Gallipoli- Movie Review

“A promising track star's running career is interrupted by Australia's entrance into World War I. Archie is an excellent candidate for the Olympics but nonetheless abandons his athletic pursuits in order to do the patriotic thing and sign up to join the ill-fated, true-to-life attempt to capture Istanbul from the might of the Turkish army.” – Empire Online

The film Gallipoli takes place during World War I's Gallipoli campaign in 1915. The two main characters in the film are Archy and Frank. They are from Western Australia and they both enlist to fight in Gallipoli. Archy is an extremely fast runner who meets Frank at an athletics competition. We can see from the beginning that Archy is eager to join the war. After being turned down because he was underage, he goes to Perth, anxious for someone to accept him into the light horsemen. Frank, however, is sceptical about Australians wanting to join the war. He tells Archy that it's "not our war to fight". Despite this statement, Frank eventually joins up into the infantry. Gallipoli shows the chaos of the war and tells a compelling and engaging story.

Gallipoli is Australia's ideal war movie. It works as a stirring tribute to the ANZAC's (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps), a criticism of the travesty which is war, and a commentary on just what drives men to sign up for the Armed forces be it duty of country, a sense of adventure, the sex appeal of being in uniform, or buying into the propaganda war machine. Yet its main theme is the mateship between its two lead characters and indeed the mateship between every soldier.

Director Peter Weir and his crew have placed great strain into creating Australia round about 1915, with flawless costume and production designs. Gallipoli was mainly shot in rural South Australia, with cinematographer Russell Boyd capturing the outback in all of its ordinary yet majestic glory. However, several key scenes are blemished by composer Brain May's decision to use electronic synthesisers during the films score, which clashes against the films early 20th Century setting.

The film is set in Western Australia, where two rival athletes – one an 18 year old patriotic farmhand Archie (Mark Lee), the other a resourceful wanderer Frank (Mel Gibson), who form a strong bond whilst travelling to Perth in order to join the Australian Army in the battle against Turkish forces in Gallipoli.

The most interesting scenes are the ones set and filmed in Cairo, Egypt, where the Anzacs were trained to fight against “the enemy”, while longing to the temptations of the flesh in the city's various brothels, and the con of various antique merchants. And it's quite a sight viewing a game of Aussie rules played against the backdrop of the great pyramids.

The Australian Diggers of World War One displayed a mateship that was beyond any ordinary bond, they were willing to face unthinkable odds and place their lives at risk not only for their country, but
also for their mates. In the film Gallipoli, director Peter Weir illustrates the importance of mateship and demonstrates why it is recognised as a part of our national identity. The text largely focuses on the protagonists Frank and Archie's journey, both physically and mentally. It places their mateship under 'the microscope' and allows the viewer to observe it evolve over time. The reason why they are mates is also illuminated; their common interest in running serves as a theme throughout the film. The text further envisions the qualities that mateship entails and raises the idea that hardship draws people closer together. Through Frank and Archy's actions the film ultimately advertises the importance that mateship brings.