

Investigation 1

Discussion

*As a class discuss what you think is meant by the **Spirit of ANZAC**.*

You might consider such elements as bravery, mateship, endurance, fighting qualities (as opposed to soldierly qualities), and more.

Summarise your ideas in handwriting in this box:

I understand the Spirit of ANZAC to mean:

For more information and resources on ANZAC Day and the Spirit of ANZAC visit www.anzacday.org.au

The Spirit of ANZAC had to come from somewhere, had to be developed by people who behaved in certain ways during war.

Investigation 2

Brainstorm

As a class list the names of any people with whom you associate ANZAC Day. Write the names in the box below.

Names of people associated with ANZAC Day

Chances are there are not many names on your list: maybe Albert Jacka, the World War 1 Victoria Cross winner; probably 'Weary' Dunlop, and maybe Sister Vivian Bullwinkel and Nancy Wake from World War 2; perhaps some military leaders – Generals Monash and Blamey; possibly a few of the very few remaining veterans from World War 1 who are now regularly reported on each year; and possibly names from your own family's involvement in one of the wars Australia has been involved in over the last one hundred years.

The one name that was probably known to many in your class is John Simpson — 'Simpson and his donkey'.

Investigation 3

What do people know about the story of Simpson and his donkey?

Brainstorm your knowledge and ideas about Simpson in your own class. Use these words to help focus your thinking:

*Who? When? Where?
What? Why? How?*

You might also survey students in other classes, and parents and friends. (After you have completed this article you might want to draw up a more formal survey, and use that to draw conclusions about the continuing strength or possible weakening of the Simpson story as part of Australia's national identity.)

Simpson, the best known representative of the ANZAC tradition or legend, is usually also seen as embodying the Spirit of ANZAC.

You can now carry out an investigation, looking closely at the Spirit of ANZAC through one of its main symbols, John Simpson.

A symbol can be a powerful thing, but symbols often distort the reality behind them. This can be a disservice to the person, as their humanity is being displaced by a falsehood. The issue for you to decide here is if the symbol of Simpson is true to the reality of the man himself.



Simpson and his donkey
Australian War Memorial Negative No J 6392

Brainstorm results

Who?	
When?	
Where?	
What?	
Why?	
How?	

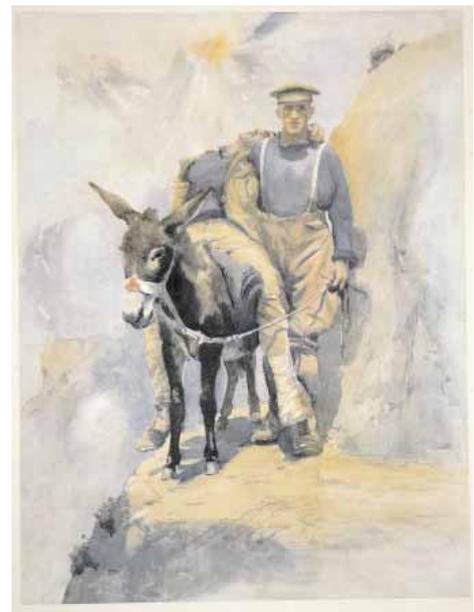
Investigation 4

What is the image or legend that has been created about Simpson?

To understand what the image is, you need to look at some examples of it.

On this page are two representations of Simpson. Each creates an image of him. Working in a small group, discuss your answers written next to the questions in the box below. (For example, compare the statue with the painting. What has the artist changed? What 'messages' do these changes send to you?)

<p>What is Simpson doing?</p>	
<p>Why is he doing it?</p>	
<p>What aspects of Simpson are stressed?</p>	
<p>How do the artists stress these aspects?</p>	



Painting titled 'Heroes of the Red Cross. Private John Simpson, & His Donkey at ANZAC' by New Zealand artist Horace Moore-Jones. Moore-Jones was at Gallipoli, and painted this picture in 1916



Statue of Simpson outside the Australian War Memorial

Investigation 5

Conclusions about Simpson

If you had **only** the information from Investigation 4 about Simpson, what could you conclude about him?

