

## These notes are for:

- Year 3 through to Year 7
- Primary - Lower High school
- 7+ years

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- HSIE/SOSE
- Art

## Example of:

- Picture Book
- Narrative Non-Fiction
- Biography

## Experience of:

- Visual Literacy
- Cultural Diversity
- War/Anzac Day
- Australian History/Heritage

## Values addressed:

- Care and Compassion
- Doing Your Best
- Integrity

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

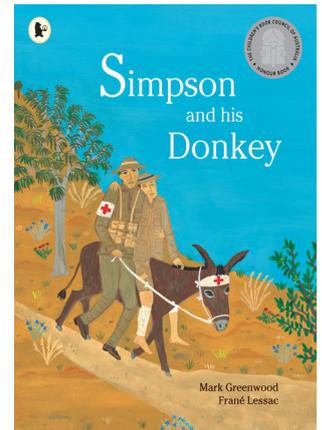
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## Simpson and his Donkey - Overview

### Simpson and his Donkey

By: Mark Greenwood  
 illustrated by: Frané Lessac  
 ISBN: 9781921529542  
 ARRP: \$16.95  
 NZRRP: \$18.99  
 Big Book ISBN: 9781921529627  
 ARRP: \$44.95  
 NZRRP: \$47.99  
 No. of Pages: 32



## Outline:

The heroic story of one man and a donkey – and the strange twist of fate that brought two boyhood friends together one last time during the Gallipoli campaign in World War I.

A poignant account of the story of John Kirkpatrick Simpson and how he and his donkey, Duffy, rescued over 300 men during the campaign at Gallipoli. Backed by detailed research, the text includes a brief biography of the man, details of his work at Gallipoli and also the little known story of how, without realising, he rescued his childhood friend from South Shields, Billy Lowes. The text also includes fact files on Simpson and Billy Lowes, maps and additional historical background information such as how Duffy received a VC.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Mark is a musician and award-winning children's author. His books aim to foster a greater appreciation and understanding of Australian myths and legends. Mark enjoys working with students of all ages, inspiring and developing their natural curiosity about books and writing. He has twice won the Western Australian Premier's Award for children's books and *Simpson and His Donkey* was Honour Book in the Eve Pownell Award for Information Books in 2009 at the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards. He is married to Frané Lessac and they live with their two children in Western Australia.

Frané is originally from New Jersey and is an artist of international renown having exhibited in London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, and the Caribbean. Residing in Western Australia, Lessac now has over 35 children's books published throughout the world. Her work has won Australian and international awards and has been translated into numerous languages. In 2010 she was awarded the Muriel Barwell Award for Distinguished Service to Children's literature.

## How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes were prepared by Mark Greenwood and Walker Books Australia.

## Background research for *Simpson and his Donkey*:

Mark Greenwood and his wife, illustrator Frané Lessac, travelled to Simpson's birthplace in South Shields, England to thoroughly research the story of Billy Lowes and his boyhood friendship with Simpson. They gathered firsthand accounts of Simpson's childhood from the archives in South Shields and Newcastle libraries as well as local newspapers and other local sources of rare records. They also gathered material at the National War Memorial in Canberra and various state museums and libraries.

To balance creative interpretation with historical authenticity, Mark and Frané travelled to Anzac Cove and retraced Simpson and Duffy's rescue trail up and down Shrapnel Gully. The site where the events actually occurred is a unique geographical and physical entity. It was vital for both of them to visit the location in order to interpret it accurately and give them the visual and visceral associations necessary for a project of such national importance.

## Before Reading *Simpson and his Donkey*:

- Look closely at the front cover. Write down your responses and then discuss them with the class.
- Look at the opening two spreads. What do they tell you about Jack Simpson's background?

