

Great Debates: The Anzac Legend

That the Anzac legend is an idealised version of the truth

THE AFFIRMATIVE CASE

Mary Gilmore



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Commemorations Branch
Department of Veterans' Affairs
GPO Box 9998
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Tel: 1800 555 254

Website: www.anzacportal.dva.gov.au

Email: education@dva.gov.au

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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?

Background Information

Mary Gilmore

*'He died a hero's death,
They said,
When they came to tell me
My boy was dead'*



National Library of Australia
nla.gov.au/nla.news-article171245625

Prior to the First World War, Mary Gilmore was active in Australia's political and literary circles. She was committed to social equality and the union movement, and regularly contributed articles and poems to *The Bulletin* and *The Australian Worker*.

Horrified by the carnage of war, much of Gilmore's work during and after the war focused on the human cost of the conflict. She was a vocal advocate for war widows in addition to returned soldiers and their families, and donated the earnings from her 1918 poetry collection *The Passionate Heart* to blinded soldiers. For many years after the war Gilmore continued to write letters and articles lobbying for better pensions and treatment for veterans and their families.

Mary Gilmore's fame and poetic achievements grew throughout her life, increasing her capacity to promote the causes she believed in.

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Mary Gilmore

■ Source 2.1

‘WAR’

Out in the dust he lies;
Flies in his mouth,
Ants in his eyes ...

I stood at the door
Where he went out;
Full-grown man,
Ruddy and stout;

I heard the march
Of the trampling feet,
Slow and steady
Come down the street;

The beat of the drum
Was clods on the heart,
For all that the regiment
Looked so smart!

I heard the crackle
Of hasty cheers
Run like the breaking
Of unshed tears,

And just for a moment,
As he went by,
I had sight of his face,
And the flash of his eye.

He died a hero's death,
They said,
When they came to tell me
My boy was dead;

But out in the street
A dead dog lies;
Flies in his mouth,
Ants in his eyes.

Mary Gilmore, 1932
from *Selected Poems* (ETT imprint, 2018)

■ Source 2.2

Singleton Argus (NSW), 18 September 1915, page 6

National Library of Australia
nla.gov.au/nla.news-article80173000

THE DARDANELLES
OFFICIAL CASUALTY LIST.

London, Thursday.—An official statement has been made that the casualty list in the Dardanelles campaign includes the following:—

KILLED.		
Officers.	Men.	Total.
1,130	16,478	17,608
WOUNDED.		
2,371	59,259	61,630
TOTAL CASUALTIES.		
3,501	75,737	79,238

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Mary Gilmore

■ Source 2.3

Within a space of fifteen feet, I can count fourteen of our boys stone dead ... Men and boys who yesterday were full of joy and life, now lying there, cold-cold-dead-their eyes glassy, their face sallow and covered with dust-soulless-gone-somebody's son, somebody's boy-now merely a thing ... God, what a sight. The major is standing next to me and he says 'Well we have won'. Great God-won ... then may I never witness defeat.

Cyril Lawrence, Lone Pine, 7 August 1915

Joan Beaumont, *Broken nation: Australians in the Great War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2013, page 131

■ Source 2.4



An unidentified member of the Australian Army Nursing service reads to a wounded AIF soldier at the No. 4 AGH.

AWM H16664

awm.gov.au/collection/C382740

Source 2.5

Now as to the soldier after the war. We 'hoorayed' him while he was in khaki. He will be the same man out of khaki. What about him then? In khaki he was the same man he had been before; his occupation only had been changed - not the man! The following shows what I mean: two lame men tried to board a tram yesterday. One was in uniform. All hands watched his progress; a woman got up and offered him her seat. No one took any thought for the other man in 'civvies.' Yet they were BOTH returned soldiers!

Mary Gilmore, 'After The War', *The Australian Worker*, 28 November 1918, page 9

nla.gov.au/nla.news-article145789482

Source 2.6



F Paget Hewkley, *The ideal and the real* (1915, pen and ink, pencil on paper, 13.6 x 10.3 cm AWM ART00021.003)

awm.gov.au/collection/C1020977

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.

Dardanelles: A narrow strait of water in Turkey which lies along the Gallipoli peninsula. During the First World War the Gallipoli campaign was also referred to as the Dardanelles campaign.
