

Teachers' Notes by Brooke Clark

Title: My Gallipoli

Author: Ruth Starke

Illustrator: Robert Hannaford

Synopsis:

Thousands of men from sixteen nations fought, and many died, during eight months of occupation on the Gallipoli peninsula in 1915, during World War I.

The Gallipoli experience meant something different for each soldier, and for their nurses and families. In *My Gallipoli*, they tell their stories: there are direct accounts from real people, as well as factual descriptions from fictional characters. The book is a moving portrayal of the Gallipoli campaign, stretching from before the landing at Anzac Cove in April 1915 through to the Allied retreat, as well as the time after the war ended and through to the present, reflecting on the meaning of Gallipoli to descendants of those who fought.

My Gallipoli tells the stories of many who were involved, including the Anzacs themselves, the shepherds who were enticed to fight for Turkey, the nurses who cared for the fallen soldiers, and the families, during wartime and in the present, who have their own personal stories to tell.

About the author:

Ruth Starke is one of South Australia's most successful children's writers, with over 40 titles published since she began writing in 1992. Many of them have won or been shortlisted for national awards, including the much acclaimed *NIPS XI* (CBCA Honour Book), *Orphans of the Queen* (shortlisted for both the 2005 NSW and Queensland Premiers' Awards), *Stella by the Sea* (shortlisted for both the CBCA Younger Book of the Year and the Queensland Premier's Award) and *Noodle Pie* (winner of the Book of the Year Award Speech Pathology Australia). Together with Greg Holfeld she has worked on four graphic picture books including *Captain Congo and the Crocodile King*, which was shortlisted for the 2009 CBCA Picture Book of the Year, and *An Anzac Tale*, which was listed as a 2014 CBCA Notable Book in the Younger Readers, Eve Pownall and Picture Book categories.

About the illustrator:

Robert Lyall Hannaford (also known as Alfie) was born in 1944 in Riverton, South Australia, and still lives in the area.

In 1962 Hannaford enrolled in life drawing and sculpture at the South Australian School of Art, but later withdrew to immerse himself in the study of portraiture and the human form. Early mentors during this time were Hans Heysen and veteran South Australian portraitist and war artist Ivor Hele, who encouraged Hannaford to pursue his interest in portrait painting. Some of his portraits include Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Donald Bradman, Paul Keating, Bob Hawke, Robert Dossaix, Max Harris, Lowitja O'Donohue, Deborah Mailman, Bob Brown and Tim Flannery.

In 2001, he was awarded the commission to paint the centenary of Federation commemorative sitting of the Commonwealth Parliament held in Melbourne.

In a professional career spanning forty years, Hannaford is recognised as an artist who deliberately places representation over abstraction, and who looks to Nature for inspiration and subject matter. His practice extends across a broad range of genres including landscape, seascape, portraiture and still life in a diversity of media – oil painting, ink, pencil and charcoal, watercolour and sculpture. This is his first picture book.

From the author:

“I became emotionally involved in the Gallipoli campaign when I began research for *An Anzac Tale* (2013) and found I could read online the war diaries written by the commander of the 28th Infantry Battalion in which my grandfather fought. They arrived at Gallipoli in early August 1915 and were sent to relieve the New Zealanders holding The Apex, high up on Rhododendron Spur. My granddad had a short war: he suffered ‘heart dilation’ or dilated cardiomyopathy – a result, my father always maintained, of hauling cans of water up to the front line – and was transferred to field hospitals in Egypt, and from there shipped back to Australia.

I did far more research for *An Anzac Tale* than found its way into the book, and I found myself thinking about another Gallipoli book, one which focused on specific narrators who would explain what Gallipoli meant to them, from well-known names like war correspondent Charles Bean and the war artist George Lambert to the largely unknown individuals like the Sikhs of the Indian Mule Cart Corp and the heroic soldiers of the 6th Gurkha Rifles. Then, of course, there were the Turks, led by the brilliant Mustafa Kemal: what must it

have been like for them in their trenches above the beach, watching the invaders pour off the landing crafts on April 25? And what happened on the Peninsula after the fighting and the Great War was over?

