

Archie Little

Stage 6

On 1 March 1939 in the town of Armidale, there was a great war that erupted, threatening the peace and prosperity of the beautiful region. The Armidale School (TAS), known for its noble traditions and unwavering commitment to its students, was at the centre of this dangerous conflict.

In this tale, the school's sprawling campus became a refuge for the town's displaced and vulnerable victims. As the war raged on, students and staff stepped up to protect their beloved institution and those seeking shelter within its walls.

The Headmaster Mr Nixon Miller, a wise and respected leader, rallied the students, transforming the school into a fortress of hope and resilience. CUO, Mark Williams the head of the Cadet unit, who is a student, organised safety drills and training sessions to prepare for any potential attacks. The young students in the cadet unit displaying extraordinary courage, took on various responsibilities, from standing guard and forming defensive teams to patrolling the perimeter, in case of threat.

Among the students, James and Nixon emerged as exceptional head prefect leaders and beacons of hope to those around them. James, a natural strategist and skilled athlete, inspired his peers with his unwavering determination, strength, and courage. Nixon a talented musician with a heart of gold, used his music to soothe the anxieties of those around him and lift spirits during the darkest hours.

As the war intensified, enemy forces attempted to breach the school's defenses. With fierce persistence, the students and staff bravely fought back, pushing the invaders away and protecting their cherished homes. The courage and unity displayed by The Armidale School

(TAS) community earned them great admiration and support from neighboring villages and communities.

As the war drew on, James, Nixon, and their fellow students faced many personal challenges and made great sacrifices. They experienced moments of fear and doubt, but their camaraderie and resilience kept them going. Bonds formed amidst the turmoil, friendships strengthened, and love blossomed amidst the chaos.

Through sheer determination and a united spirit, The Armidale School (TAS) community not only defended their campus but also managed to establish a humanitarian aid center, offering assistance to those affected by the war outside its gates.

As the war eventually came to an end a few months later, the Armidale region celebrated a spectacular Passing out parade on Friday the 8th of September, put on by The Armidale School (TAS) to farewell Year 12 students in the unit but also signify the end of the war. The campus that once bore the scars of war now stood as a symbol of hope and strength. The students, led by head prefect James, Nixon, and even CUO, Mark Williams had not only defended their home but had also proven that, even in the darkest times, a united community could make a significant difference.

While this story is entirely fictional, it highlights the values of bravery, unity, and resilience of The Armidale School (TAS), which aims to instill in its students. In reality, The Armidale School (TAS), like many educational institutions, is focused on providing a safe and supportive environment for its students to learn and grow.

The Honour Board

It was 2am the sky was as dark as the shoes I had polished the night before.

Time to rise, although this time it wasn't to the sound of air raids and bombs like all those years ago in Borneo.

It still haunts me to this day, although I don't talk about it much.

I remember getting drafted into the Army and my mother signing papers not really knowing what they were for. I was only seventeen, my life about to change forever.

As I pinned my medals on my jacket the memories that came to my mind were mixed. Still dark, I make my way into the city for the dawn service.

Over the years the sombre crowd has grown like the longest branches of a colossal fig tree. The Last Post breaks the silence in Martin Place.

The crowd is still, my mind slips away to the many years before, we were just boys, our bodies strong and a whole life in front of us not yet lived.

I look to the Honour Board I see the names of those who did not come home, I remember them. I think of what their life could have been.

I feel the loss, I see their faces, I hear their voices, the list on the Honour Board is longer than the overgrown tracks where the battle took place.

Lest We Forget.

By Elliott Schaeffer

Enlisted

Evelyn Brownlie

Stage 3

Only the bravest would dare to enlist. Many did. Risking their lives for their country, leaving the safety of their family's and their school. Leaving the charming school was the hardest part. The chirping of birds, the cool breeze, the lawnmower clunking around the oval, students stomping up stairs, professors shouting, boys at rugby training, but most of all the beautiful sights of the Dining Hall and the house banners dangling from the boat hull-like ceiling, Big school and the eeriness of the long corridors and hallways. How they were going to miss TAS.

