

What Inspiration Does the Legend of the ANZAC Provide for Youth in the 21st Century?

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The Legend of the ANZAC provides inspiration for youth in the 21st century through the tasks of great courage they achieved at Gallipoli in the early days of World War One (WWI). They are the only ones who can claim to be the embodiment of the ANZAC legend and the start of a new era for Australia. Suddenly, Australia was not just a nation born of convicts: we were a proud nation respected on an international scale. The ANZAC's showed this fledgling nation who we could be.

The ANZAC legend began on the 25 April 1915, a day that was destined to be part of history. When the ANZAC's landed under cover of darkness on the beaches of the Gallipoli Peninsula, they were in disarray and under fire from Turkish troops on the high ground. Most of the landing force was decimated before they reached the shore. Despite this fatal start, the ANZAC's fought on, and overran the first Turkish positions. After receiving reinforcements, the ANZAC's gained a substantial amount of ground, but at a terrible cost of life. After 19 hours of fighting, the ANZAC commanders decided to send an evacuation request to their commander, General Sir Ian Hamilton. On receiving this, he ordered the soldiers to dig in. This order would result in 8 months of futile, terrible fighting before being evacuated.¹ This battle is where the ANZAC's first showed the ANZAC spirit- to have great courage, initiative, discipline, endurance and mateship - especially mateship - in the face of danger. They sought to leave no-one behind. They displayed the courage needed to achieve their goals. They showed the rest of the world that Australia was not just an immature country descended from convicts. With only 13 years of history as a nation, they had proved themselves, and their country, on the world stage. They had not won the battle, but they had achieved the world's respect and Australia's pride.

I cannot comprehensively speak for the youth of Australia, but to me the legend of the ANZAC shows us how far above and beyond it is possible to go. In times of extreme danger, it is possible to stick together and keep at it, to show extreme bravery, mateship and determination even in adversity. The ANZAC's gave it their utmost, until they could not give any more. As was then, living in today's society involves hardship, but it is of a different nature. When trying to determine where to go in life, the effort to decide and then get there can be overwhelming. As a middle school student, I still have to finish high school, pass my exams, be accepted at a university and get through over four years of assessments, so I can hopefully become a Mechanical Engineer. That is daunting, but I think of the ANZAC's, and how the task they had been set must have seemed futile in their minds; but they got through it by setting a goal and following it, no matter what. That is what I need to do. I have a goal, so I need to follow it and do my very best to make it a reality. However, the ANZAC legend applies to more than just that; it can apply to the problems of today's world. Some of those problems were not even around during WWI, like drugs. If a youth today is offered drugs and accepts, he can commit himself to years of suffering; but if he takes inspiration from the

ANZAC legend and stays strong and loyal to himself, even when faced with peer pressure, he will have saved himself from that pain, and will move toward his goal. It may be hard, but if you are anything like the ANZAC's you will get there.

In any era, there will always be a physical link between today's youth and yesterday's ANZAC's. I had a Great-great uncle named Fenton Thomas Delaney who fought in the Australian Army during WWI. He enlisted in 1917, did three months training in NSW, and was then posted to the 10th Reinforcement for the 54th Battalion, arriving in France on the 12th April 1918. He spent six months there before being Killed In Action (KIA) on the Western Front on the 2nd of October 1918. He is buried in Bellicourt British Cemetery, Franceⁱ. Even though he fought three years after the ANZAC's fought at Gallipoli, he is part of the ANZAC legend too, along with all Australian and New Zealand soldiers who have fought in any war. They embody the Legend of the ANZAC. Even though the average life expectancy of an infantryman in WWI was a month and they were thousands of kilometres from home and might never see their families again, they knew they represented the freedom of their country and the world and they did us proud.ⁱⁱⁱ The youth of today is tomorrow's future, and with inspiration from the ANZAC's, it will be a future worth striving for.

As described above, the legend of the ANZAC's is more than a legend; it is part of all Australians. It is part of our history, and our culture. It embodies what we stand for and value; freedom, courage, determination, initiative, mateship. The original ANZAC's were not superhuman; they were ordinary men who embraced these qualities. The ANZAC legend inspires the youth of the 21st century because it personifies Australian qualities of ordinary Australians - we can all achieve anything we set our minds to. [910]

ⁱ Meena Tharmarajah [ABC]. (2009). ANZAC Landing. [Online] Gallipoli: The First Day available: <http://www.abc.net.au/innovation/gallipoli/gallipoli2.htm#> [Last Accessed 31/7/2011]

ⁱⁱ "Your Story, Our History' [Online] National Archives of Australia Available: <http://naa12.naa.gov.au/scripts/Imagine.asp?B=3498162> [Last Accessed 5/8/2011]

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Roll of Honour-Fenton Thomas Delaney' [Online] Australian War Memorial Available: http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/person.asp?p=571601 [Last Accessed 7/8/2011]

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