Even before Robert Hannaford came on board as illustrator, I always thought that the art should dominate the text and be prominent on the page. My words are in the voices of the participants, and often those voices are straightforward and undramatic. But there is nothing undramatic about the illustrations in *My Gallipoli*; they powerfully convey the unspoken emotion in each line. I find them more deeply moving each time I look at them.”

From the illustrator:

“South Australia has produced a number of well-known and accomplished war artists, including H. Septimus Power during the First World War and Ivor Hele, Geoffrey Mainwaring, Stella Bowen and Nora Heysen during the Second World War. My interest in the history and tradition of this area of art was sparked by my professional relationships with Ivor Hele and Geoffrey Mainwaring, who I was fortunate to meet early in my career. Their war experience defined their careers as artists and made them the great practitioners they were.

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it, I have never been commissioned to go to war as an artist. The breadth and scope of the *My Gallipoli* text, with its tribute to the many different and ordinary Australians and Turks who took part in the Gallipoli campaign, allowed me to steep myself in the ‘virtual’ world of Gallipoli in 1915. It also gave me the opportunity to explore the rich tradition of ‘artists at war’ in more detail and ‘see’ Gallipoli through the eyes of such great Australian artists as George Washington Lambert.

Such was my interest in this project that it prompted me to go to the Gallipoli Peninsula myself, to see the landscape where soldiers of all nations fought and died for their country and their empire, and to take in the ‘mood’ of the place itself. As both a person and an artist, I found it impossible not to be stirred by the rugged terrain on which these people fought, or moved by the sight of the cemeteries and memorials to the thousands who died in that eight-month battle. This first-hand experience gave me an emotional (as well as a physical) background to Ruth’s poignant stories in *My Gallipoli*.

As an artist I am always interested in exploring new and different genres and mediums. The idea of drawing and painting for the print medium intrigued me, not least because it imposes its own challenges and constraints in terms

of the physical reproduction of the images, but also because the final images must be planned from the outset to work in harmony with the added element of text and the overall design of the pages. Working on this book was one of the hardest things I have done and gave me great respect for the subtleties and intricacies an illustrator brings to a book.

The *My Gallipoli* project has inspired me to pursue this subject area further. I intend to use the drawings and sketches I did for research during my trip to Gallipoli as the basis for a number of paintings, including portraits, landscapes and seascapes, for a future exhibition.”

Themes:

Bravery

Part of the Anzac legend involves the bravery the soldiers showed in the face of seemingly impossible situations. The soldiers were asked to do things that it seemed would result in their death, but they pushed on regardless. On pages 6 and 7 we read about Midshipman Peter Burch RN, describing the landing at Anzac Cove.

- How do you think it would have felt to be in his position?
- Do you think you could have been so brave?
- Did the soldiers have any other choice than to do what they did?

On page 24, we read, ‘*Well, it was broad daylight. They could see us coming. Two hundred of us Aucklanders killed in twenty minutes, with most of the rest of the battalion wounded.*’

- How would it feel to have to continue on, knowing you may be killed?

The war at home

Newspapers reporting on the war told a different story from what was actually happening (see pages 18–19).

- Why do you think the newspaper reports didn’t tell the full truth?
- Would it have been acceptable to misrepresent the truth to give the public some good news?
- How are things different today? Is it still possible to mislead the public as to what is happening in other parts of the world, or does social media mean that it’s harder now to hide the truth?

Families of soldiers were also affected, although in different ways.

- Why do you think Jack downplayed his injuries to his family on page 30? Would you do the same?
- How would they have felt when they saw the full extent of his injuries on page 36?
- Why would it be difficult for a soldier coming home from the war to adjust to life at home?
- How do you think families cope when their loved ones are at war?

The enemy

- On page 4 we meet Adil Sakin. Does it seem like he had a choice in whether to join the war? Do you understand his wanting to defend Turkish land?
- Page 14 '*Harder to think of them as the enemy now. Reckon they're suffering just as much as we are, more perhaps.*' Would the Anzacs and Turks burying their dead together have made it harder for the Anzacs to fight their enemy? Is it easier to fight an enemy you can't see or haven't had close contact with?
- Page 23 '*... I never fire at stretcher-bearers or Turks trying to rescue wounded comrades. On the other hand, if I spot an injured Turk, I'll shoot and put the poor cuss out of his agony.*' Do you think this respect for the enemy was common in other areas where World War I was fought, such as in France? Is this kind of respect for the enemy shown in war today?

