



The

a competition for

Simpson

year 9 and 10 students

Prize

2008 winner
Northern Territory

Terry Lim
Taminmin High School

To what extent was Simpson a hero? How have his heroic qualities been demonstrated by other Australians since 1915?

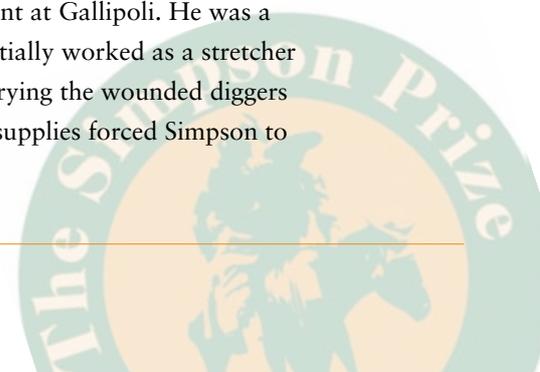
by Terry Lim, Taminmin High School

Popular perceptions of heroes often revolve around characters such as Superman or Wonder Woman, fictional characters that have extraordinary powers and use them for the greater good – in the best interests of society. Actual heroes on the other hand, are mortal men and women who when faced with a choice, put their lives on the line for the good of others and society itself, demonstrating heroic qualities. Actual heroes are those who inspire others around them and their actions define what it is to be a courageous and altruistic person. Although they may attain fame and success, this is not the original motivation for their actions.

Since the dawn landing at Anzac Cove in 1915, many heroes have emerged from Australian society showing heroic qualities when needed. Sportsmen and women have inspired Australians through their physical courage. They have demonstrated the fighting spirit and the blood, the sweat and the tears that exist within us all and have captured the hearts of every Australian. A less famous hero is the Aussie battler, a person who displays courage time and time again, showing not only grit and determination, but resilience in the face of life's challenges. They always fight to the end for what is right and in other's best interest. However, for many Australians, heroism is defined by the 'Diggers' of the legendary ANZACS; they demonstrated the resilience and the courage to fight for what they believed in.

As the first groups of ANZACS landed at Gallipoli almost 93 years ago, they were outnumbered and outgunned. Though facing defeat, they showed perseverance and fought on to defend their way of life. In doing so, they helped shape the Australian character. Losing the battle didn't stop them winning the war itself, and the fact that this event has been selected as a day of celebration epitomising the true Aussie hero shows that as a community, we value the resilience needed to rise above adversity.

John Simpson Kirkpatrick was initially an unwilling participant at Gallipoli. He was a simple man who chose to protect his fellow man. Simpson initially worked as a stretcher bearer of the Field Ambulance at Gallipoli and assisted in carrying the wounded diggers down to the stations on the beaches of ANZAC Cove. Short supplies forced Simpson to



improvise and create new methods of carrying the diggers. A donkey grazing nearby was recruited to the task.

From then on, 'Simpson and his donkey,' as they are now referred to in Australian folklore, worked as an independent unit until Simpson's death twenty-four days after the landing. Together, they made the daily journey up the steep snipes covered paths to the front line and collect the badly wounded. Simpson displayed courage in this situation, motivated by a desire to help his fellow soldiers. Although warned about the dangers by his Commanding Officer, he replied simply '*my troubles*' (ANZAC House, 2005).

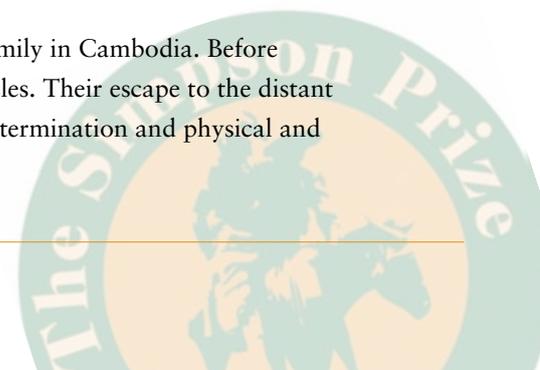
In this dire situation he took the initiative to help his fellow soldiers and demonstrated heroic qualities of independence, selflessness and the crucial ability to make decisions for action, despite the consequences to themselves.. These heroic qualities are typical of a hero who has compassion for others. Simpson today is a national symbol of our Australian enduring resilience – when it all seems lost, we lift our heads and keep going, no matter how difficult and challenging the situation may seem. He may have lost his life but in doing so he became a permanent reminder of the values he was protecting. In this sense, he lives forever.

