Australian books on WWI: A list for young people

Picture Books

Simpson and His Donkey by Mark Greenwood
Two boys grow up in London together. One boy, Jack, sails to Australia seeking adventure. Jack lands in Gallipoli as a stretcher-bearer. He enlists a donkey's help to tirelessly carry wounded soldiers to the hospital. A strange twist of fate brings the friends together one last time.

In Flanders fields by Norman Jorgensen
It is Christmas Eve on the Great Western Front, when one soldier ventures into No Man's Land to rescue a bird trapped on the barbed wire. Soldiers from both sides join together singing Silent Night. Very poignant.

Night Without Darkness by Elizabeth Stanley
Set on a 'birding' island off Tasmania, Australia just as the War breaks out. A young girl is friends with a young man who leaves for the War. We share in her grief when the news comes of his death.

Richthofen The Red Baron by Raymond Briggs
Written about the Red Baron, the greatest German pilot in WWI. It was interesting to read about the War from the view point of Germany.
Chapter Books

The Donkey who Carried the Wounded: The Famous Story of Simpson and His Donkey - a True Anzac Legend
by Jackie French

Most Australians know of Simpson and his donkey, who became heroes at Gallipoli, even among the Turkish forces. Did you know another man carried on rescuing the wounded with the donkey after Simpson died? A story of Anzac heroism.

War Horse
by Michael Morpurgo

In 1914, Joey, a beautiful bay-red foal, is sold to the army and thrust into the midst of the war on the Western Front.

The Silver Donkey
by Sonya Hartnett

A lieutenant walks away from a battle in France during World War I. Tired of the fighting and unable to see, he wants to return home to England. Four children living near the English Channel find him and provide him with food and other supplies. The children work on a plan to help the man across the channel.

Soldier Boy
by Anthony Hill

The true story of Jim Martin, the youngest Anzac.
On 28th June 1915, young James Martin sailed from Melbourne on the troopship Berrima, bound ultimately for Gallipoli. He was just 14 years old. This is Jim's extraordinary story of how an enthusiastic school boy became Australia's youngest Anzac.
War Games
by James Riordan

It's Christmas Eve, 1914, and there's a war on. British and German soldiers sit in the muddy trenches either side of No Man's Land, as deadly enemies. Suddenly, a strange sound fills the air. A German voice is singing 'Silent Night'. A British sergeant joins in, and so begins a most unusual evening.

Road to War
by Valerie Wilding

It's 1917 and the Great War rages in Europe. When Daffy Rowntree's brother goes missing in action, she refuses to sit safely in England, and determines to do something to help win the war. Soon she finds herself in the mud and horror of the battlefields of France, driving an ambulance transporting the wounded of the trenches.

A Fortunate Life
by A.B Facey

Autobiography. Born in 1894, Facey lived the rough frontier life of a sheep farmer, survived the gore of Gallipoli, raised a family through the Depression and spent sixty years with his beloved wife, Evelyn. Despite enduring hardships we can barely imagine today.
Non-Fiction

The Gallipoli Story
by Patrick Carylon

Full of pertinent information, written so children can easily understand the real meaning behind events of Gallipoli.

My Grandad Marches On ANZAC Day
by Catriona Hoy, Benjamin Johnson

A small girl goes to the pre-dawn ANZAC Day service with her father where they watch her grandad march in the parade.

In Flanders Fields
by Norman Jorgensen,
Illustrated by Brian Harrison-Lever

A young WWI soldier risks his life to rescue a bird.

Anzac Cottage: The House That Was Built in a Day
by Valerie Everett
Illustrated by Barbara McGuire

This work recreates an historic community celebration of the early ANZAC legend using archival photographs and evocative illustrations. On 12 February, 1916, two hundred residents of Mount Hawthorn in Perth, Western Australia rallied together to build a cottage over the course of a single day for one of the first wounded ANZAC soldiers to return from the Gallipoli. Watched by more than 4,000 spectators, 'Anzac Cottage' (as the building became formally known), was opened with great fanfare by the then Premier of Western Australia, The Hon John Scaddan.
Memorial by Gary Crew Illustrated by Shaun Tan

A Moreton Bay Fig tree, planted as a memorial to Australian soldiers killed in World War I, is slated to be cut down by the local council. A young boy tells the moving story of the tree, as related by his great grandfather, grandfather, and father, each of whom has participated in wars over the years. Interweaving themes of war, memory, and conservation, this book blends a sensitive text with brilliantly original collage art by Shaun Tan to bring an important lesson to young readers.

Simpson and Duffy by M Small

John Simpson Kirkpatrick was born in England but came to work and travel in Australia. After the outbreak of WWI he joined the army with the 3rd Field Ambulance along with the thousands of volunteers believing he would get a free passage home to see his mother and sister. Instead, at dawn on April 25th 1915 he landed on Gallipoli and became part of the ANZAC legend. In 2003 this best-selling book was shortlisted for 'Australian Awards for Excellence in Education Publishing'.

Caesar the Anzac Dog by Patricia Stroud Illustrated by Bruce Potter

When the New Zealand Rifle Brigade marched down Queen Street to board their transport ship to Egypt and the Western Front in World War I, they were led by their official mascot, a bulldog called Caesar. Trained as a Red Cross dog, Caesar rescued wounded soldiers at the Battle of the Somme.

The Donkey of Gallipoli: A True Story of Courage in World War I by Mark Greenwood Illustrated Frané Lessac

Two unlikely heroes rescue hundreds of men wounded in war in a poignant picture book based on a true tale of World War I. When Jack Simpson was a boy in England, he loved leading donkeys along the beach for a penny a ride. So when he enlists as a stretcher bearer in World War I, his gentle way with those animals soon leads him to his calling. Braving bullets and bombs on the battlefields of Gallipoli, Jack brings a donkey to the aid of 300 Allied soldiers — earning both man and donkey a beloved spot in legend.
Harry And The Anzac Poppy
by John Lockyer
Illustrated by Raewyn Whaley

Harry learns about the First World War through reading his Great-Great Grandfather's letters home from the Western Front. The letters describe what it was like to be a soldier in the trenches and express the feelings of loneliness and fear which they experienced.

Young Adults

Scarecrow Army: The ANZACS at Gallipoli by Leon Davidson

On 25 April 1915, thousands of Australians and New Zealanders landed at an unnamed cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula. They had come to fight the Turks. They thought the battle would be over in three days. Months later they were still in the trenches they’d dug at the landing. Anzac Cove became a graveyard where bodies lay above the ground and the living slept under it. They had gone looking for the adventure of a lifetime. A book for a young audience that corrects much of the starry-eyed jingoism but that will nevertheless leave its readers with pride and a warm glow on Anzac Day.

A Rose for the ANZAC Boys by Jackie French

The 'War to end all Wars', as seen through the eyes of three young women. It is 1915. War is being fought on a horrific scale in the trenches of France, but it might as well be a world away from sixteen-year-old New Zealander Midge Macpherson, at school in England learning to be a young lady. But the war is coming closer: Midge's brothers are in the army, and her twin, Tim, is listed as 'missing' in the devastating defeat of the Anzac forces at Gallipoli.