Conditions of war

Conditions in the trenches at Gallipoli were terrible, and soldiers could not easily bury their dead.

- Page 14 '*We watched them for days, lying out there in the blazing sun, black and swollen and buzzing with green flies. The smell was terrible.*' How do you think these conditions would have affected the soldiers? Would it make it harder to fight?
- How do you think the soldiers would have coped with burying their dead the way they had to on pages 14 to 17? Could there have been another way to bury their dead?

A shared effort

We see throughout the book that many different people were on the Gallipoli Peninsula. On pages 10 and 11 we meet Sister Ellen Walker, a nurse attending the wounded during the landing.

- How do you think the nurses felt about the constant stream of soldiers being brought to them for treatment?
- How would treating injured soldiers at the front be different from working in a hospital emergency department?

On page 32 we read of Trooper James Lang, an Aborigine who joined the fight at Gallipoli.

- How do you think Aborigines would have felt at not being allowed to fight in the war? Would you resent this?
- In what ways were they treated as equals when they fought in the war?

The Anzac legacy

The Gallipoli landing and the 'Anzacs' have great importance in Australia and New Zealand. This reverence began the very year the war finished, 1918, and has built up over the years to become one of the most important aspects of our identity as Australians.

- Why do you think war artists wanted to capture the landscape at Gallipoli (see page 39)?
- Why do Australians still travel to Gallipoli each year for Anzac Day?
- Why do you think the memory of the Gallipoli campaign is still so important?

Characters:

The soldiers

My Gallipoli introduces us to various men who find themselves fighting on the Gallipoli battlefield.

- How do you think the war might have changed the people involved? Would they have come home happy and ready to come back to the 'real' world?
- Why would men from countries such as Nepal (see page 12) join the war under the British Army?

Support people

- On page 11, Sister Ellen Walker talks about the soldiers' faces haunting her dreams for years to come. How might medical staff who support wounded soldiers in war be affected by what they see?
- Women could not fight on the frontline at the time of World War I; why do you think that is? Should they be allowed to fight at the frontline in wars?
- There were also chaplains at Gallipoli. In what way do you think chaplains might support soldiers fighting wars?
- C.E.W. Bean, an official war correspondent, wrote about the Gallipoli experience from the frontline. Why is it important for soldiers' experiences in war to be told to those at home? Is it important for those at home to read about those experiences? Why?

The enemy

- How are the Turks represented in the story?
- Find out about Lieutenant-Colonel Mustafa Kemal (see page 27). Why is he so respected?
- Do you think the Turkish soldiers were bad people? Think about their point of view. How would you feel about soldiers coming to your country to fight for your land?

Activities:

- Write a newspaper article, meant for the Australian public during the war. Include information you found in this book.
- On page 4 we read about a villager being recruited when soldiers visited the village, told them about the war and told them they had to be soldiers. Find out how Australians were recruited for World War I. How are Australian soldiers recruited today? What is different about how soldiers are recruited today?
- Imagine you are an Australian soldier; write a letter home to your family describing your experiences. Now imagine you are a Turkish soldier and do the same thing. How might your letters be similar? How might they be different?
- There has been some controversy over the years about some of the decisions the people in charge made, which may have cost lives. What can you find out about this?

- Think about how Robert Hannaford, the illustrator, has used his art to complement the words on the pages. What can you say about the style he has used? How do the images work with the text to tell the stories?
- What is your favourite illustration from the book? Why?
- Create your own illustration that represents Gallipoli. It might be a scene depicted in the book, or something that shows how you feel about the Gallipoli campaign.
- In his *Illustrator Notes*, Robert Hannaford talks about the legacy and skills of Australian war artists who have been appointed to provide a pictorial record of Australians at war. Find out more about the history of official Australian war artists. Why do you think war artists are necessary? What do you think a war artist would be able to convey that a war correspondent could not? In an era of digital photography, film and television are war artists still necessary? Why?