Conclusions based on information from Investigation 4

Investigation 6

Examining some statements about Simpson

Here are two statements by modern writers about Simpson and his place in the ANZAC legend. What aspects do they stress?

Every civilised society has its national hero, some individual who provides an ongoing inspiration through heroic, selfless deeds he or she has performed on behalf of their fellow country-men — and in the performance, capturing and personifying their nation's ideals — whether that be through a Ghandi, a Joan of Arc, a Nelson or a George Washington. Australia has its Simpson, and we are fortunate indeed to have a hero of such inspirational stature. We cannot afford to lose him.

(Tom Curran, 'The true heroism of Simpson', Quadrant April 1997 page 70)

I value the Simpson legend and have great respect for what he did at Gallipoli. I am pleased that our culture has, as its pre-eminent tale of heroism and self-sacrifice, a brave stretcher bearer who is remembered for his compassion rather than his skill with a bayonet.

(Peter Cochrane, 'What is history?', Quadrant December 1996 page 60)

Aspects stressed:

Investigation 7

Summarising the legend

Make up your own summary now about what you think the image or legend of Simpson is about, and what it means to Australians.

The image and legend of Simpson and what it means to Australians

Investigation 8

Who was Simpson?

You now have a good idea of the legend or image of Simpson. A main aspect of this series of investigations is for you to make a judgement about whether the image or legend has distorted the reality of the man himself. If it has, it may be argued that this is undesirable, that in remembering the legend the man is being forgotten. That's for you to decide for yourselves. To make this decision, you need to look at historical information about the man, and compare it to the legend.

In the box on page 2 make a list of words that describe aspects of Simpson.

JOHN SIMPSON KIRKPATRICK

Born 1892 in South Shields (a beach resort town in north-eastern England).

He had two older sisters, a younger sister, three older brothers (who died in infancy from diseases), and an older sister who died at age 11 in 1900.

As a boy young Jack used to help the owner of donkey rides along the beach.

His father worked on the docks and on ships, and was crippled in an accident in 1904. Jack left school to become the family 'breadwinner', delivering milk around the local area.

In 1909 his father died. Just two days later, Jack had signed on as a seaman on a ship that would take him away from England for long periods of time. He immediately started the practice of sending his mother part of his wages, which he continued to do for the rest of his life.

In 1910 he was a stoker, with the hot, filthy and exhausting job of shovelling coal into the ship's boilers for hours at a time.

During one voyage in 1910, the conditions aboard ship were so bad that Jack and thirteen other crewmen jumped ship at Newcastle, New South Wales.

In Australia Jack travelled around the country, with stints as a swagman, jackaroo, and a coal miner. He then re-joined a ship, a steamer that travelled around Australia's coastal waters.

Some of Jack's letters home contain rough advice to members of his family. For example, in one letter he talks perhaps literally, perhaps in a joking way, of his mother giving his sister 'a thick ear' if she misbehaves.

By 1914 Jack was getting homesick, and was looking to return home to see his family.

In August his ship pulled into Fremantle Harbour, where Jack learned that Australia was at war. He jumped ship again and enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force, dropping the 'Kirkpatrick' from his name so that the authorities would not find him (if they were looking).

He was described on his enlistment form as 5 feet 8 inches tall (173 cm), of stocky build, weighing 12 stone (76 kg), with a fair complexion, blue eyes and brown hair.

In the Army, Simpson was selected for training in 3 Field Ambulance as a stretcher bearer. This job was only given to the strongest men, and Simpson's years as a stoker had built up his strength considerably. He expected to be sent to England before going to the Western Front, and this would give him a chance to see his family again.



Investigation 9

Revisiting Investigation 3

Look back at your brainstormed set of information on Simpson (Investigation 3). What elements have been confirmed, and what have been challenged, by this information? (For example you may have assumed that he was Australian, or a tall man, etc.)

Confirmations and challenges

Investigation 10

Describing Simpson

Imagine you have just met Simpson. Write a brief description of him below this photograph of him.



*John Simpson Kirkpatrick on his
21st birthday (in 1913)
(Courtesy of John Simpson Parkin)*

Description of Simpson:

Investigation 11

Simpson at Gallipoli

You now have some idea of the man who landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 and soon became part of the Spirit of ANZAC.

