

Springboard^{into} Comprehension

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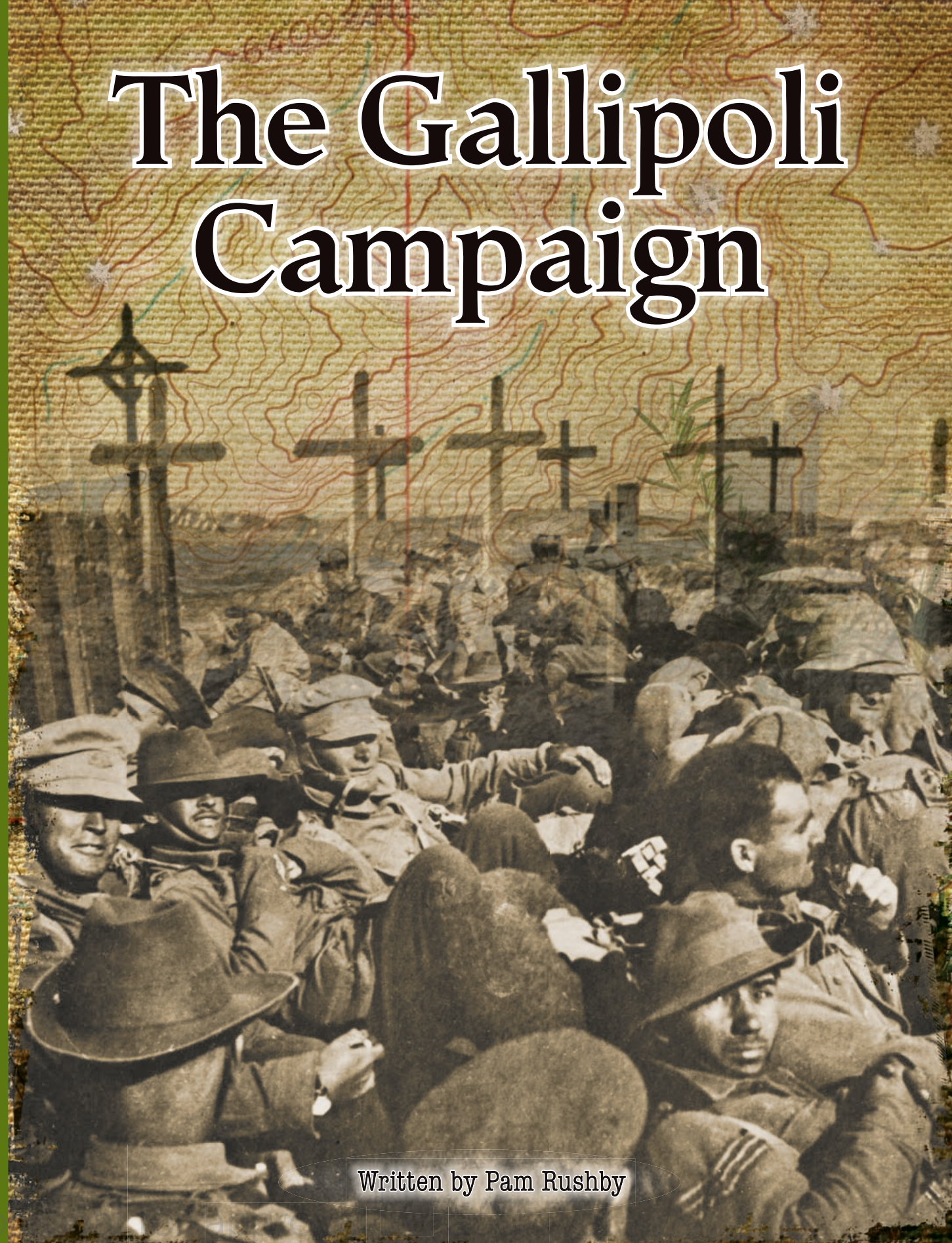
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Recount

