

PAC Year 10 History

Essay on Gallipoli and the ANZAC Legend

Question: Courage, mateship, determination, resourcefulness, and a sense of humour are identified as characteristics of the ANZAC tradition and spirit. Select any one or more of these characteristics and explore its/their significance to Gallipoli and in more recent times.

To endure hardships special qualities are needed to help keep going and succeed through adversity. On the 25th April 1915 the ANZAC Legend was born and two qualities emerged, characteristics that would set the Anzacs apart from other soldiers. As they charged steep cliffs these soldiers found something in themselves to succeed, to triumph over the enemy that was raining fire down upon them. Mateship and determination became strengths that no one could take away from the soldiers that fought, and these two distinguishing qualities are still at the forefront of today's society, carrying on the traditions and spirit of the past into present time. These distinctly Australian qualities of mateship and determination not only exist, but thrive in a modern Australian society. These are prevalent in our armed forces but also in everyone in society, with Anzac Day a celebration of all these ideals have come to mean.

The determination that was showed throughout the Gallipoli campaign gave the soldiers goals to achieve and strength to fight through the bleakest hours. In pitch dark under heavy enemy fire, the Anzacs landed at 4:00am in an area now known as Anzac Cove. *"Our first warning was a sharp crack and a flash from the hills in front of us". "One of our comrades was hit and died after wishing us good luck."*¹ As they stormed up the beaches and cliffs they showed a determination to succeed and achieve their objectives and goals with their fellow soldiers falling around them. At Lone Pine Private John Hamilton epitomised the determination that the Anzac legend spawned. Without cover he directed fire at attacking Turks and greatly assisted in repelling a determined attack. The determination of the soldiers at the tragic attack at the Nek is

¹Great Search Stories, Australians At War, Lt William Britt 1915, excerpt from a letter to his mother <http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories.asp?war=W1&id=101>

testament to their spirit. When the artillery bombardment ceased 7 minutes early, the fate was sealed for 234 light-horsemen, who sprang from the trenches and were slaughtered helplessly. However, what must be said is that the determination of the later waves, who saw the fellow soldiers decimated, never faltered. This has been represented in films, none more recognisable than “*Gallipoli*”, by Peter Weir. They went into the attack with all their strength, not faltering in the face of certain death. The determination of the soldiers enabled them to fight with an ardour not found in the average soldier and cope with the hardship that surrounded Gallipoli.

The spirit of determination borne out of the Gallipoli campaign has lost none of its significance over the past 80 years. As Paul Keating said, “*It is a legend not of sweeping victories so much as triumphs against the odds, of courage and ingenuity in adversity.*”² The determination that drove the creation of the legend lives on today. Troops on the Kokoda Trail in Borneo during World War II showed determination in overwhelming odds. In terrible conditions they walked through the jungle, knowing that to stop would mean certain death. They kept marching to make sure they did not meet an end in steaming, deserted jungles, abandoned by civilization. As well as the peacekeepers overseas constantly protecting foreign nations, Australian aid efforts in the Indonesian province of Aceh after the Boxing Day Tsunami show a true determination and motivation to help others. Australian aid workers and troops worked tirelessly through ruined infrastructure, mud swamped lands and heavy rain to get supplies to where they were needed. Showing incredible determination and dedication, they endured appalling conditions and succeeded in saving untold numbers of lives. Determination born out of adversity in Gallipoli has carried through to today, and is constantly shown by all Australian troops, peacekeepers and aid workers overseas as well as ordinary members of society in everyday areas of life.

The mateship that gave soldiers their driving determination and motivation was central to the birth of the Anzac legend, the heart of the entire ordeal. Mateship made the harsh conditions bearable, providing an escape from the reality that surrounded them and a link to better times. As the campaign dragged on the men began to realise

² Beaumont, 1995, *Australia's War 1914-191*, p176 Quote of Paul Keating

they were fighting not for their country, but for the man next to them who needed their support. It became a deeply personal experience; fighting to make sure those around you were safe. Wounded soldiers relied on the mates to get them off the frontline and a pair that exemplifies this bond are James Reid and Les Dinning. Reid was shot in the head on the 26th April, and while insisting he was useless, Dinning provided aid and while under heavy fire dragged his schoolmate back to a medical tent to provide him with proper care. Reid said, *“He had undoubtedly saved my life by his promptness in rendering first aid and in getting me quickly to the base & by doing which he had risked his own life.”*³ The mateships that were established at Gallipoli gave soldiers strength and motivation to keep on fighting. They relied on their mates and their mates relied on them so the soldiers found something in themselves to keep on going.

Mateship, born out of the Anzac hardships and central to the Australian ethos, is everywhere in modern Australian society, from soldiers to emergency servicemen in Australia. During World War II in the grim prisoner of war camps and death marches the mateship between fellow soldiers was in stark contrast to the enemy troops. When an Australian was dying, he always died in the company of someone, not left alone to face his fate but always with a mate. The Japanese captors abandoned their wounded and left them to die. As Prime Minister Howard said, *“I was moved by an account written by Hugh Clarke, who, like thousands of other Australian and British servicemen, endured years of senseless cruelty as a prisoner of the Japanese after the fall of Singapore. He couldn't recall a single Australian dying alone without someone being there to look after him in some way. That's mateship.”*⁴ The true spirit of Anzac mateship is demonstrated by the comradeship these dying men felt and shows the uniqueness of mateship. Australia's peacekeepers and deployed soldiers all over the world display how mateship has become more embracing. From East Timor, where the final troops have departed from rebuilding schools and vital infrastructure, to Iraq and Afghanistan where Australia's presence assisted the elections in the face of insurgency from Sunni Muslims. Finally, the huge amounts of money that

³ Great Search Stories, Australians At War, James Reid 1915, excerpt from letter to Dinning's father, <http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories.asp?war=W1&id=232>

⁴ Prime Minister John Howard's speech delivered at Australia House in London on November 10, 2003 <http://www.australianbeers.com/culture/mateship.htm>

spontaneously poured into regions devastated by the Boxing Day Tsunami show how Australia's mateship has evolved to span oceans and countries.

On that nation-defining landing almost 80 years ago, characteristics emerged that would come to be recognised as distinctly Australian. Determination and mateship quickly became qualities that would continually define the soldiers that fought on the beaches and hills of Gallipoli. As time has marched on the characteristics now define Australia so much more, and in so many more ways. These qualities are as visible and influential now as they were for the gallant soldiers that sacrificed themselves years ago. *"We have gained legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and with it a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian."*⁵

⁵ Beaumont, 1995, *Australia's War 1914-191*, p176 Quote of Paul Keating

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