

# 'gallipoli' by les carlyon essay



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In times like these of unrest and turmoil the world will often turn to its history for answers. The history of warfare is a dated and overflowing one. In his book ' Gallipoli', Les Carlyon writes of a place and a battle. His descriptive writings take the reader into trenches and introduce them to the politicians and generals who led during the time around the landing on Gallipoli. The landscape of the battlefields is also included prominently because of the impact this terrain had on battles on this Turkish peninsula.

As a young person I have never known the story of Gallipoli nor much about WWI. Reading this novel gave me an insight into the reasons behind the ' great' war and what really happened. Carlyon's book differs to others of the sort because of his honesty and detail as an author. Books such as ' Anzac and Empire: The Tragedy and Glory of Gallipoli' by John Robertson and ' Defeat at Gallipoli - The Dardanelles Commission: 1915-16'. This book contributes to existing literature in its high level of research and detail undertaken to put it together. The common aspects of soldier bravery and who we are as Australians are still included like many other books and articles on the topic.

Born 1942, Les Carlyon is a well-awarded and well-written journalist. This book is one of his most famous works and can be accessed at the majority of libraries and bookstores of Australia. ' Gallipoli' was only just released in 2001 and then recently re-issued to coincide with Anzac Day. Les Carlyon, is a former editor of The Age and editor-in-chief of The Herald and Weekly Times.

Anyone simply wanting to know someone else's perspective on this time in history or wanting to read a book which covers all bases on Gallipoli should be very interested in this epic tale. Perhaps at times a long-winded account, Carlyon's details can become over substantial but overall the novel is interesting enough to sustain reader's interest. With six hundred pages including index, photographs, bibliography, acknowledgements, maps and thirty-three chapters of reading, it covers everything from the details of the Gallipoli peninsula, the leaders and fighters of WWI, the decisions made and even includes today's attitude to this 'legendary' part of our history. A reader may either take this book as an educational, interesting read or perhaps use it as a research tool. The size of the book is initially intimidating, however insight into this book is a worth-while experience.

Carlyon also continues to refer to the continuum of the Gallipoli legend and the impact it has on people of today. An impact great enough for thousands of people to make the annual pilgrimage to the site of Lone Pine cemetery to pay their respects each Anzac Day. 'Gallipoli' is essentially about the young men who fought in war on the Gallipoli peninsula.

Throughout 'Gallipoli' Carlyon is keen to give his definite and well researched opinion of those involved in the war on Gallipoli, and at the same time illustrating principles he has about the idealism that has encompassed the Turkish peninsula since landing of 1915.

A significant mention is given to the rugged terrain which took the lives of so many young men. Using maps and vivid metaphors, he describes the countryside and allows readers to become familiar with many famous

landmarks and spots. Excerpts from diaries including those who participated and saw the worst of the campaign, divide the book, creating a quick change of pace and style for the reader.

More than anything, this description of the Gallipoli campaign is a very readable one. Carlyon, entwines his own brand of humour with his descriptive style, to keep any reader amused and entertained. Carlyon enlightens his reader effortlessly through easy to read accounts. Often using cynicism or sarcasm, Carlyon outlines his opinion of the sometimes low standards of warfare and leadership.

Some leaders become corps commanders because they are irresistible, so good that no-one would think of appointing anyone else. Some get through a combination of destiny and imagery: they are seen as natural leaders and photograph well in sunglasses...Sir Frederick Stopford became the commander of IX Corps at Gallipoli through a process of elimination - and also because he was neither too fat nor too tall. (p333)

With hindsight, anyone can note the mistakes that these leaders made. Carlyon is quick to agree with this, while still making negative, dismissive assessments of the military and political commanders of that time in our history. Not a General involved directly or indirectly in the Gallipoli campaign is left out of Carlyon's assessment and portrayal. No one can escape mention nor meticulous description. Just as readers love their characters in fictional novels, 'Gallipoli' is continually introducing new characters for one to get acquainted with. This all contributes to the view of Gallipoli and the Anzacs

as a legend. Their personality as well as their position is examined. Carlyon also examines the major reasons for the campaign's failure.

The Gallipoli campaign was a failed attempt to seize control of the Dardanelles, knock Turkey out of the war and open up a sea route to Russia. Apart from that, it created a reputation for Australian soldiers as those willing to fight the best fight possible, with no exceptions, under any conditions.

The size of ' Gallipoli' creates the notion of just how complex this time in history was. Accuracy and integrity makes this an epic book. After much hard work and research, Carlyon's own intentions of his finished product was plainly to remind people that behind this created legend of the Anzac stories of heroic self-sacrifice, the facts of fear, destruction and death remain. He wanted to paint more than a sweet story of myth and legend; he shows the sacrifices of both sides.

One feature difficult to miss by any reader is Les Carlyon detail. No point is deemed little or unimportant. Research was conducted in Australia, New Zealand, Britain, France and of course, on the Gallipoli peninsula. Step by step, detail-by-detail, Carlyon leads his reader into this well-developed legend, encompassing everyone involved.

Carlyon's arguments are all strongly supported by extensive research. His book may be seen as opinionated, but he does tell the blatant, unedited story for everyone who wants more than a myth. A moving piece for anyone who may feel a strong connection to the Anzacs, or for those who never knew there was such strength yet weakness during war. The Anzac tale is a

gruesome one so therefore there is no softening it in ' Gallipoli'. All war stories these days include this element of shocking and horrific pictures for the audience. This book is no different, so for those who enjoy all aspects of war movies and books will find little to complain about in this depiction.

This novel has become an epic in such a short amount of time. This is perhaps because of the sensation that the Anzac legend carries with it. ' Gallipoli' encompasses and examines all that embodies Anzac. Legends are created through wars and as the world creates new legends through conflict everyday, it seems nice to sit back and read a tale of truth authored by a well-written journalist.