

A Young Maori's Experience

Thandiwe Parker

The papers called, the news was around
 'Sign Up. We Want You.
 Fight For Your Country'
I was a traditional warrior, it felt like a challenge.
 Fight for what you believe in.
 My family. My iwi. My country.
 Fight for them, Keep them free.
 So I took the challenge.

Aramataku, Herewini, Pte. Killed in Action, Gallipoli, 6/8/15.

My day arrived. My name was called.
I boarded the boat. Excitement. Anticipation. Pride.
My Pakeha comrades treated me with respect.
 I was part of a team.
 I was an individual.
 Not just a Maori soldier.
Gallipoli peninsular was just around the corner.
 I was eager.

Carroll, Tuahae, Cpl. Killed in Action, Gallipoli, 10/12/15.

We arrived.
 The sea was turning red.
 The Turks were shooting us down.
 Sitting ducks we were.
 This was not what we expected.
This outside world was different to what I had imagined.
 We were small.
 We were dying.

Hare, Heremaia, Pte. Killed in Action, Gallipoli, 7/8/15.

In the trenches, shivering and sick.
Members of my iwi, comrades and brothers.
 Killed around me.
 My friends.
 All fighting for a common cause.
 Grief, sorrow, stricken.
New Zealand. My homeland. My cause to keep trying.

Maraki, Tautuhi, Pte. Killed in Action, Gallipoli, 9/8/15.

I realised something.
Here, I fought in uniform, alongside Europeans.
I was fighting in a European war.
My culture was nothing here.
My homeland, far away.
I am a soldier for New Zealand.
And my identity is lost.

Papuni, Kurei, Pte. Killed in Action, Gallipoli, 6/8/15.

War has ended.
Those left have returned home.
I am discriminated against.
Thanked,
But not receiving rehab assistance.
A torn and broken man.
Back home to my ways and life.
Never the same.

34 Maori Died at Gallipoli.

I have gained individuality.
Knowledge about the outside world.
Pride in knowing I fought for my family. My iwi. Aotearoa.

But I lost.

(All Maori names used above are used respectfully, accessed from
<http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-CowMaor-t1-back-d1-d1-d1.html>)

The Days go Thrice
Kathryn Mitchener

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To stand so tall
On such a day
These young men proud
Not one will stay
Uniforms fresh
They stand in line
Many so young
Yet a man defined
Off to war
Their heads held high
Not one will fail
Too brave to die

We lay today
Our bodies sore
Our trenches deep
Our lives unsure
The rain pelts down
There's mud and slush
Our mothers' biscuits
Turned into mush
And we are soldiers
We are strong
We fight for justice
And right the wrong

Today we stand
Many men have gone
Wars have passed
It's been so long
A poppy flutters
Pinned to my chest
A constant reminder
Of those that left
To stand so tall
On such a day
Those young men proud
Now gone today

Shell of a Man

Bronwyn James

One of ten thousand,
He marched out from the homelands,
Answering a call to war,
Rifle clasped in strong hands.

Honour bound not to shrink away,
They were ordered to storm the beaches.
The Turkish were there, ready to slay,
And blood ran in rivers.

I remember the day he came back,
Covered in bronze, gold, silver and tin.
His uniform like gift wrap,
Crisp, with no sign of impurities.

Honoured with an emotional parade,
He mourned his comrades he lost that day.
One of ten thousand,
He was lucky to be alive.

Outraged by the battle,
We'd never quite lost so many.
Survivors were heroes,
And the dead live on in memory.

Neighbours hailed his return.
To them he was the invincible hero,
They didn't see the ways his eyes would burn,
With unshed tears.

He has fits at night,
And more during the day.
Behind sealed doors,
He relives the nightmares of his Turkish stay.

Society tells me, it's 'okay',
He fought for the right ideals.
But in their eyes I see it,
They find it hard to believe it.

A shining solider,
But the shell of a man.
The choice was not his,
It was made for him.

His Story Denyce Su'a

I rose before the sun this morning and pinned a flower to my shirt. I walked together with neighbours and friends to a place where you were ready to tell your story.

You left home with a smile on your face and excitement in your heart. Hand in hand with your neighbours from all over, you marched off to war.

You wrote home and told them of your adventures overseas. Pride filled your heart and the letter was signed by a man.

You marched on with your chin held high. Your accent was thick and hard to understand but you soldiered on and gained the respect of your fellow comrades.

You saw him get shot and your heart dropped. You didn't know him, but his face reminded you of your brother and you cried for home.

You moved from place to place and lost was the feeling of security. You longed for a reassuring nod of safety, a heartfelt thank you, a warm embrace.

You wrote home and told them of your experiences overseas. Sadness filled your heart and the letter was signed by a man with lost hope.

You ran onto the beach and your voice fell silent. You saw surprise and anguish and your world went mute with the deafening sounds of attack.

There was no sound. There was no movement. There was only nothing.

You stood there, drenched in rain, covered in blood and reeking of death. Surrounded by your brothers, you cried and the thunder covered your sadness.

I sat there in the cold and listened to your story. It was early morning and I sat atop a hill and witnessed your struggle and triumph.

I looked around at the people whose lives you touched. They sat there thankful, proud and inspired.

I stood and went to shake your hand. I looked in your eyes and saw the history you were proud to be apart of.

I met your brothers both in flesh and stone. Their names forever carved into the memory of this nation.

I asked you if you would do it all over again if you could. You said that as long as this country was proud to be 'Kiwi', you would. And forever will.

I slept just as the sun went down, thinking to myself:
'Thank you my friend, thank you'.