The Gallipoli Campaign



Written by Pam Rushby



The Gallipoli Campaign

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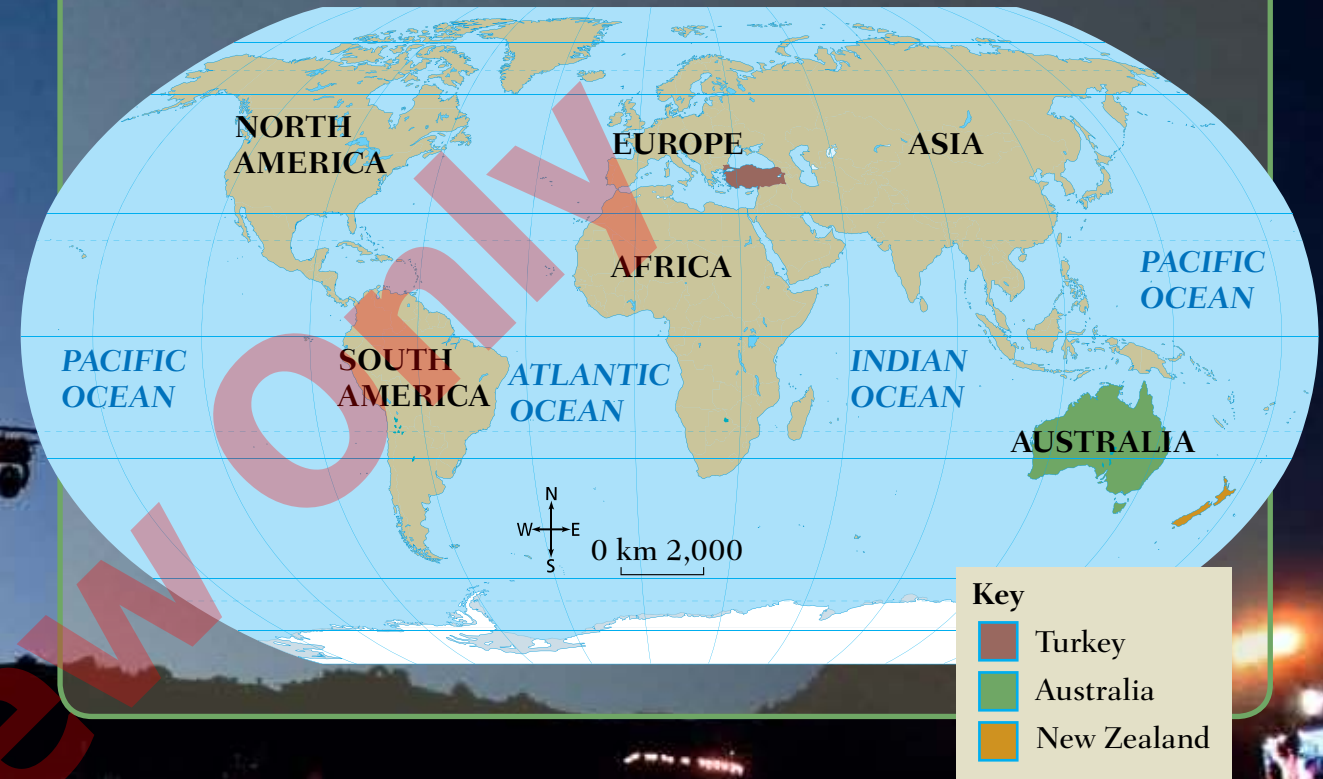
Dawn Service

It is the very early morning of April 25. On the Gallipoli Peninsula, in Turkey, thousands of people are trying to find a spot to stand on a narrow strip of sand and a grassy slope above a beach. Most of them are Australians and New Zealanders. They have travelled halfway across the world to be in this special place, on this very special day of the year. They have been arriving all night – on foot, in about 600 buses and in more cars than anyone can count. By 4 a.m., there are around 15,000 people. They sit, growing colder and colder, waiting...for the dawn.

At about 5 a.m., the night starts to grow a little lighter. Fifteen thousand faces turn towards the east. Fifteen thousand people rise silently to their feet. This is what they have been waiting for. The Anzac Day dawn service at Anzac Cove begins.

Every year, thousands of Australians and New Zealanders travel to Turkey to remember the Anzac soldiers who fought and died at Gallipoli in 1915, during World War I. Who were the Anzacs and why were they fighting so far from their homes?

Location of Turkey



People attending the dawn service in Anzac Cove, April 25, 2009

The War

In August 1914, Great Britain and the nations that supported it, or **allies**, called the Allied Powers, went to war with Germany and its allies, the Central Powers. At that time, Australia and New Zealand were still part of the British Empire. Consequently, many Australians and New Zealanders still felt a great deal of loyalty to Britain.

