

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

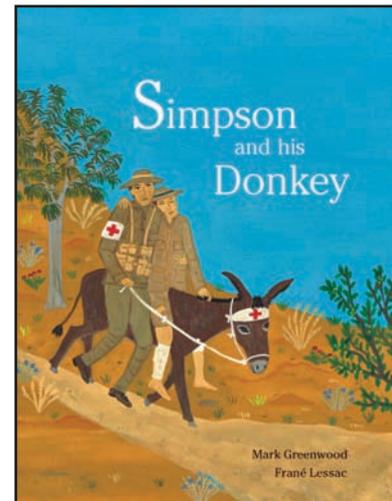
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Walker Books Australia Ph +61 2 9517 9577  
 Locked Bag 22 Fax +61 2 9517 9997  
 Newtown, N.S.W., 2042

For enquiries please contact Melissa Hamilton:  
 mhamilton@walkerbooks.com.au

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## Simpson and his Donkey - Overview



### Simpson and his Donkey

By: Mark Greenwood/Frané Lessac  
 ISBN: 9781921150180  
 ARRP: \$27.95  
 NZRRP: \$29.99  
 No. of Pages: 40

## Outline:

Jack Simpson Kirkpatrick typifies the 'Anzac qualities' of bravery, patriotism and sacrifice. As a veteran of the initial Gallipoli landing on 25th April 1915, he worked tirelessly in Shrapnel Gully carrying wounded soldiers from the battlefield to the beach hospital. In 24 days, under constant attack from artillery and sniper fire, he rescued close to 300 men.

**Simpson and his Donkey** traces the boyhood friendship of John Simpson Kirkpatrick and Billy Lowes from their home in South Shields, north-east England, where they walked donkeys for a penny a ride during summer holidays to the battlefields of Gallipoli. It is the story of a man and his donkey and a strange twist of fate that brought two boyhood friends together one last time.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

It was on a trip to the National War Memorial in Canberra that **Mark Greenwood** and **Frané Lessac** first conceived the idea of creating a book about Simpson. Their intention was to encourage an understanding of the sacrifice made by those who served their nation in war.

It was at Gallipoli that the 'Anzac tradition' was born, with the ideals of courage and mateship that distinguish and unite all Australians. Mark hopes Simpson's story of bravery and sacrifice will encourage young people to value our veterans and provide them with a deeper understanding of what it means to be an Australian.

Frané Lessac has illustrated numerous children's books for both the Australian and international markets. Her work has won Australian and international awards and has been translated into numerous languages.

Travelling is a major source of inspiration for Frané's work as she paints her impressions of a country and its way of life in gouache artwork.

## 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 Sue Whiting.



### 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 most 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 Jack 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 Jack'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 Jack 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 Jack'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 Jack been at Gallipoli when he died? Where is he buried? What do we know about Jack from the story? What type of person was he? Create a character profile showing all we know and can surmise about Jack 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.”*

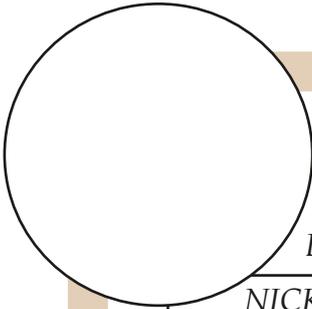
Why do you think these words mean so much to Australian visitors to Gallipoli?

**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.

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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:

.....

