

Focus Questions

- What is meant by ANZAC Day?
- How has it come to be accepted as a national day?
- Is it an appropriate and relevant national day today?

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

The landing at Gallipoli created the ANZAC Legend. Put simply, this legend was that a group of ordinary Australians took on the enemy under great difficulties, fought magnificently, endured where others might not have, showed great human qualities, and then had to withdraw because of the incompetence of the planners of the campaign. They did not win this battle strategically, but they set a standard and an example which others then could live up to. These soldiers showed what Australians were.

From 1916, this discovery of ourselves has been celebrated on 25th April as ANZAC Day. Why?

Understanding the Evidence

- 1 Explain these elements of ANZAC:
 - Who was involved?
 - What did they do?
 - Why was this important at the time?
- 2 Why do you think we remember and celebrate ANZAC Day today?

Special Activity (1)

- 3 ANZAC Day is still celebrated in Australia – but how? What is emphasised? Has this changed since 1916? Look at the next ANZAC Day. Watch the march, in person or on television. Try to attend the Dawn Service, and any local commemorative activities. How are events reported in the newspapers and on television? What is happening? What are the messages and the values which are being presented? Use your research and observations to complete this table.

Aspect	The past	Today
What is it?		
When does it happen?		
What is done?		
What is said?		
What do people say it means?		
Who is involved?		
What are its messages?		
Any other aspects you note?		

Taking it Further

- 4 Identify the 'social engines', those elements in society which mean that something grows and continues, which have brought ANZAC Day down to us today.

Special Activity (2)

- 5** 'And now every April I sit on my porch,
And I watch the parade pass before me
And I see my old comrades,
How proudly they march,
Reliving old dreams of past glory ...
And the young people ask 'What are they marching for?'
And I ask myself the same question.
(Eric Bogle, *And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda*)
How would you answer this question?
Consider such aspects as:
- Is it a day which is inclusive?
 - Is it an appropriate day of commemoration?
 - What symbols and messages are there associated with the day?
- 6** Survey: Is ANZAC Day still relevant to Australia today?
Create a survey to find out what people know, and what they think or believe, about ANZAC Day.

For more information

For more information from the ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland web site see: <http://www.anzacday.org.au/> and go to

- Education – Traditions, Facts and Folklore (ANZAC Day Commemoration),
- The Spirit of ANZAC – The Spirit of ANZAC – Not Only A Hero

12A

It was there that our young and untried troops ... given as their baptism of blood a task before which veteran soldiers might well have blanched, [ac]quitted themselves as men, and gained the plaudits of the world. They might have done equally valiant work, almost unnoticed, amidst the vast armies in Belgium or France; but Gallipoli provided a conspicuous theatre for their achievement, and focussed [on them] the attention of the world.

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1915. Australia's entry into the Company of nation – no finer entry into history ... to have leapt into Nationhood, Brotherhood and Sacrifice at one bound ... what a year: – never can Australia see its like again.

12C

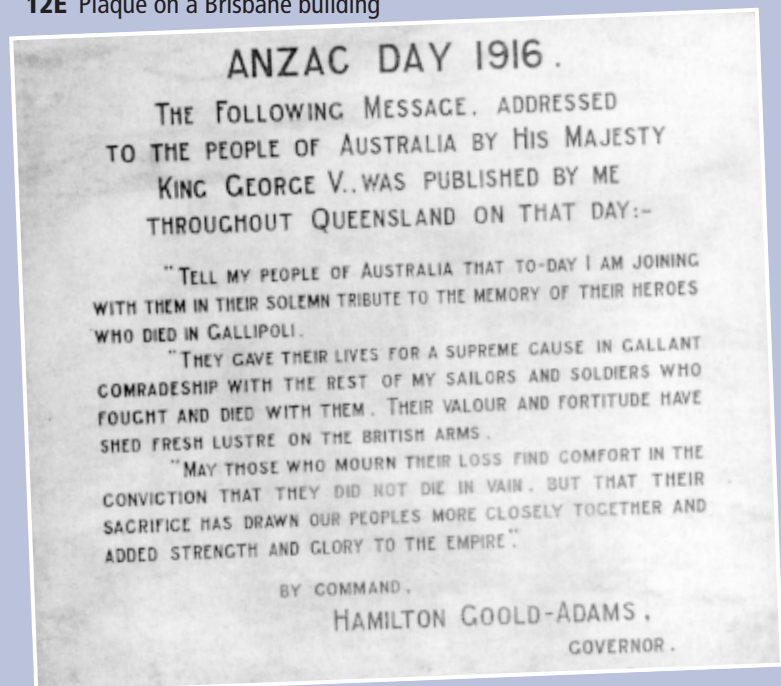
The price of nationhood must be paid in blood and tears. ... Before the ANZACs astonished the watching nations, ... we were Australian in name, and we had a flag, but ... generally speaking, it was assumed that Australia only lived by the grace of England. ... ANZAC Day has changed all that ... [and] we are at last a nation, with one heart, one soul ... There is mourning in our homes and grief in our hearts, and the flower of our youth will not return to us ... [but] the spirit of our dead heroes has come home across the seas ... to whisper that we have taken our place among the nations.