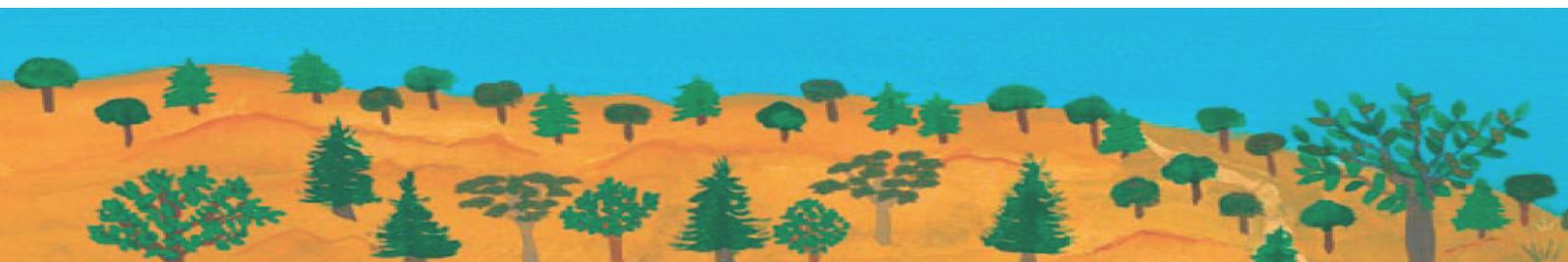
What might the book be about?  
Where is the story set?  
What clues are there about the story's content?  
What questions come to mind?

## Jack Simpson Kirkpatrick:

- Why do you think Simpson decided to travel to Australia? Make a list of the jobs he did when he was in Australia. Why do you think he had so many jobs? Do you think his trip to Australia fulfilled Simpson's dreams? Why/why not?
- In Australia all WWI soldiers were volunteers. Why do you think so many young men volunteered to go to war? Why do you think Simpson was quick to enlist in the army? What did he hope would be the outcome of enlisting?
- View the illustration depicting Simpson in the boat heading for Gallipoli. Imagine you are Jack Simpson in that boat. It is dawn, 25th April 1915 – you are landing at Gallipoli.
- Why do you think Simpson's friend, Billy Lowes, believed it was Jack Simpson who carried him to the beach at Gallipoli? Research other stories of bravery from soldiers at Gallipoli.
- How long had Simpson been at Gallipoli when he died? Where is he buried? What do we know about Simpson from the story? What type of person was he? Create a character profile showing all we know and can surmise about Jack Simpson as a person. (Worksheet No. 1)
- On a map of the world, mark Simpson's journey from South Shields to Gallipoli. View the endpapers. What do you think is their significance to the story?

What thoughts are going through your mind?  
How are you feeling?

Write an account of your feelings as the rowboat is heading towards the shore of Gallipoli.



## The Gallipoli Campaign:

- Study the illustrations depicting the conflict at Gallipoli. In small groups brainstorm the difficulties the soldiers may have been experiencing. Imagine you are a soldier and write a letter home discussing the difficulties during the first few days of the landing.
- Imagine you are an old Anzac soldier returning to the battleground after many years – write an account of your feelings and the thoughts going through your mind.
- Soldiers watched Simpson and Duffy from the trenches. Write a letter from the point of view of a soldier watching Simpson and Duffy go about their work.
- What do you think happened to Duffy after the Anzacs left Gallipoli? Research other stories of animals at war.
- Jack joined the 3rd Field Ambulance as a stretcher-bearer and was present during the landing at Gallipoli. What particular dangers did the stretcher-bearers experience? Why did Simpson say: “Bless yee little fella” when he spotted Duffy? How was Duffy going to be of help?
- Map the first landings on the Gallipoli coast. Locate sites and identify any place names mentioned in the text.
- If you were designing a recruitment poster to encourage young men to volunteer to go to war, what would you put in it?
- Should we commemorate Anzac Day? Why/why not? Write an exposition/debate arguing your point of view.

