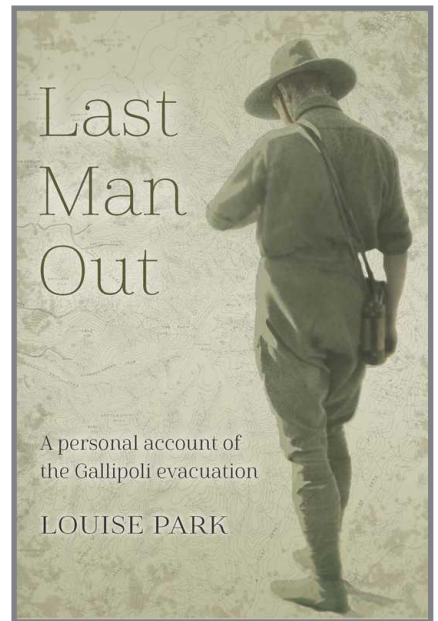


# Last Man Out: A Personal Account of the Gallipoli Evacuation



AUTHOR  
**LOUISE PARK**

**SCIS:** 5438716

**ISBN:** 9781742036427

**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Lower to Mid Secondary  
(Violence)

## SYNOPSIS

The evacuation from Gallipoli of Australian and New Zealand troops was a logistically incredible undertaking. The exhausted young men were to slip away by ship in the dead of night. But someone needed to remain behind to cover for their fellow soldiers.

This was a mission that almost certainly meant death.

Would it be you?

Would you volunteer to be the last man out?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Louise Park is one of Australia's leading children's authors, publishers and educational consultants. She has had over 20 years experience in teaching, publishing, seminar presenting and writing both fiction and nonfiction.

## STUDY NOTES

### BEFORE READING

- As a class discuss the title and cover.
  - Why might the soldier be facing away from the reader?
  - Why might the front cover feature a map of Gallipoli, while the back has an image of the bay?
- 'Would it be you? Would you volunteer to be the last man out?' Do you think you'd volunteer?
- Given the men are soldiers in an army where orders must be obeyed, is volunteer the right word? What word might you choose?
- Read and discuss the book's dedication:
 

'For those who in the face of adversity discover that there exists an opportunity to help others and do so.'

  - Who might the author be referring to?
  - Compare the different times of adversity soldiers at Gallipoli faced.
  - What types of adversity today might the author be referring to?
- As a class, discuss what students already know about the Gallipoli campaign. Lead them to discuss what they know of the withdrawal.
- Create a KWL worksheet and ask students to fill in the columns using the following questions as guidelines.

- K—What I know about Gallipoli and the withdrawal.
- W—What I want to know about Gallipoli and the withdrawal.
- After reading, return to the KWL Sheet to complete—What I have learnt.

### WHILE READING

- Examine the Contents page. Discuss the timeframe. What clues do they give about the story?

#### John Alexander Park

- Examine the photo of Park. What might the image show about him?
- Discuss the following quote from Park's:

“No doubt our mates on the transport cannot sleep at the moment because they all believe the rear guard is doomed.”

What clues does the quote offer about Gallipoli soldiers?

- Discuss the choice of the word ‘doomed’.

#### 1915 Gallipoli

- How does the first chapter prepare you for the story?
- What does it show you about conditions, morale and the relationship between the two sides?

#### The Turks

- Discuss the following text on p 6: ‘. . . it is getting harder and harder to think of them as our enemy. We’ve helped each other bury the dead, traded cigarettes and bully beef, and shared a laugh, some notes, and a handshake.’
  - Does this description surprise you?
  - How would their feelings towards the Turks affect the soldiers when it came to battle?

#### September 12—Sickness, a constant companion

- Examine the photo on p 8. What does it show you about conditions at Gallipoli? How does that compare to *your* understanding of conditions?
- This chapter begins with a dream. What does the dream show about Park’s life?
  - Why might the author have chosen to include ‘Ring o’ Rosies’?

#### October 2—A prickly affair in No Man’s Land

- What do you know of No Man’s Land?
- Discuss the story shared by Park, and the two incidents of humour. ‘One prisoner going cheap.’ ‘To Let. Nice dugout with valley views.’ Discuss what you know about ‘trench humour’. Why might the soldiers find humour in things that you may not find funny?

