

History teacher Adam Fryday tells us why he organised his school's trip to Gallipoli

One of my career goals as a teacher was to take a group of students to the Gallipoli Peninsula. I am very proud to announce that within three years I have ticked it off my teacher-bucket list. There are a number of reasons why I made this a priority for the students at Holy Spirit College, Bellambi.

I love teaching about the Gallipoli campaign to students for a number of reasons, but the top reason is that it is a self-contained narrative. Gallipoli has a definite beginning (the landing), middle (the August Offensive), and end (the evacuation). When so much of the First World War is chaos, students can find a sense of chronology and familiarity in the Gallipoli story. History is easier when we can place it into a narrative, and Gallipoli comes complete with protagonists, antagonists, the noble enemy and bumbling command. The other elements have been done to death: Australia's baptism of fire, mismanagement by the English, the exotic romance of the peninsula. The story is fascinating.

After this trip, I had a number of people (those who came and who observed from home) come up to me and tell me what a great idea the soldier presentations were and how they were a great addition to the trip. What they fail to initially understand is that the soldier presentations *make* the trip. They are more or less the sole purpose for going. The students who came on the trip come to learn this as well. You'll notice in the videos of my students that they refer to the soldiers they presented as "my soldier". They are not related to them, and in most cases they don't even know what they look like. Yet there is a bond that develops between the students and the soldiers they go to find. I constantly remind them that these soldiers may never have had a visitor to their grave.

Just like any task involving children, there were some incredible presentations and others that were obviously left to the last minute. Interestingly, regardless of the quality of their presentations, students were able to feel a strong connection with their soldier. The process of researching the soldier places their experience into a real world timeline, and students gather an understanding of the days and weeks leading up to their soldiers deaths, whether it be on April 25th or August 7th. In many cases I allocate soldiers that do not have a comprehensive history available. This forces students to consider the common experience of the soldier, as well as looking through unit diaries to try and locate the movements of their soldiers.

The truth is that you or your students cannot appreciate the ruggedness of the terrain until you have seen it. We know it is hard going. A myriad of soldier diaries tell us as much. Until you see the rising and falling ridges for yourself, until you walk Artillery Road in 35-degree heat with flies buzzing around your ears, you cannot completely understand. That is one of the reasons why a trip to the peninsula is so valuable. Students can see for themselves what the soldiers faced. Having Peter Weir interpret the attack at the Nek for your class pales in comparison when your students are standing at the old Turkish trench, looking down that tennis court sized patch of grass balancing on the first ridge. I've never had students in the classroom explain so animatedly the aims of the campaign as they do standing beneath the Sphinx at North Beach. A way to ensure that students gain an appreciation for the terrain is to walk the peninsula. Too often do we see chartered buses drive past with tourists

clamouring at the windows for photographs. As an Australian school, we spent two days walking the Anzac Sector and one day at Cape Helles. Spreading all the presentations out across the cemeteries gave the day a pleasant pace, despite the heat and uneven ground.



Students getting first hand experience of the terrain at Gallipoli

The tour went better than I could have imagined, and I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge Associate Professor of the University of Wollongong John McQuilton for the tour he took me on, that sparked my passion for Australians involvement in the Great War. I modelled my very successful trip on his university study tour I participated in. A series of pre-departure lectures and soldier presentations is a sure fire way to run a successful Gallipoli Study trip.