## The Turkish Perspective:

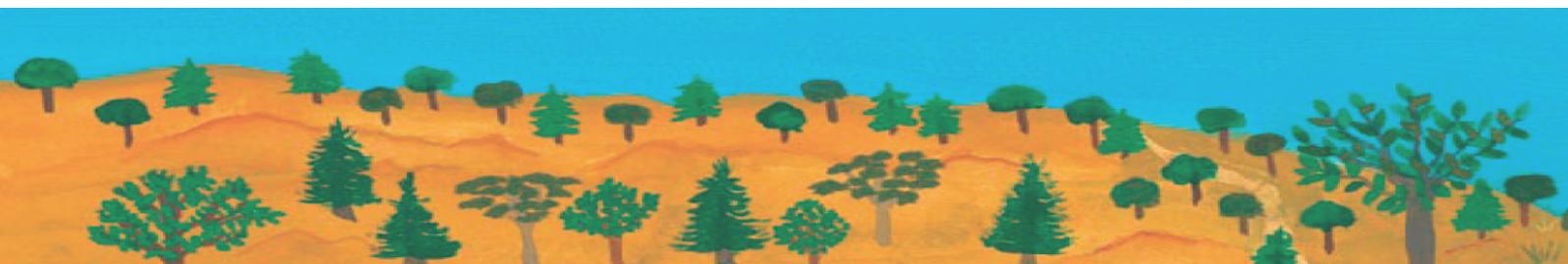
- For the people of Turkey the battle to defend the Gallipoli peninsula from invasion was one of the defining moments in their history. General Mustafa Kemal Atatürk led his troops to victory over the allied forces. The bond between the soldiers who fought at Gallipoli was expressed by him with these famous words:
- Turkish soldiers fought with courage, honour and bravery in defence of their homeland. Discuss why Australian and New Zealand soldiers regarded the enemy with great respect.
- Discuss the invasion from the Turkish perspective. Why has such a strong bond developed between the Turkish and Australian people?

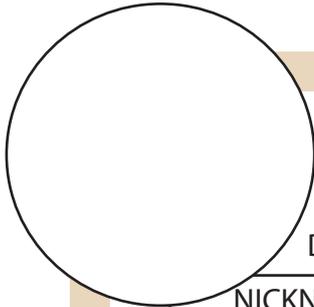
“Those heroes who shed their blood and lost their lives, you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side in this country of ours. You, the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries wipe away your tears, your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they become our sons as well.”

Why do you think these words mean so much to Australian visitors to Gallipoli?

## Text and Purpose:

- View the final spread. How is this different from the rest of the book. Why do you think it was included? What is its purpose?
- This book is narrative non-fiction. List the elements of the story that are historical fact and those that may be the author’s creative interpretation.
- What illustrations, if any, would you do differently if you illustrated the story, and why?
- To what degree does the visual text add to the written text? Discuss.





JOHN SIMPSON  
KIRKPATRICK  
(KNOWN AS JACK)

Draw Jack as a young boy

NICKNAMES:

.....  
.....

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH:

.....  
.....

HAIR COLOUR:

.....

EYE COLOUR:

.....

ACCENT:

.....

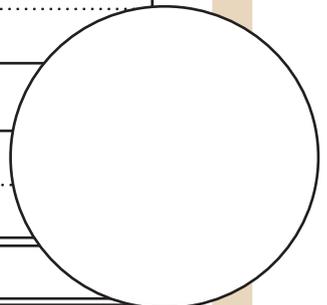
NAME OF CHILDHOOD FRIEND:

.....  
.....

THREE JOBS JACK HAD BEFORE THE WAR:

.....  
.....  
.....

Draw Jack as a soldier



MILITARY UNIT:

.....  
.....

NUMBER:

.....

RANK:

.....

NUMBER OF MEN RESCUED DURING 24 DAYS:

.....  
.....

NAME GIVEN BY SIKH GUNNERS:

.....  
.....

COUNTRIES JACK VISITED:

.....  
.....

DATE AND PLACE OF DEATH:

.....  
.....

THREE WORDS TO DESCRIBE JACK AS A PERSON:

.....  
.....  
.....

# Simpson and his Donkey

Colour us in!

