirit that has made Australia what it is today. The spirit that helped the first ANZAC (Australian New Zealand Army Corps) soldiers jump out of the boats at Gallipoli and charge up the slopes is typically Australian, and we should be proud to have this strong spirit inside us and be proud to be Australian. It has made men strive for excellence even when their backs are against the walls, and has helped the troops in the Second World War, and the following conflicts, continue on against the odds.

The ANZAC spirit was first “found” on the cliffs and in the gullies at Gallipoli, where the Australians were fighting with their backs against the wall, and yet were remarkably cheerful in the face of death. The men at Gallipoli had such a strong sense of mateship that they were prepared to die for their mates, their countries and their families, so they wouldn't let any of them down. If they were wounded all they wanted to do was get back out to the front line and help their mates out, for exactly the same reason. These men were proud to be Australian, and in the mud and flies at Gallipoli, they found out that these men who were considered their superiors, were equal to them even though they were “high born”, it didn't matter a bit when they were charging at the enemy, they were all equal.

When the first ANZAC soldiers left Australia, Australia as a country was relatively new, and as a country, wanted to stand up and be counted. At Gallipoli, they proved to themselves and to their commanders that Australia was not going to be found wanting, which made them want to protect Australia and it's freedom even more fiercely. This made the ANZAC soldiers brave and courageous, which meant that they were mostly frontline troops and were chosen if an assault was going to be made. This is why those in command would often choose the Australians over other troops.

The ANZAC spirit was extremely strong not only in the First World War, but also in the wars to follow it was very obvious in the Australian troops. On the Kokoda Track, the ANZAC spirit was especially strong, as they were protecting the freedom of their country from the Japanese. The USA were prepared to get out of Papua New Guinea, but the Australians made the Japanese fight for every piece of ground that they gained, and eventually the Japanese couldn't be stretched any more so they retreated. The part the Australians played in the Second World War created one of the biggest turning points and changed the course of the war.

The ANZAC spirit is still relevant today, and it is especially important for young people as they often experience hard times, and the fighting spirit and mateship shown by those first ANZAC soldiers can help them through their hard times. This is because if the people around you carry the same values as the first ANZAC soldiers, they will help you get through your troubles, and it will push you to keep going when your back is against the wall. It pushes you to make sure that your freedom isn't taken from you, whether it is freedom of speech, the freedom of your country or the freedom of your thoughts and actions. This all should be important to every Australian, and this is why Australians are so proud of our country.

The ANZAC spirit has carried many people through hard times and it was one of the driving forces during the Great Depression. I believe that it will carry civilians and soldiers through hard times again and again, as long as Australians hold the right values and are proud to be Australian.

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