

# The Anzac Legend: Fact or fiction?

Lesson Map: <http://esriaustralia.com.au/education/SpatialActivity75>

## Engage

*How and why do we commemorate Australian WWI servicemen and servicewomen?*

- Click on the URL above to open the StoryMap. A StoryMap will open, displaying the title page: *The Anzac Legend*. Scroll down to get started.
- Read through the first section titled *Why do we commemorate WWI?* Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- ? As a class, review or brainstorm qualities and characteristics associated with the Anzac Legend. *[Qualities/characteristics include: fearless, brave, courageous, fierce and dominating fighters, loyal to country, loyal to their mates (mateship), sacrificial and selfless, innovative, not afraid to question authority, laid back, sense of humour even when the going gets tough, larrikin nature, sense of determination and perseverance etc.]*
- ? Consider what you know about the qualities of an Anzac soldier. What parallels can you draw between these qualities and Australian culture? Provide some examples. *[Answers will vary e.g. Australians appear to be very proud of their colloquial language – g'day, barbie, ankle biter etc. – and this is an example of innovation, humour and a larrikin nature ingrained in 'Aussie' culture. Australians also appear to consider themselves fierce and competitive fighters and this is seen in the sporting arena; Australia is very successful in international levels of sport like cricket, the Olympics, etc. and do very well despite a relatively small population.]*
- Read through the next section titled *How do we commemorate WWI soldiers?* Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.

## Explore

*Defining the Anzac Legend as evident in WWI servicemen*

- Scroll down to the next sections titled *John Simpson Kirkpatrick* and *Albert Jacka*. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.

Download student worksheet [here](#).

### Time

Approximately 2 x 45-minute lessons

### Activity

Investigate Australia's commemoration of WWI and the significance of the Anzac Legend

### Learning Outcome

Students will be able to:

- Examine Australia's commemoration of World War I, including debates about the nature and significance of the Anzac Legend
- Create a historical argument in response to a statement
- Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources
- Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources

### ACARA Curriculum Link

[Year 9 History: World War I \(1914-1918\)](#)

[ACDSEH021](#) | [ACDSEH095](#) | [ACDSEH097](#) | [ACHHS164](#) | [ACHHS165](#) | [ACHHS169](#) | [ACHHS170](#) | [ACHHS171](#) | [ACHHS172](#)

### Teacher Feedback:

To share your feedback on this, or any Spatial Activity, please contact [education@esriaustralia.com.au](mailto:education@esriaustralia.com.au)

- ? As you read through the information on John Simpson Kirkpatrick and Albert Jacka, identify characteristics that each man displays that appear to be synonymous with the qualities of an Anzac by completing the table below. Ensure you find a supporting quote in the text to support the characteristics you identify. Note: not all characteristics will be evident in each excerpt.

Anzac characteristic / quality	John Simpson Kirkpatrick	Albert Jacka
Bravery or courage	<i>Would escort wounded to safety despite being vulnerable to enemy sniper fire</i>	<i>"For these efforts, and his "most conspicuous bravery", he was awarded Australia's first Victoria Cross in WWI"</i>
Fearless demeanor		<i>"He then held the trench for the rest of the night until Allied reinforcements arrived."</i>
Fierce and dominating fighters		<i>"Single-handedly killed seven Turkish soldiers"</i>
Sense of loyalty to country		<i>"Albert Jacka enlisted in the AIF in September 1914," showing his sense of duty and loyalty to country.</i>
Sense of mateship	<i>"Simpson would rescue wounded men, transporting them...to safety"</i>	<i>"...freed a group of recently captured Australians" despite suffering severe wounds as a result.</i>
Sacrificial / selfless	<i>"enlisted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance, Australian Army Medical Corps" to help save others despite added risk to himself.</i>	<i>"...freed a group of recently captured Australians" despite suffering severe wounds as a result</i>
Sense of humour / laid back / larrikin attitude		
Sense of determination / perseverance		<i>"Albert Jacka was severely wounded ...at Pozieres in 1916, and ... in 1917 after being hit by a sniper's bullet. This didn't stop him from returning to the front after both occasions."</i>

[Teacher's note: quotes can be used to highlight multiple Anzac qualities.]