Look at the information provided in this Investigation about Simpson's time on Gallipoli, and answer the questions at page 5. For more information about Gallipoli go to www.anzacday.org.au

The Landing at Gallipoli

Simpson landed early on the morning of the 25th. A stretcher bearer in another boat at the same time recorded his experience of the landing under terrifying fire:

I don't know what it was, shrapnel, maxim [machine gun] or rifle fire — I was frightened to look, but never so frightened in my life as when I had to stand up in the bow to dominate the men [to keep rowing] ... I could feel the damned things hitting me all the time in my imagination, while we couldn't see the other boats for the spouts of stray all around, and the men hit yelled and then whined and clawed the air as they died.

(Lyle Buchanan in Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 29.)

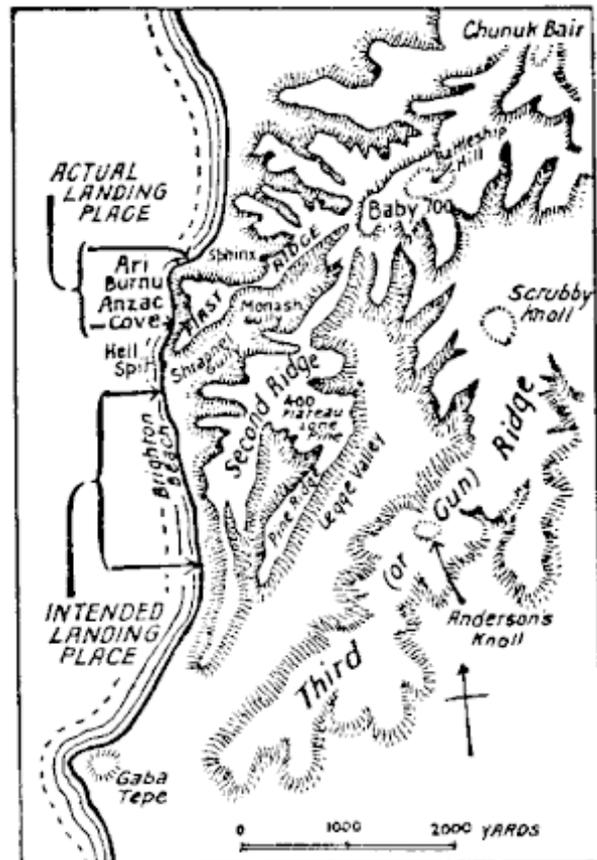
Another 3rd Field Ambulance man recorded his landing experience:

We got within [10 metres] of the beach when we began to scramble out of the boat. I fell over the starboard side and made a rush through the water. I fell a couple of times and regained my feet again. I scrambled ashore and got about [three metres] ashore when I felt an awful smack on my side & I knew that I was shot. I crawled for about [five metres] and found I could not go any further.

(Otto Kirkby in Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 30.)

Jack and the other three in his four-man team were in the boat together. Jack was second man out of his boat when it grounded. The first and third men out, on either side of him, were hit and killed instantly. His remaining team member was wounded.

Soon after dawn the Australians had secured the beach, the Turkish fire on the area ceased, and the medical men could start collecting the wounded.



Working as a stretcher-bearer

In theory stretcher bearers worked as a team of four to carry a wounded soldier – each carrying a corner of the stretcher on his shoulder.

In fact the stretcher bearers at this time were more likely to be working as a pair, which was much harder.

If only one man was available, he had to carry the wounded on his back.

"You could only carry for about a hundred [metres] at a time, before you had to stop for a rest, before going on."

(Bert Baker in Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 34.)

After bringing in the nearest wounded, the stretcher bearers at Gallipoli had to push further inland to find the wounded.

Simpson's group, C Section, had to go up and down the razor-back approaches to Baby 700 with their burdens. This citation for the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal to Private Cedric Rosser tells us something about the conditions under which these men were operating:

"Totally regardless of the danger ... [Rosser] showed the greatest bravery and resource in attending to the wounded ... under a continuous and heavy shell and rifle fire dressing and collecting the wounded from the most exposed position."

(Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 32.)

Another soldier described the situation:

"The transportation of the wounded to the beach was in itself a nightmare even when the stretchers were used, but [where stretchers were not available] oil sheets had to be used. Then [for the bearers] — slipping and sliding down the steep hillside, their hands cramping from the insecure hold upon the corners of the sheet, the heavy shrapnel fire continuously above them, and a persistent urge to halt — if only for a few seconds so as to ease the cramp in their hands — made the journey one long agony."

(Tom Chataway in Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 34.)



Sketch by Ellis Silas, 'Stretcher-bearers in action at the head of Monash Valley'

(Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 34.)

Jack and his donkeys

During the morning of the 26th of April Simpson was operating in the same way as many other bearers — carrying wounded on his back — until he saw a stray donkey.

A number of donkeys had been landed with their Greek drivers to carry kerosene tins of water to the troops.

Jack had no equipment for a harness for the donkey, so he rigged together a lead and bridle from field dressings. There was no saddle, so the passenger would just have to sit on the donkey and hold onto Jack.

The 3rd Field Ambulance diary for 1 May 1915 recorded this event:

"The behaviour of the men in view of their rude introduction to the circumstances of war was splendid ... No 202 Pte Simpson has shown [initiative] in using a donkey from the 26th to carry slightly wounded cases and has kept up his work from early morning till night every day since."

(Peter Cochrane, Simpson and the Donkey, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1992, page 43)

Simpson was operating alone, against regimental orders. His response to being told this was: "To hell with them. The old donk and I can do as much work as four men."

His commanding officer saw the value in what he was doing, and allowed him to continue.

(Tom Curran, Not Only a Hero, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 39.)

Simpson was now operating down Monash Valley and Shrapnel Gully, to the clearing hospital on the beach, a distance of about 1200 metres. Using his donkey Simpson could make between 12 and 15 trips a day, when two-man stretcher teams could make only about six trips a day.

A stretcher bearer in the 4th Field Ambulance has left an account of a typical trip:

Many snipers being in the hills made the carry down the gullies rather unhealthy. For the first fortnight or so the carry from Quinn's to the beach was beset with all sorts of inconceivable difficulties. The carry ... had to be done without relief over a variety of muddy and narrow tracks. At various places ... it was necessary to sprint past these warm points, from one safe place to another, as snipers were very diligent and accurate, and shrapnel was also uncomfortably plentiful ... After the first fortnight however conditions began to improve by widening of the track and protecting the same by building sandbag barricades at exposed points and by the construction of dug-outs, mainly consisting of holes dug into the side of the hills.

(E.H. Kitson in Tom Curran, Not Only a Hero, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 38.)

Simpson used a number of donkeys — Murphy, Abdul, Queen Elizabeth, Duffy. Several were killed, as were some of their passengers.

He only carried men wounded in the leg, and some head wounds, that is, men who could sit astride a donkey with assistance. He left the serious chest and abdomen wounds to the two-man stretcher bearers.

"1 May:

Re — Simpson — English name, called Scotty and speaks with thick brogue — doing great work — bringing wounded from trenches, dressing stations, etc., on little donkey which he calls Murphy — Deserves VC. During the first push he brought couple of men from beyond the firing line. Works by himself."

(Diary extract of J.E. McPhee in Peter Cochrane, Simpson and the Donkey, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1992, page 43)



The only photograph of Simpson and Duffy in action, Shrapnel Gully.

AWM Negative No. A 3114

Jack and his donkeys (continued)

In 1915 a soldier/writer collected a number of eye-witness accounts from wounded ANZACs in hospital of Jack at work:

When the [shooting] down the valley was at its worst and orders were posted that the ambulancemen must not go out, the Man and the Donkey continued on placidly at their work. At times they held trenches of hundreds of men spellbound, just to see them at their work. Their quarry lay motionless in an open patch, in easy reach of a dozen Turkish rifles. Patiently the little donkey waited under cover, while the man crawled through the thick scrub until he got within striking distance. Then a lightning dash, and he had the wounded man on his back and was making for cover again. In those fierce seconds he always seemed to bear a charmed life. Once under cover he tended his charge with quick, skilful movements.

