

Teaching Resource: Tales of Three Campaigns

by Major C. B. Brereton, V.D.

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Foreword: Dr Christopher Pugsley

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Focus

New Zealand military history, World War I, personal testimony, and regimental identity.

Resource Overview

Tales of Three Campaigns is a compelling first-person account of Major C. B. Brereton's experiences during three military campaigns: Gallipoli, the Western Front in France, and the post-war occupation of Germany.

Rich with detail and personality, this text provides a unique lens through which students can engage with New Zealand's contribution to World War I, the lived reality of soldiers, and the significance of regimental camaraderie and duty.

Curriculum Links

New Zealand Curriculum: Levels 5–8 (Years 9–13)

Learning Areas:

Social Sciences (History)

English (Reading, Writing, Speaking)

Key Competencies:

Thinking

Using Language, Symbols, and Texts

Relating to Others

Key Themes

New Zealand's role in World War I

Personal narratives in history

Leadership and duty

Psychological and physical cost of war

Memory and commemoration

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Understand the structure and purpose of a soldier's personal narrative.
- Analyse the experiences of New Zealand soldiers in Gallipoli and on the Western Front.
- Evaluate how personal and national identities are shaped through war.
- Compare historical narrative with textbook or formal historical accounts.
- Reflect on the relevance of World War I stories to New Zealand's national identity.

Lesson Sequence

Lesson 1: Introduction to the Text and Historical Context

Objective:

Introduce students to World War I and Major Brereton; examine the purpose of personal narratives

Activities:

Watch a short documentary clip on New Zealand in World War I.

Read the Foreword by Dr Christopher Pugsley.

Discuss the role of soldier memoirs in historical understanding.

Timeline activity: Place Gallipoli, France, and Germany within the broader context of World War I.

Homework:

Read Chapter 1 and write a reflection on Brereton's tone and purpose.

Lesson 2: Gallipoli – The Baptism of Fire

Objective:

Explore the Gallipoli Campaign through Brereton's personal account.

Activities:

Close reading of selected passages describing the landing and trench conditions.

Discussion: What does Brereton reveal that official histories might omit?

Group work: Create a map of the campaign based on Brereton's descriptions.

Assessment:

Write a paragraph comparing Brereton's Gallipoli account with a textbook description.

Lesson 3: The Western Front – Courage and Carnage

Objective:

Analyse life on the Western Front and the psychological impact of warfare on soldiers.

Activities:

Read selected excerpts from the France chapters.

Discuss Brereton's leadership style and his relationships with fellow soldiers.

Mini-lecture on trench warfare and technological changes in World War I.

Creative Task: Write a fictional diary entry from a soldier under Brereton's command

Lesson 4: Occupation and Aftermath – Reflections on War

Objective:

Evaluate the final campaign and the long-term effects of war.

Activities:

Read the final chapters covering the German occupation and return home.

Discuss the theme of memory: How does Brereton remember the war?

Explore the concept of regimental identity and duty.

Assessment:

Group presentations examining how war shaped Brereton and his men.

Lesson 5: Commemoration and Legacy

Objective:

Connect Brereton's narrative to New Zealand's cultural memory.

Activities:

Discuss: How should soldiers like Brereton be remembered today?

Investigate local war memorials or family military histories.

Design a commemorative plaque, exhibition, or digital tribute.

Final Assessment (Choose One)

Essay:

How does Tales of Three Campaigns help us understand the New Zealand experience of World War I?

OR

Creative Option:

Produce a short podcast episode or video using Brereton's experiences as a foundation.

Extension Activities

Compare with The Silent Division or Guerrilla Surgeon to explore multiple perspectives.

Write a letter to Major Brereton responding to his story.

Investigate the history of the 12th (Nelson) Company N.Z.E.F.

Assessment Criteria

Historical understanding and effective use of evidence

Ability to interpret and reflect on primary narratives

Clarity and creativity in written and/or oral responses

Engagement with key themes and concepts