- ? What effect do you think Albert Jacka's story would have had on Australians back at home during the war? *[The daring and courageous actions of Albert Jacka at Gallipoli, and later the Western Front, would most likely have created a national sense of pride for Australians. It may have also contributed to an increase in enthusiasm for participation in the war, which would drive enlistment and support.]*
- ? How do you think Albert Jacka's actions would influence enlistment in Australia? What groups would be most heavily influenced? Refer to the enlistment poster as evidence in your response. *[Albert Jacka's exploits most likely resulted in an*

*increased enthusiasm to enlist for military service as his actions garnered a sense of national pride but also generated personal glory and set him up as a national hero. The opportunity to potentially replicate Jacka's exploits and gain national glory and hero-status would be highly appealing to male youth and young men. This is reinforced in the enlistment poster, where young men are depicted as pausing in their sporting and leisure activities to turn and admire Lieutenant Jacka VC.]*

## Explain

### *The Anzac Legend: fact or fiction?*

- ➔ Scroll down to the next section titled *The Anzac Legend: fact or fiction?* Read the information. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- ? Explore the sources [6 sources + an extension source] in the slideshow on the StoryMap. Click on the button to download the 'Source Analysis table'. You can also download the source analysis table [here](#). Complete the source analysis table either individually or as a class depending on your teacher's instructions. You will need to:
  - Determine the type and creator of each source
  - Evaluate the reliability and accuracy of each source
  - Identify the perspective of the source
  - Identify quotes that refer to values contained in the Anzac Legend
  - Determine whether the source considers the Anzac Legend factual, fictional or both.

**Note to teachers:** *Teachers can access the source analysis table with teacher answers in the appendix of this document. The first source has been completed as an example for students to follow.*

## Extend

### *Australian actions on the Western Front cemented the Anzac Legend*

- ➔ Scroll down to the next section titled *In summary...* Read the information. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- ? **Extension activity option:** Put forward a historical argument that responds directly to the statement below:

*The Anzac Legend, and the values it perpetuates, lay more in the realm of exaggerated fiction than fact.*

In your response, refer to two sources you have analysed in the StoryMap as evidence to

support your argument. *[Answers will vary. Model response below]*

*The Anzac Legend, and the values it perpetuates, lay more in the realm of exaggerated fiction than fact.*

*Although the Anzac Legend has been exaggerated, values like courage, endurance, sacrifice and mateship are evident in the actions of Anzac soldiers in WWI, clearly demonstrating that the Anzac Legend is ultimately factual. The actions of Australian troops, like Simpson and Jacka, were often reported back to Australia in glowing reports that displayed a clear prejudice in favour of the way they conducted themselves. This most likely stemmed from motives including a national pride in Australia's soldiers or the need to boost morale, support and enlistment on the home front. This exaggeration and prejudice is clearly displayed in official war correspondent Charles Bean's embellishment of Simpson's bravery, demeanor and worth: "When...many others thought it wiser to duck for cover, the man with the donkey calmly went his way...The commander of this section...told me that the man with the donkey had been worth a hundred men to him." Instances of these embellished and prejudiced reports of fearless demeanors, bravery and sacrifice lie in other sources like the Gallipoli letter written by journalist Keith Murdoch. However, despite these exaggerated accounts of Anzac values, one thing remains true; Australian and New Zealand soldiers did demonstrate courage, endurance, sacrifice and mateship daily during the war. These values are evident in the very first landing of the Gallipoli campaign as, "Australians fought courageously to capture a narrow strip of land at Anzac Cove. Thousands died overcoming fierce enemy resistance" (Shrine of Remembrance, 2013). It is unquestionable that although these men would have been scared, they demonstrated a stoic courage and tenacity to capture the beach at Anzac Cove and the surrounding ridgelines despite a hefty cost to human life. Ultimately, this courage, sacrifice and endurance is corroborated and best reflected in the statistics of Australian service in WWI; almost 10% of Australia's population served in war, 60,000 were killed and a further 156,000 were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner (Australian War Memorial, 2020). Even though sources sometimes exaggerate the feats of the Anzac soldier, these exaggerations are clearly established in fact, as evident in the courageous actions of both notable individuals, as well as, the common Australian or New Zealand soldier.*

