Great Debates: The Anzac Legend

That the Anzac legend is an idealised version of the truth

THE AFFIRMATIVE CASE

Keith Murdoch
## Source Analysis Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>What is the source? Who created it?</th>
<th>What information does the source provide?</th>
<th>What argument does this provide your character?</th>
<th>What questions are you left asking?</th>
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Keith Murdoch was a journalist working for the *Sun* newspaper in Melbourne when the First World War began. Soon afterwards, he was narrowly beaten by Charles Bean in a ballot to select an Australian Official War Correspondent. Nonetheless, Murdoch managed to travel to Gallipoli for four days in 1915 and assess the campaign. He was concerned by what he learned, identifying a lack of suitable resources and failures of British command.

After leaving, he wrote an 8000-word letter to Prime Minister Fisher, describing the ‘continuous and ghastly bungling’ of the campaign. Murdoch travelled on to London and a short time later the letter was also shared with members of the British Government. The letter is believed to have influenced the decision to recall General Hamilton and, ultimately, to evacuate troops from Gallipoli.

The letter also earned Murdoch his own critics. Several errors were identified and he was accused of disloyalty by senior members of the Australian and British military. Murdoch worked in London for the remainder of the war. He was well connected with various politicians, and continued to influence decision-makers throughout the war years.
Source 1.1

... I now write of the Dardanelles expedition ... It is undoubtedly one of the most terrible chapters in our history ...

Some of the finest forces on the peninsula were used in this bloody battle [on August 21] ... They and other troops were dashed against the Turkish lines, and broken. They never had a chance of holding their positions when for one brief hour they pierced the Turks' first line; and the slaughter of fine youths was appalling ... to fling them without the element of surprise, against such trenches as the Turks make, was murder ...

... for the general staff, and I fear Hamilton, officers and men have nothing but contempt. They express it fearlessly ... What I want to say to you now very seriously is that the continuous and ghastly bungling over the Dardanelles enterprise was to be expected from such a General Staff as the British Army possesses, so far as I have seen it.

Extract from Gallipoli letter from Keith Arthur Murdoch to Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, 1915
National Library of Australia
nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231555472/view

Source 1.2

The Mercury (Hobart), 25 April 1915, page 6
National Library of Australia
nla.gov.au/nla.news-article23501643

FORCE ORDER.

SPECIAL
General Headquarters,
21st April, 1915.

SOLDIERS OF FRANCE AND OF
THE KING.

Before us lies an adventure unprecedented in modern war. Together with our comrades the fleet we are about to force a landing upon an open beach in face of positions which have been vaunted by our enemies as impregnable.

The landing will be made good by the help of God and the Navy. The positions will be stormed, and the war brought one step nearer to a glorious close. Remember—said Lord Kitchener when bidding adieu to your Commander—Remember, once you set foot upon the Gallipoli Peninsula you must fight the thing through to a finish. The whole world will be watching our progress. Let us prove ourselves worthy of the great feat of arms entrusted to us.

(Signed) IAN HAMILTON,
General.
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Source 1.3

Anzac Cove, Gallipoli Peninsula, c. April 1915
awm.gov.au/collection/C618

Source 1.4

It was very steep terrain, and steep gullies, and it was very hard going. We didn’t see many Turks at all. It was just a matter of going for your life. But we got all mixed up. There was the 5th Battalion mixed up with the 6th, and the 8th – all over the place! The higher up we went the worse it got! We had to pull ourselves up in the virgin scrub, and here they were in trees and God knows what. They had a sitting shot at us. Then we started to get heavy fire and the casualties were high, very high.

Private Frank Parker, 5th Battalion, AIF, 25 April 1915
Harvey Broadbent, Gallipoli, The Fatal Shore, Penguin, Melbourne, page 69
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Keith Murdoch

Source 1.5

F Paget Hewkley, *The ideal and the real* (1915, pen and ink, pencil on paper, 13.6 x 10.3 cm AWM ART00021003)
awm.gov.au/collection/C1020977

Source 1.6

*Singleton Argus* (NSW), 18 September 1915, page 6
National Library of Australia
nla.gov.au/nla.news-article80173000
### Glossary of terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anzac</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dardanelles</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallipoli</td>
<td>A peninsula located in Turkey where Australians fought in 1915.</td>
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