(Extracts from 1916 ANZAC Day articles in Australian newspapers)

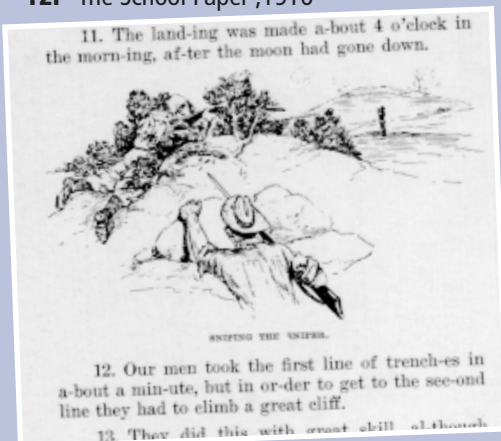
12D Cover of the School Paper, 1916



12E Plaque on a Brisbane building



12F The School Paper, 1916



12G Why has ANZAC Day continued down the years? Some possible reasons.

A need for a myth	Every nation seems to need a myth, or an image of itself, that it can look to with pride and recognition. The message is not necessarily “I am that person”, but rather “I am part of the society which can produce that person, and I share in those qualities.” The image or myth has to be based in some reality, but that reality need not be common to all those who share in it.
A new people	Australia had no experience on the world stage before 1914. People were anxious about who they were, and how they would stand when tested against the established order.
Behaviour of the troops	The soldiers fought with skill and courage. That is the essential element.
Newspaper reports	But then the deeds occurred; they were reported in a particular way; the audience was responsive to these reports, and they struck a chord.
A representative group	All Australians were involved – while the first army was only 50,000 men, virtually everybody in Australia had some connection – as relative, friend, or work-mate – of someone in that army. So it was a representative body. The soldiers accepted the praise, and it provided a standard for them for the rest of the war – survivors wore a brass A for ANZAC on their sleeve for the rest of the war, making it obvious to all that they were considered special.
ANZAC Day 1916	Right from the first ANZAC Day in 1916 messages of national identity and pride were being expressed. These sorts of ideas were echoed in <i>The ANZAC Book</i> , a collection of drawings and articles from Gallipoli which was sold throughout Australia.
The ANZAC Book	
ANZAC Day holiday	The day became an official national holiday in the 1920s, and school children read about the feats of the ANZACs in their school readers.
School books	
World War 2	In World War 2 many of the first recruits were the sons of ANZACs, and they saw themselves as carrying on the traditions. They also provided ‘new blood’ for the ANZAC Day ceremonies and marches.
<i>The One Day of the Year</i>	Then the ANZAC tradition began to decline. In the 1960s a famous and influential play by Alan Seymour, <i>The One Day of the Year</i> , brutally represented ANZAC Day as an occasion for a few old diggers to make public fools of themselves as they became embarrassingly drunk.
Vietnam War	During the 1970s peace slogans were painted on the Melbourne Shrine on the eve of ANZAC Day, and much attention was paid to feminist/pacifist anti-ANZAC Day marches.
Post-Vietnam – Welcome Home	In 1987 the ‘Welcome Home’ parade for Vietnam veterans seemed to show a change in attitude towards recognition of Australians’ military service.
75th Anniversary	The 75th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli in 1990 and the associated pilgrimages again focused attention on the few remaining Gallipoli veterans.
<i>Australia Remembers</i>	The 1995 <i>Australia Remembers</i> year for the 50th anniversary of the ending of World War 2 also focused attention on Australia’s military heritage.
Attendance at ceremonies	In the 1980s and 1990s crowds watching the parade are growing rather than declining, and there are many young people attending dawn ceremonies.
School curricula	The wars are an important and popular part of most States’ and Territories’ secondary school curricula, and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, the Australian War Memorial and Ryebuck Media have produced many important collections of documents and resources for a study of the wars.