## Appendix:

Source	Type of source? Who created it? Primary / Secondary?	Perspective evident in source / excerpt	Likely reliability and accuracy	Evidence of mateship or selflessness	Evidence of courage, military prowess or determination	Evidence of sense of humour	Stance on the Anzac legend (Fact or fiction?)
<b>Source 1: The cost of World War I</b>	Secondary source. (2020). Type: excerpt containing enlistment, death and wounded figures. Creator: Australian War Memorial	Balanced perspective due to factual nature of excerpt.	Considered reliable and accurate as source provides factual figures which can be corroborated easily. Australian War Memorial also government-funded and leading authority on Australian involvement in wars.	N/A	Facts show that 'just under 10% of Australia's total population served in WWI. Of these, many were killed or wounded at war. This can demonstrate courage as a significant number of Australians served despite the inherent dangers of war.'	N/A	Position: Based on statistical information in the excerpt, suggestion that the Anzac Legend is fact as evidenced in the number of enlistments, deaths and wounded (sense of mateship/ duty; courage/bravery)
<b>Source 2: Excerpt from the Gallipoli letter</b>	Primary source (1915). Type: letter to Australian PM. Creator: Journalist Keith Murdoch	Murdoch's presents a glowing praise of the character of Australian soldiers. Perspective is one of awe and respect for Australian soldiers.	The entire letter itself may have accuracy issues as it is representative of Keith Murdoch's opinion and was initially written as a private letter to the Prime Minister. However, its reliability is bolstered by the fact that Keith Murdoch visited Gallipoli during the campaign and witnessed the current state of the campaign first-hand. The source excerpt included in this task can be considered biased as it presents Australian troops in a very positive light, going so far as to state that they, "fearlessly" discussed the prospects of their own deaths.	"It is no disgrace for an Australian to die beside good pals in Anzac, where his best pals are under the dust." "... and the wonderful affection of these fine young soldiers for each other and their homeland..."	"These lads discussed quite fearlessly the prospects of their deaths..." "They have the noble faces of men who have endured." "It is only these fighting qualities, and the special capacity of the Australian physique to endure hardship, that keep the morale at Anzac good."	N/A	Position: Anzac Legend is fact. Murdoch refers to the Australian soldiers as fearless, enduring, noble and as having a sense of duty to their country and to their mates.