Dank and repulsive were the words that could only begin to describe the trenches. They were vile. The smell. The rats. It was unbearable. Truly a sickening experience. But it doesn't end there. For anyone who made it home, would have to fight their way through ghastly memories of those they loved who died right in front of their eyes. A horrible trip of what was promised glory, adventure and pride for home countries. A lie. Thousands tragically died, many civilians or young men and women who lied about their age to fight for their home that was so far away from those they loved so dearly, whom they would never see again. Many soldiers wrote letters to their loved ones, explaining their desperation to get home. The food was less than appealing. Cakes made with ash and pepper. Only the ANZAC biscuits were worth eating. The only thing to keep them going until they could come back to the warmth of family and friends.

Finally home. Although blessed to come home in one piece, scars inside and out. Never shall they forget their best friends die right in front of them. Though scars from bullets and bombs can heal, losing a best friend will never ever be forgotten. Something imprinted into their identity. Never to leave. But now they are home and they are once again safe.

Megan Varvari

Stage 4

Honour

Gunshots. All he hears are gunshots. An explosion in the distance. Shrapnel flying their way. A feeling of worry and uncertainty washes over his weary body. The air instantly becomes thicker and harder to breathe, and slowly his vision becomes hazy. Then all there is is darkness.

A bright white light pierces through his eyelids, waking him from his otherwise undetermined slumber. Nurses are running around a crowded room. A cacophony. Noises of coughing and sneezing and screaming and pain. He looks around, cautiously turning his injured neck, slowing every time he hears it crack. A woman lies on a thin mattress next to him. The woman has thick, blonde hair, and a face drained of all energy, pale as paper. Her arm is crooked, seemingly broken, and spotted with bruises and a bloody gauze wrapped around it. She looks unconscious, but he is curious about her, so he leans over and taps her shoulder. No response, as expected. He turned over again and shut his eyes. He thought it wise to get some rest, as he didn't know what was going on and what was to happen next.

Breathing heavily, jaggedly, chest rising and falling with difficulty. Heart beating irregularly. Eyes wide open. Conscious.

"Where am I?" he asks, almost demanding. "Where am I?" He was beginning to move, trying to get out of the underwhelming hospital bed, the bedframe shaking violently at even the slightest movement.

"Sir, please settle down. You are in no condition to move, let alone leave." A nurse explains as she walks up to him. She has long, black hair in a neat French braid. It hangs behind her knees. Her skin is olive, her eyes a subtle green, and her expression anxious.

"What even happened? This is absolute nonsense!" He retorts. His pale face scrunched up. His glassy eyes filled with emotion. Rage.

"Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to calm down. This is unsafe for you and others. Please, stop. Don't get cross over something so small and unimportant. Everything will be explained in time. Right now you need to rest." The nurse attempted to assure him.

"No. I want to know..." he trails off, and passes out.

“Officer, what do we do now?”

“I don’t know, soldier. Whatever happens, we fight with pride. We fight with glory.”

Breathing heavily, jaggedly, chest rising and falling with difficulty. Heart beating irregularly. Eyes wide open. Conscious again. The blue sky was just a memory now. Not sure how long it had been since he saw one. Anything he could remember was dear and valuable. He needed to hold on. The lights become dimmer. The night approaches, the inky, blue sky creeping through the thin windows. He fades off into a light, gentle sleep.

“Officer! We’re outnumbered. The enemy is stronger than what we anticipated! It’s over. It was not just a pleasure, but an honour to serve with you, sir.”

“What are you talking about? There is still time for us to fight back.”

“Have you seen what is going on out there? There is not a chance. That is a delusional idea. We are done. Goodbye, sir.”

“NO!”

He jolts up. Cold sweat dripping down his back.

“Nightmare?” It was the lady in the bed next to him.

“Well, yes. It felt so real.” He replied.

“I understand. The vividness brings back the trauma. It is truly frightening.”

“Well, at least I know what I need to do now.”

“And what would that be?”

“I must avenge him.”

“Who is him?”

“My best friend. My closest friend. He was even more than a brother to me.”

“What happened?”

“Never mind that. What really matters is what I am going to do now.”

TAS Creative Writing Competition

Sam Trevaskis

Stage 1 (Year 1)

Once upon a time there was a fight. The fight started a World War. Lots of soldiers from countries all over the world were fighting in the war. Some of them were from a school. They were young Aussies.

A dog had travelled with the Aussies to the war. His name was Sergeant Russell. He was a bulldog. Russell kept the soldiers happy by playing with them and doing tricks. The soldiers taught him to fetch things and one day he rescued five peoples' lives.