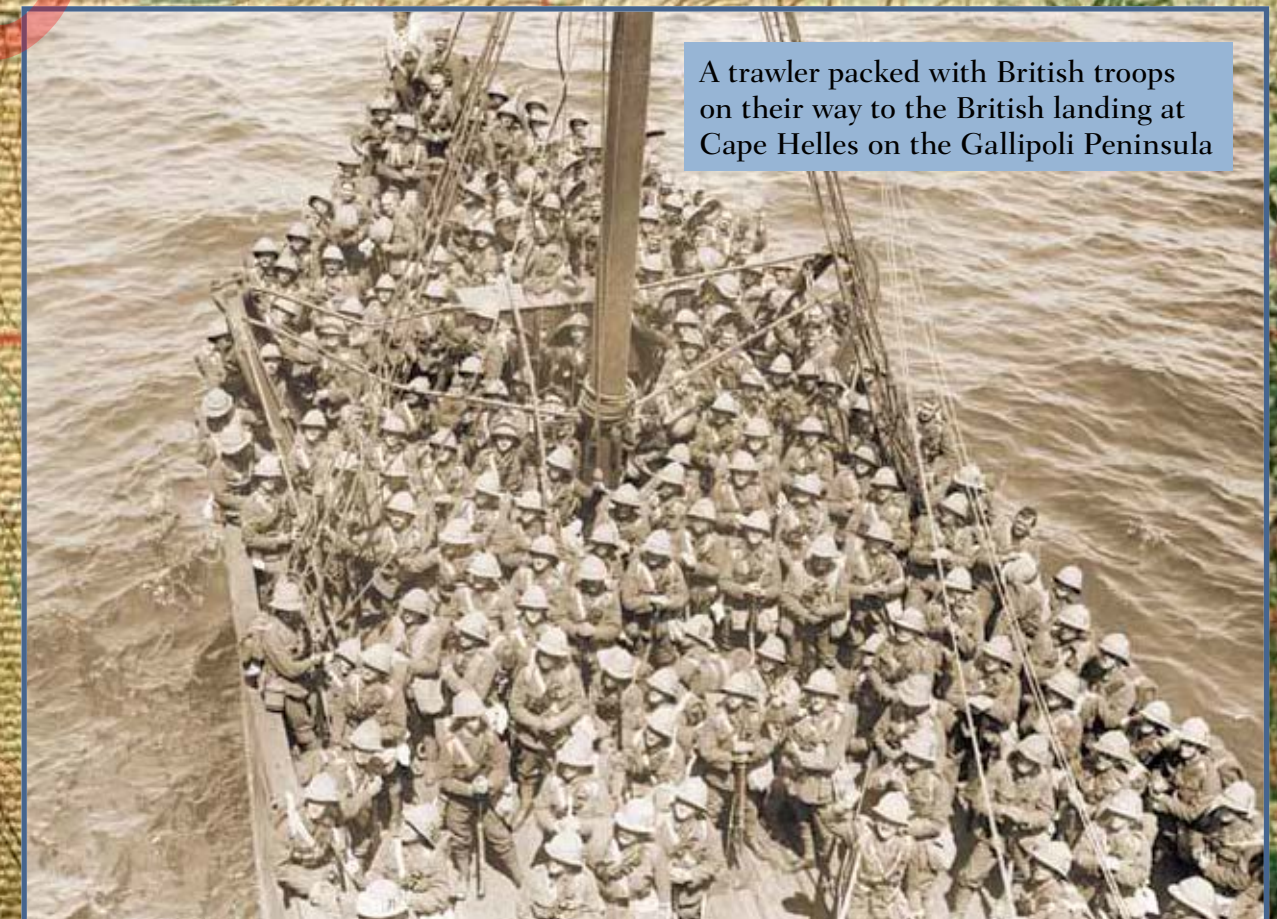
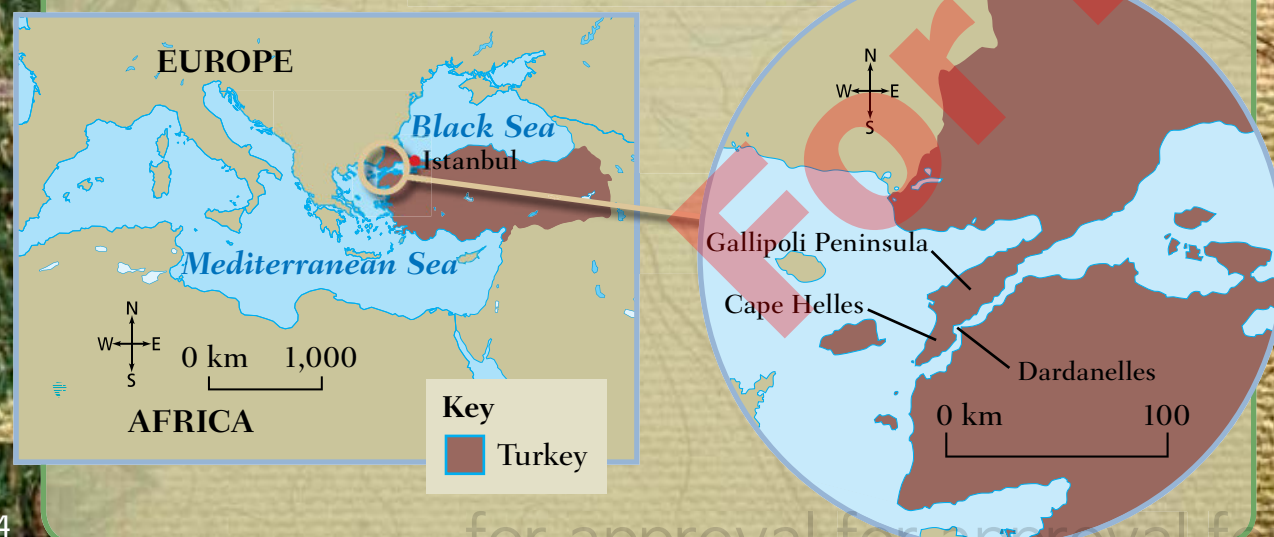
The Australian and New Zealand governments promised support to Great Britain in the war. As a result, many young men joined the armies of Australia and New Zealand to fight for Britain. Their military unit, or corps, was named Anzac, an acronym for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. Many Anzac troops were sent to fight overseas. One of the places they were sent to was Gallipoli.