<b>Source 3: ABC fact checks Anzac myths</b>	<p>Secondary source (2014). Type: News report / investigation Creator: ABC News</p>	<p>Balanced perspective. Report interviews a range of experts including military historians from AMW and UNSW Canberra. These experts acknowledge the myths that exist but also commend the Australian soldiers on their bravery, courage and resolve.</p>	<p>The source can be considered reliable as it is published by ABC News and RMIT University. These organisations have a reputation for delivering accurate information. Furthermore, Fact check claims to be an agenda-free watchdog that attempts to determine the accuracy of claims made in the public arena.  The accuracy of this news report is also bolstered as the news report calls upon experts – military historians and professors – to provide information about the myths that circulate around the Anzacs.</p>	<p>“What about the claim that Simpson saved dozens of lives, bringing them down to safety on the donkey’s back? [New speaker] Probably untrue. He did very brave work. He went into the gullies. He rescued wounded but mostly men with leg wounds. He may not have saved a single soldier who was actually going to die...but his legend grew much larger after his death and as one historian says, ‘He was far busier in death than he ever was in life.’”</p>	<p>“We are told that Anzacs were natural fighting men. Bushmen who were crack shots and great horsemen...”  “The reality was that they were not really a race of athletes that they were sometimes called.”  “The Australian troops were the best physical specimens that could be found even though they were found in Australia’s cities.”  “They were a fine contingent of men and they did stand out alongside the British troops. People noticed the difference in the bearing, their size and so on...but they were not good soldiers. At the outset, when they landed, they were actually very inexperienced amateurs.”</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Position: Acknowledgement of both fact and fiction).  “The myths of Gallipoli all started on the day of the landing...we’ve all got a huge emotional investment in Gallipoli and Australians want it to be an important story and a positive story.”  All military historians and professors acknowledge the bravery, sacrifice and resolve displayed by Australian soldiers.</p>
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<b>Source Four: Charles Bean on Simpson</b>	<p>Primary source (1915).</p> <p>Type: excerpt from reports / correspondence</p> <p>Creator: Charles Bean, official war correspondent</p>	<p>Charles Bean's perspective is prejudiced in favour of Simpson and his actions. It is likely that this prejudice is – at least in part – a result of what Simpson's commander reported to Bean.</p> <p>His perspective makes Anzac troops out to be fearless and unbothered about the dangers around him.</p>	<p>This source can be considered reliable as Charles Bean was Australia's first official war correspondent and it was his official duty to update the Australian public and government on Australia's involvement in the war by sending reports back home. This is also bolstered by the fact that Bean was present at Gallipoli from the beginning of the campaign, meaning he witnessed the campaign first-hand and had access to officers like Simpson's commander.</p> <p>Despite the source's reliability, the accuracy of this excerpt may be dubious as a clear bias exists. Bean presents Simpson as fearless despite the mayhem around him. Furthermore, although stretcher-bearers were under threat of fire, they were under, as well as the commander's words: "had been worth a hundred men to him."</p>	<p>Not explicitly stated but implicitly suggested that Simpson risked his life to transport wounded soldiers to the safety of Anzac Cove.</p>	<p>"[Simpson] came up and down that valley – through the hottest shrapnel, through the aimed bullets of snipers...When...many others thought it wiser to duck for cover as they went, the man with the donkey calmly went his way."</p>	N/A	<p>Position: Anzac legend is fact.</p> <p>Suggested in Bean's glowing report of Simpson's bravery and fearlessness under threat of Turkish fire.</p>
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<b>Source Five:</b> <b>Extract from</b> <b>speech by</b> <b>Prime</b> <b>Minister John</b> <b>Howard at</b> <b>Dawn</b> <b>Service,</b> <b>Gallipoli, 25</b> <b>April 2005</b>	<b>Secondary</b> <b>source (2005).</b> <b>Type:</b> Commemorative speech made at Anzac Day Dawn Service <b>Speaker:</b> Prime Minister John Howard	This speech is representative of Prime Minister John Howard's personal perspective but also the wider Australian perspective as he was voted in by Australia's public to represent them. This perspective presents a thankful and commemorative attitude towards WWI servicemen and servicewomen.	This source can be considered reliable as the speech was made by the Australian Prime Minister at the time, John Howard, who represents the Australian public. It can also be considered reliable as it was made at an official Anzac Day dawn service at Gallipoli. The accuracy of the excerpt is bolstered as Prime Minister Howard refers to factual information like the approximate number of servicemen and servicewomen, and the approximate number of deaths and injured, at Gallipoli. However, the accuracy of this speech may also be impacted due to the emotive language used throughout the speech and the fact that the speech was made on a day purposed specifically for commemorating Australian soldiers who served in WWI; it is therefore, unlikely that Prime Minister Howard would make any negative comments towards the events that took place 90 years earlier.	