Another day, Russell wounded himself while he was trying to save some more soldiers. The soldiers thought he was very brave and took good care of him because he had always looked after them.

At the end of the war, Russell got a medal for bravery. He also got a big delicious bone to chew on. Russell lived the rest of his life on the army base back in Australia. He made thousands of soldiers happy and he was very spoilt.

It's Always the Gold

by Tara Schalk (Parents, Staff and Community)

The page seemed to rest heavily between my fingers. The familiar granularity of the paper was comforting as my thumb tracked aimlessly backwards and forwards. I didn't need to open my eyes. This was a journey I had taken many times and the meandering pathway was intimately recognisable.

Shadows flittered across my closed eyelids, momentarily casting my thoughts into a dusky twilight. Searching within the dimness I caught the glimmer of gold. It was always the gold, shimmering at the very edges of my consciousness. I could never quite make out the words, the angle of the board obscuring their decryption. I drew in a shallow breath. I didn't need to read the words that were ornately scribed onto the mahogany honour board, I could feel them in my very soul.

Shifting slightly, I rested the back of my head against the recliner. I can hear his giggles and then the seriousness of his voice as he says, "no Mumma, I want to read I Love Planes." I pull him into my lap laughing, "don't you want to read something else?" I enquire. He shakes his head, strawberry blonde hair tickling my cheek. "No Mumma, this is what I want to read." I smile, open the book, and start reading. We read this book at least once a day, if not twice and his little lips move in silence as he recites every word by heart. I feel his body tense as we get to his favourite part. I hesitate, building the suspense and then whisper, "this small jet is often used to fly people to important meetings. Inside the cabin are!" With a flurry of his arms he yells, "comfortable seats, cushions, tables and carpets." I kiss him gently on the cheek and his brown eyes search my face with such innocence. "Mumma, I'm going to be a pilot when I grow up and help people."

My body feels hot, and I can feel beads of perspiration forming on my forehead. The roaring sound of the blood pumping through my body gives way to the methodical hum of a Cessna taxiing down the runway. I squint, trying to keep the plane in focus as it seemingly merges into the blackness of the tarmac. I cock my head and listen. I will myself to stay calm as the engine reaches fever pitch and the plane, almost awkwardly, lifts into the air. Briefly he is silhouetted against a blue-grey sky before disappearing into its vastness. For a long time, I stand, staring in the direction of flight, imagining the grin that would surely be plastered across his face.

There's a tightness in my chest. I check my watch and settle into my chair. The century old memorial hall stands without change, unlike the familiar faces that surround me etched with the marching of time. We stand for the national anthem. My focus is on the stage as the principal of the school takes her place at the microphone. I hear the rise and fall of her voice. The passion, the admiration and the emphasis placed on certain words, but I'm not listening. I hear his name. I know that I am holding my breath and my body stills. A young man, tall, with the darkest of hair wearing an immaculately pressed air force dress uniform appears from behind the wings. I let my breath out and watch him confidently stride towards the microphone. The emotion I feel threatens to unravel my composure and I only hear snippets of his story. "Over 200 peace-keeping flights, numerous natural disaster rescue missions, and thousands of people's lives touched by his kindness and compassion," the principal announces. "This young man is a 2025 graduate, and it is my greatest pleasure to induct him into the school's hall of fame," the principal says reaching for his hand. He accepts the honour with grace and unveils his name, written in gold, on the mahogany honour board. Our eyes meet and I can no longer control the sudden desire to cry.

The page slipped from my fingers. I slowly opened my eyes taking a moment to focus on my surroundings. I followed the snaking clear tube of the cannula down my arm, admiring its graceful arc across my knuckles and the precision in which it pierced my skin. The skin is red and puckered and I'm

sure I can see the vein throbbing around the needle. I watched the fluid slowly shunt along the cannula line to the rhythmic click of the infusion pump. His hand was large, I could feel its strength as he took my fragile hand in his. With a weariness weaved into every fibre of my body I slowly turned my head. His brown eyes scanned my face and I smiled weakly. He leaned in and kissed me softly on the cheek. I reached out and traced the outline of the gold wings proudly displayed on his left breast pocket. I could tell his very core was shaken, and I watched as the pain overflowed and trickled down his cheeks. "Why can't I save you Mumma," he whispered. My heart shattered.