

Great Debates: The Anzac Legend

That the Anzac legend is an idealised version of the truth

THE NEGATIVE CASE

Ben Roberts-Smith



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Source Analysis Worksheet

Source	What is the source? Who created it?	What information does the source provide?	What argument does this provide your character?	What questions are you left asking?

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Background Information

Ben Roberts-Smith

'We are Australians.

We are born of the Anzacs.'



AWM P09901.001
awm.gov.au/collection/C1270039

Ben Roberts-Smith joined the Australian Regular Army in 1996 when he was 18. He is the fourth generation in his family to be a soldier, with members of his family having served in every Australian conflict since the Boer War. Roberts-Smith reflects that 'From the day I read my first book about Gallipoli, I always wanted to be a soldier'. Roberts-Smith has served in many parts of the world, including East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq. He was awarded the Medal for Gallantry in 2006, the Victoria Cross (Australia's highest military honour) in 2011 and a Commendation for Distinguished Service in 2014.

Since leaving the full-time army in 2013 Roberts-Smith has continued to serve as a member of the Australian Army Reserve. As a civilian, he has publicly supported organisations that care for veterans, such as Wandering Warriors and Legacy. In addition to a career in business, he has also taken on community roles such as chairing the National Australia Day Council and serving on the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Veterans' Mental Health.

■ Source 4.1

Whilst the Anzac spirit may have first risen in troops on the battlefield, it is indeed a life force that resides in all Australians. We saw it shine through the black and desperate days of the bushfires earlier this year when volunteer fire-fighters rallied from all over the country and whole communities mobilised to look out for one another, to do what had to be done to save lives, homes, and livelihoods ...

The Anzac spirit, and the values it demonstrates, remain our common bedrock, creed, and source of hope and confidence through difficult and uncertain times, in our world and our communities. Times that would be wholly unrecognisable to our original Anzacs.

This is the core of its meaning to me. With dawn on the break, here at the Australian War Memorial, Anzac Day 2014, as we commemorate one of our greatest defining events as a people and nation, I ask each of you, all of us, to ponder and embrace your own special sense of the Anzac spirit.

We are Australians. We are born of the Anzacs. We are the custodians and stewards of their spirit, now and into our future. We must take good care of it.

Extract from Dawn Service address by Ben Roberts-Smith, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 25 April 2014

awm.gov.au/commemoration/speeches/anzac-day-dawn-service-address-2014

■ Source 4.2

As he approached the structure, Corporal Roberts-Smith identified an insurgent grenadier in the throes of engaging his patrol. Corporal Roberts-Smith instinctively engaged the insurgent at point-blank range resulting in the death of the insurgent. With the members of his patrol still pinned down by the three enemy machine gun positions, he exposed his own position in order to draw fire away from his patrol, which enabled them to bring fire to bear against the enemy. His actions enabled his Patrol Commander to throw a grenade and silence one of the machine guns. Seizing the advantage, and demonstrating extreme devotion to duty and the most conspicuous gallantry, Corporal Roberts-Smith, with a total disregard for his own safety, stormed the enemy position killing the two remaining machine gunners.

Extract from citation for Victoria Cross for Australia awarded to Ben Roberts-Smith

army.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1846/f/benrobertssmith_vccitation.pdf

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■ Source 4.3



Designer: Lynette Traynor; ©Australian Postal Corporation 2015

australiapostcollectables.com.au/stamp-issues/australian-legends-the-victoria-cross

■ Source 4.4



Mark Knight, 2011

Courtesy of Mark Knight

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■ Source 4.5

War has played an undeniable role in shaping Australia. That today we live in a peaceful society is due in no small part to our experience and understanding both of war and of its consequences. Our military history provides us a valuable insight into how we have developed as a nation into the 21st century.

The term 'Anzac' is instantly recognisable in Australia and has come to mean far more than just a military acronym. The Anzac spirit encompasses values that every Australian holds dear and aspires to emulate in their own life: courage, bravery, sacrifice, mateship, loyalty, selflessness and resilience. This spirit has given Australians an ideal to strive for and a history to be proud of, even though it was born out of war, suffering and loss.

How Australia may commemorate the Anzac Centenary, The National Commission on the Commemoration of the Anzac Centenary, March 2011

anzaccentenary.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/anzac_centenary_report.pdf

■ Source 4.6



Les Cane and his granddaughter Jackie Cane attending the Anzac Day Memorial Service in Nowra NSW, 25 April 2012.

Department of Defence: 20120245ran8109938_192
images.defence.gov.au/assets/archives/5003-All%20Defence%20Imagery/?q=20120245ran8109938_192&sa=yyy

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Glossary of terms

Anzac: Originally used to describe the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) that first formed in 1915, 'Anzac' was soon used to describe the men themselves.

Gallipoli: A peninsula located in Turkey where Australians fought in 1915.