(E.C. Buley in Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 36.)

[The fighting] was fierce and many of us were soon out of action and placed out of the line of fire for evacuation ... After a terrible night daylight eventually arrived and soon after came Simpson. Some of our cases were pitiful but this cheerful digger had a word and smile for all. He came to me and asked what was wrong and I told him I'd been shot through the right leg above the knee ... He rebandaged my leg and helped me to his famous donkey. Two or three times on the way he grinned at me and said, 'That was a very nasty spot we have just passed. Jacko's snipers are wonderful shots. It doesn't do to linger in such spots'. When you realise that he knew the extreme dangers to which he constantly exposed himself in his self-imposed errands of mercy you can only marvel at the cheerful way in which he carried out his duties. He brought me safely back to the beach hospital and when I thanked him he smiled and said 'Glad to help you'.

(P.C. Menhennet in Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 43.)

Unlike the other bearers, leading his donkey along, Jack was exposed almost all of the time to constant shrapnel, rifle and occasional machine-gun fire.

"Other people using [Monash] Valley had a dozen waist-high shelter spots ... [Simpson] had really only one spot on the way which sheltered him and his donkey. ... [He] had earned [the Victoria Cross] fifty times."

(Lyle Buchanan in Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 41.)

Colonel Monash: "Simpson was worth a hundred men to me."

(Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 38.)

Simpson rescued an estimated 300 wounded soldiers during his 24 days at Gallipoli.

On May 19 there was a large Turkish attack. This meant heavy casualties. Simpson was coming down Monash Valley when a Turkish machine gunner hit him as he was bringing back a wounded man, killing him.

On the next day Colonel Monash wrote a lengthy submission about his deeds:

Private Simpson and his little beast earned the admiration of everyone at the upper end of the valley. They worked all day and night throughout the whole period since the landing, and the help rendered to the wounded was invaluable. Simpson knew no fear and moved unconcernedly amid shrapnel and rifle fire, steadily carrying out his self-imposed task day by day, and he frequently earned the applause of the personnel for his many fearless rescues of wounded men from areas subject to rifle and shrapnel fire.

(Tom Curran, *Not Only a Hero*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, 1998 page 51.)

A recommendation for a Victoria Cross was submitted in the wrong category, and was denied.

Simpson was buried at Hell Spit, and his headstone is now at Beach Cemetery.



Questions to be answered:

When did he land at Gallipoli?	
What would the landing have been like?	
What was his job on Gallipoli?	
Why did Simpson work alone?	
Why did he use a donkey?	
What advantages and disadvantages did this mean to him in his job?	
How did he behave at Gallipoli?	
What qualities did he show?	
What did he achieve?	
What was the attitude of others to him?	
What happened to him?	

Investigation 12

Revisiting Investigation 8

Look again at the list of words in Investigation 8 that you used to describe aspects of Simpson.

Would you add to or change any of these?

Additions or changes

Investigation 13

Revisiting Investigation 3 and Investigation 9 again

Look back at your brainstormed set of information on Simpson which you produced in Investigation 3 and adjusted in Investigation 9. Would you change anything now that you have further information?

Additions or changes

Investigation 14

Revisiting Investigation 10

Look again at your description of Simpson in Investigation 10. Are there any changes that you would make to that description?

Additions or changes

Investigation 15

Making a decision - image and reality

You have now seen evidence of Simpson the man, as well as the image that has been created about him.

Do you believe that the image sufficiently captures the humanity of the person, or has the real Simpson been lost in the image? Justify your decision.

Comments and justification:

Investigation 16

Designing an alternative representation of Simpson

Working as an individual or in a small group, design an alternative representation of Simpson.

It may be in the form of a sculpture, a painting or drawing, a poem, a talk for an ANZAC Day ceremony, a web page, a storyboard for a brief film of Simpson's life, a children's story book — or any other format.

Whichever format you choose the key thing is that you capture both the Spirit of ANZAC in the man, and his personality.

Notes on an alternative representation of Simpson: