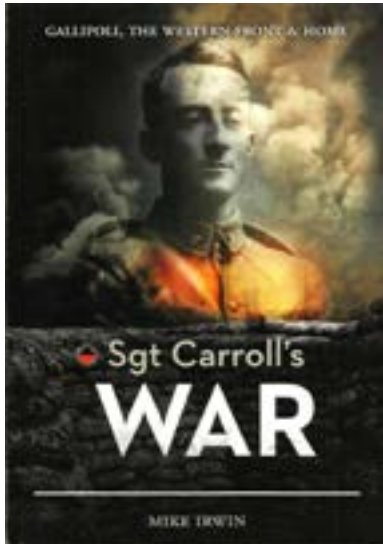


# Kritikos

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### Sgt Carroll's War

by Mike Irwin

2018  
Melbourne  
Paperback, x + 90 pages  
Illustrations, portraits, maps



### Turkish Private Ryan

by John Gillam and Yvonne Fletcher;  
Illustrations by Lillian Webb

2018  
East Maitland, New South Wales  
Legends and Lessons  
Paperback, 51 pages  
Illustrations, portraits

Reviewed by Lauren Sullivan  
Caulfield Grammar School, Caulfield

Both *Sgt Carroll's War* and *Turkish Charlie Ryan: Çanakkale's Anzac Hero* focus on the historical events of World War I, each with its own different perspective and style.

*Sgt Carroll's War* shares the story of Sergeant William Edward Carroll, born in Australia in 1891. It follows his journey, mainly focusing on his experiences during the Great War and its immediate aftermath. The book is written in the first person, as the words throughout the text are from oral recollections of William himself, or Bill as he was more commonly known. Bill's story is shared by publisher Mike Irwin and the Mildura RSL. Irwin played a significant part in recording Bill's recollections over a five-year period, and diligently assembled them into a logical sequence, with a few minor adjustments to provide clarification or explanation.

The book is structured into a series of chapters, with each chapter focused on one aspect of Bill's life. This allows the reader to gain a deeper understanding into Bill's background, his experiences during and after the Great War and more insight overall into his story. It's a very powerful story, and one that deserves to be told. The book itself allows the reader to imagine what it might have been like to have been a young soldier, forced to depart his home, leaving family and friends, headed for a relatively unknown and possibly deadly destination.

Today, it is difficult for most people to imagine what this may have felt like for the thousands of soldiers departing for war. Therefore, there is significant value in books such as this, which give a first-hand perspective of the experiences, the challenges and the long-lasting impacts that each soldier

and his family had to deal with during and after the Great War. Books like *Sgt Carroll's War* play an important role in giving those who have passed, a voice. A voice for our young people to connect with, to preserve the legacy of all those who fought in their own way during the Great War, for those who never returned home, and those like Bill, who managed to make it back to Australia, and lived to be ninety-nine years old.

Irwin has made some clever choices with the structure of the book, weaving a range of additional historical sources into Bill's chapters, including photographs, letters, maps and enlistment papers. By studying these historical sources, students receive a richer understanding of Bill's experiences, but also of all Australians involved in the war. This text is a perfect accompaniment to any unit on war, particularly for students studying the Year 9 course 'Australia at War (1914–1945): World War I.' Students will engage with the clear and uncomplicated format of the book, the rich visual and written sources incorporated throughout, and most importantly, the engaging and entertaining voice of Bill as he recounts his extraordinary life.

In comparison, *Turkish Charlie Ryan: Çanakkale's Anzac Hero*, provides a very different style to *Sgt Carroll's War*. In its own way, this book also provides an informative and engaging perspective of experiences during the Great War. This book, however, is produced in a storybook format, which initially might cause readers to place it in a younger genre but when you delve deeper into the text, you quickly realise that this text would suit readers of all ages. The idea for this book was developed by the Social Science Teachers of TED Mersin College, a school based in

Turkey, with the goal of creating historical awareness and a sense of mutual respect and friendship in the Australian and Turkish youth of today. The book tells the story of an Australian man, Charlie Ryan, born in Melbourne in 1853. The narrative of the book focuses on Charlie's life, from his youth growing up in rural Victoria, through his desire for adventure and travel, which led to him to working as a military surgeon in Turkey. The story follows Charlie's experiences of working in various hospitals and on the battlefield for the 'Battle of 93' in Turkey. The authors John Gillam and Yvonne Fletcher do a fantastic job in telling Charlie's story in an engaging and informative way. The accompanying illustrations are vivid and allow readers to imagine Charlie's perspective of war in a way that purely written text cannot. This thoughtful addition allows readers of all age to engage with the text and Charlie's story.

Interestingly, the narrative follows Charlie's unique experience of serving on the Turkish side of a war (in 1893) and, during World War I, on the side of their opponents, the Australian forces. Perhaps the most significant learning from this book is the concept of perspectives and the unique situation that Charlie Ryan was in, having been a close friend to the Turkish, and now having to fight these same friends, but from the Australian side. The role that Charlie Ryan and other key figures in the Gallipoli battle, such as Turkish Commander Mustafa Kemal, played in allowing the brief armistice to occur, where soldiers on both sides

could collect their wounded and bury their dead, was one of the most significant moments in a gruesome battle, where both sides exchanged stories, souvenirs and rations. It was a time when soldiers stopped being soldiers, albeit briefly, and men simply became men.

The things that I enjoyed most about reading *Turkish Charlie Ryan* was how the stories and illustrations complemented each other perfectly. The stories of Charlie Ryan and his comrades in arms (on both sides), the photos that he was brave enough to take during the armistice and the touching letters towards the end of the book that twenty-first century Turkish children wrote to fellow children living in Australia make this a rich and memorable book. It is full of rich sources, and lines up perfectly with the 'Perspectives and Experiences' aspect of the Australian curriculum on war.

Both these books would be wonderful additions to any History teacher's toolkit, and both would engage even the most reluctant History student. They are suitable for students from Year 9 right through to senior VCE History, and would be particularly relevant for those students studying World War I. Younger students would find both books easy to read and understand. *Turkish Charlie Ryan* would appeal to more visual learners, while senior students would benefit from hearing Bill Carroll's first-hand perspective during and after the Great War. Overall, I enjoyed both historical books, each for its own style.