The Gallipoli Peninsula lies in Turkey. It is a long, narrow piece of land about 80 km long and between 6 and 20 km wide. On its eastern shore is the Dardanelles, a narrow water channel that connects two seas, or a **strait**. The Dardanelles leads from the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea. Because the strait is so narrow, anyone who controls the Gallipoli Peninsula controls the Dardanelles. In 1915, the Gallipoli Peninsula was controlled by the Ottoman Empire, modern-day Turkey.

The Ottoman Empire was an ally of Germany, so it was also at war with Britain. Therefore, British ships could not pass through the Dardanelles. This was a major problem because the British wanted to ship supplies to their ally, **Russia**, across the Black Sea. In order to do this, Britain wanted to **capture the** Gallipoli Peninsula and the city of Istanbul. First, Britain's navy tried to force its way up the Dardanelles in battleships. However, the Turks had blocked the strait with mines, and as a result, the **British ships** could not get through.

Britain therefore decided to attack the Turks by land on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The soldiers chosen to do this were British, Australian, **New Zealand**, and French troops. The date was April 25, 1915. British and French troops landed on Cape Helles, and Australian and New Zealand troops landed on what became known as the Anzac beaches, and the struggle to control the Gallipoli Peninsula began.

Location of Gallipoli



A trawler packed with British troops on their way to the British landing at Cape Helles on the Gallipoli Peninsula

The campaign to secure the peninsula was not a success for Britain. This was partly due to the rugged, hilly country the soldiers were fighting in, and also to the fact that the Turks were strong and determined fighters who defended their territory fiercely. The Anzacs never got more than about 1 km inland on the peninsula. Both the Turks and the Anzacs dug long deep holes with steep sides in the ground, or **trenches**, to fight from. Often, the trenches were only a few metres from each other, so the enemies faced each other from their trenches. Because neither would give in, a long, bitter struggle dragged on. This kind of fighting, typical of World War I, is known as **trench warfare**.

The trench warfare went on for months. As a result, thousands of soldiers, on both sides, were wounded or killed. Conditions in the trenches were appalling, so many men also died of disease.

By December 1915, the Anzac troops had been on the Gallipoli Peninsula for eight months, very little territory had been taken, and many soldiers had died. It was clear to the British command that the campaign was a failure. A decision was therefore made to take the troops off the peninsula. A withdrawal of troops, or **retreat**, was planned. By January 1916, there were no Anzacs left on the peninsula. The campaign had failed.

This photograph of some of the mountainous terrain the Anzacs faced on Gallipoli, the Sari Bair Range, was taken in November 1915 by the Australian journalist Charles Bean.



Australian soldiers in the trenches



Turkish soldiers in the trenches



A painting of Turkish troops at Gallipoli, firing down on positions of the Allied forces