<b>"These young</b> <b>Australians, with</b> <b>their New Zealand</b> <b>comrades, had come</b> <b>to do their bit in a</b> <b>maelstrom not of</b> <b>their making."</b>	<b>"In the hills, ridges</b> <b>and gullies above us</b> <b>the Anzacs fought,</b> <b>died, dug in and hung</b> <b>on."</b> Evidence of courage despite dangers associated with the campaign: "more than 26,000 who fell or were wounded here..."	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Position: Anzac</b> <b>Legend is fact.</b> Prime Minister John Howard's speech suggests that over "impossible months" Australians came together to fight through tough conditions. He also acknowledges their mateship, their determination and their ultimate sacrifice and that because of these things, "they won a compelling place in the Australian story."
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<b>Source Six:</b> <b>Spirit of</b> <b>Anzac video</b> <b>(First 6</b> <b>minutes only)</b>	Secondary source (2013).  Type: short documentary focusing on key Australian servicemen	This documentary / narration champions the actions of Australian servicemen and women in WWI.	This video was published by the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, which is a national memorial honouring the service and sacrifice of Australians in war and in peacekeeping. One of the goals of the Shrine of Remembrance is to educate Australians about Australia's involvement in war, inclusive of WWI. The source and content can therefore be considered reliable.  As its mission is to engage Australians in commemoration through reflection, education and learning, this may impact on the accuracy of the source as they will most likely portray Australian service in wars in a positive light. This appears evident in the source as it champions notable Australian servicemen and is very one- sided in its perspective.	Refers to Jacka's exploits at Pozieres to free Australian prisoners who had been captured by Germans.  Refers to Simon Fraser's actions at Fromelles – going out into No-mans- land to rescue wounded and injured Allied soldiers. He would die in the following year.  Refers to Frank McNamara's actions – saved a fellow pilot who had been shot down by the enemy. He landed his aircraft to pick up the pilot despite being injured and despite enemy cavalry closing in.	"Australians fought courageously to capture a narrow strip of land at Anzac Cove. Thousands died overcoming fierce enemy resistance."  Explores themes of courage, loyalty, initiative, endurance and mateship in the actions of men like Albert Jacka (VC), Simon Fraser, Frank McNamara & Sir General John Monash.	N/A	Position: Anzac legend is fact.  Evidenced as the documentary champions the actions and exploits of notable servicemen, often tying their actions directly to the values of the Anzac Spirit.  "The Shrine of Remembrance built to honour this service, commemorate sacrifices and perpetuate the values our servicemen and women stood for; values like courage, loyalty, initiative, endurance and mateship... values often called the Anzac spirit."
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Source Seven (Extension): Caricatured portrait of 'typical' Australian soldier	Primary source (1915). Type: Cartoon / drawing Creator: David Barker, 5 <sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance	David Barker's perspective of the Australian soldier appears to be that the Australian soldier was a battler, who could always find a way to smile.	This source can be considered reliable as it was created by a serviceman who was at Gallipoli. This is evident as the location and year is written, along with the serviceman's position. The drawing is not a realistic portrait of a soldier, but instead a caricature. A caricature's purpose is to provide a picture of a person or figure, with striking characteristics to exaggerate certain themes or values. The accuracy of this source is therefore limited as the caricature of this Australian soldier seeks to exaggerate his enduring demeanor and laid-back attitude.	N/A	The Australian soldier is depicted as having teeth missing, a band-aid on his chin and some loose stubble. This implicitly suggests that he has experienced the hardships and challenges of war, and although he hasn't come away unscathed, he has come away unbeaten. This implicit message is corroborated by the writing below the caricature which reads: "At the landing and here ever since." This suggests that the Australian soldier has endured and has overcome the challenges put to him so far.	The Australian soldier is depicted as smoking his cigarette and smiling. This implicitly suggests that the Anzac soldier still finds a way to laugh, smile or see the positive in his set of circumstances, despite the horrors of war.	Position: Acknowledgement of both (fact and fiction). David Barker acknowledges that the Australian soldiers did display endurance, courage, a positive attitude and humour, which is all evident in his caricature. However, the very nature of a caricature suggests that he has exaggerated the soldier's features so that these values can be seen.
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## Next Steps:

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