Australian history is littered with many of the most unlikely heroes from the bushranger Ned Kelly to wildlife campaigner and TV personality Steve Irwin. Both these men are seen by many as passionate fighters who risked all for a cause. Since 1915, many Australians have demonstrated heroic qualities similar to that shown by Simpson himself at Gallipoli. It's often only in times of crisis that these qualities will suddenly emerge as circumstances demand.

Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop was a surgeon who became a POW in WWII and, through his heroic actions, a courageous leader to thousands. Sir Dunlop worked untiringly in the camp and on the Burma-Thailand railway. His compassionate nature saved many but his actions meant he was brutally beaten and tortured. This treatment strengthened his resolve and made him more determined to continue his work. Sir Dunlop died in 1993 of pneumonia but his determination and enduring resilience means he continues to be an inspiration to all.

The Bali Bombings of 2002 saw 88 Australians lose their lives and hundreds more seriously injured. The damage done in the Sari Club, didn't, however stop many heroes entering the smouldering building to save those who were trapped. Most of these people will remain anonymous but they are nonetheless heroes. One example of this heroism, were the actions of Senior Constable Timothy Britten and Richard Joyes. Both these men entered the building to rescue a woman trapped by rubble. Despite the burning debris, exploding gas bottles and the intense heat and flames inside the Sari Club, they persevered until they located the woman and she was freed from the rubble. These men's effort, despite the risks and consequent serious burns they sustained demonstrate the heroic qualities defined above - compassion, initiative and taking risks.

Parts of my life have been shaped by the experiences of my family in Cambodia. Before migrating to Australia, they were faced with numerous obstacles. Their escape to the distant border of Thailand was a struggle to survive through sheer determination and physical and



mental courage. My family were accepted into Australian and became Australians. Since then, their lives have improved through their determination, courage and the resilience. Their example inspires me even today.

People are often faced with difficult and dangerous choices but it is the decisions some make that make them heroes. To put oneself at risk for the good of others is the essence of a hero; one who rises to the challenge when asked and chooses to put others' needs before their own to take action to protect others.

John Simpson Kirkpatrick accepted the challenge at Gallipoli and he chose to save the lives of his fellow diggers even if it meant putting his own at risk. Simpson also demonstrated the heroic qualities of independence, selflessness and taking initiative. These heroic qualities are those of a hero who has great compassion for others and it is not surprising that of all those brave men who fought in this war, that his example should be chosen as a symbol to all Australians of what it is to be heroic. Without any adversity, there would be no heroes but not everyone has the ability to indulge in courageous acts and it is this capacity that sets Simpson and others like him apart.

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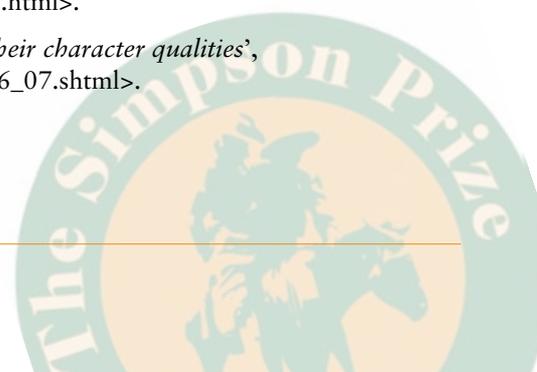
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