Anzac Day

Winners of the Tug of War Anzac Sports H.Q A.G.H. Sutton Veny 30.4.19

What Is Anzac Day?

Anzac Day is a day of remembrance that takes place on 25th April. It is commemorated in Australia and New Zealand, or by Australians and New Zealanders living elsewhere in the world. It is held in memory of the members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzacs), many of whom lost their lives in battle.

Australia and New Zealand Join the First World War

When Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914, Australia was allied with Britain and France. The Commonwealth consists of 53 countries, which were all once ruled directly by the United Kingdom. In 1915, soldiers from Australia and New Zealand formed part of an expedition to capture the Gallipoli peninsula. The main objective was to capture Constantinople (now Istanbul), the capital of the Ottoman Empire. At that time, the Ottoman Empire was an ally of Germany.

The Battle of Gallipoli

The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps landed at Gallipoli on 25th April 1915. This was the first major combat of the war for these two countries. The plan was to defeat Turkey as quickly as possible in a quick battle; however, the battle lasted eight months. At the end of 1915, the Anzac forces were rescued from the beach. Generals and commanders were worried about the high number of casualties as well as the coming winter and they started to plan a retreat.

Many were killed during the Battle of Gallipoli. Over 8000 Australian soldiers and more than 2500 New Zealander soldiers lost their lives. Even though the mission was not successful, the bravery and determination shown by the Anzacs have made it an important moment in Australian history.
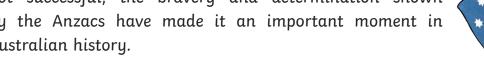
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The Anzac Spirit

By the end of the war, more than 60,000 Australian soldiers had lost their lives. At this time, the total population of Australia was less than 5 million, which means that Australia suffered the largest number of casualties of all the countries involved in the war. The spirit of the brave Anzacs caused Australia to be regarded as a reliable and strong nation across the world.

How Is Anzac Day Celebrated?

The first Anzac Day was commemorated on 25th April 1916. Since then, a parade is often organised in local towns and major cities. Originally, Anzac soldiers marched in these parades while residents attended and watched, waved flags and cheered. Now it is common for the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Anzac soldiers to march in parades. They wear the medals or they carry something belonging to their ancestors. Another popular tradition is a dawn service. This is a ceremony which includes the raising of flags, the reading of relevant passages and a performance of the last post. This is followed by a minute's silence. Many schools will hold their own Anzac ceremony. This is a solemn occasion during which the Anzacs are remembered and people often take time to reflect on the sacrifice they made. This is a sign of respect and recognition of the nature of the event.