#### October 6—Rest Gully Hospital

- Examine the images on pp 13, 14 and 17. What medical issues might the soldiers have faced?
- In pairs, have students research one aspect of the care of injured and ill soldiers during the Gallipoli campaign. They can then present their findings to the class.

#### October 10—Moments of home

- When mail and packages arrive from home, Park and the other soldiers are quick to share news and gifts. Given the conditions, discuss why they may do this?
- Reread pp 20–21. What details does this provide about Park’s life?
- Authors choose images and describe imagery with care to provide information about characters. List the details the author has included to paint a picture of Park’s home and family. What image had the biggest emotional impact on you? What further information does this passage give you about Park?

#### October 29—C2 mine under the enemy trenches

- Discuss the courage shown by Park and Rankin in rescuing the soldiers.
- Park says ‘my lungs are cactus’. What might that mean?

#### November 5—A visit from the Royal Engineers and a bit of mischief-making

- At the start of this chapter, the men are discussing food. Why might they be doing so in such great detail?
- Read the opening of Mid November (p 28) What does this suggest about food at Gallipoli?
  - Research the food eaten at Gallipoli.

#### Mid-November—A visit from Lord Kitchener

- Under the chapter name is the following text: ‘41,218 men, 2,363 animals at Gallipoli’. What might those numbers indicate? Why aren’t the numbers included in previous chapter headings?
- Reread the line ‘I see the way he is weighing his thoughts, and my gut twists. He thinks we are beaten.’ (p 29) How might that realisation affect Park? Provide reasons for your answers.

**November 27—The Great Blizzard/November 30—A guest artist on fashions of the season**

- Revisit the images throughout the book of the trenches and answer the following questions:
  - Discuss the impact weather might have on living and fighting conditions.
  - Which season do you think would be the toughest? Why?
  - Research the types of weather experienced at Gallipoli and how the soldiers were able to protect themselves.
- ‘There is not a single one among us that would walk away.’ (p 32) Discuss this statement.
- As someone who has never been involved in a war, you might expect that the men would be desperate to leave. Give reasons why you believe the men might have found it hard to leave.

**December 11—Evacuation plans & December 13—Shrapnel Gully Cemetery**

- After reading this chapter return to the previous discussion in November 27. What clues does this chapter give about the reasons why men might feel reluctant to leave?
- The chapter opens with the line ‘. . . the shock of evacuation rips through . . .’ Discuss the opening line. Why would evacuation affect the soldiers in this way?
- Park says ‘The rivalry begins’ (p 36). Why might soldiers want to be part of the rear guard, when it’s seen as a suicide mission? Why, when Park has family at home, would he be keen to be part of the rear guard?
- He mentions his damaged lungs. Discuss how that might influence his decision.

**9am, December 18—Courtney’s post-cold and cloudy with a high chance of enemy attack**

- Discuss the men’s ingenuity of creating a diversion using water, candles, sand and string.
- *Necessity is the mother of invention*. Discuss the proverb in light of the soldier’s inventiveness.
- How great a part does the will to live play in the soldier’s ingenuity?

**11pm, December 18—Of muffled boots and more goodbyes**

- ‘Now that the time has come for the men to withdraw, an overwhelming urge to go with them hits me like a dose of Gallipoli gallop.’ (p 42) Up until now, Park has been adamant he wanted to stay. Why might the urge to leave have hit him so hard at this time?
- Given that Park is feeling anxious about staying, why do you think he agreed to ‘. . . Stay to the last . . .’ p 42, when asked by Riddell?
- After reading this chapter, what do you think is more important in Park’s decision to stay? His courage or his sense of duty?

**5:45pm, December 19—Hold fast to the end, lads**

- At the time of the evacuation, the war was continuing in Europe and Africa. Why do you think the men left so much equipment behind during the evacuation?
- ‘We must hold the line to the last.’ (p 46) What might ‘the last’ be?
- The men vow to die before capture. Why do you think this is?

**11pm, December 19—C party, a bloomin’ picnic**

- What does this chapter show you about Park’s opinion of the Turks? What does it reveal about his personality? Do you think all soldiers would feel like this towards their enemy?
- ‘C party were handpicked.’ (p 49). What attributes and abilities might those chosen to stay have exhibited?

**2:15am, December 20—Approximately 100 men in the trenches and following chapters**

- No sleep, no water, soldiers leaving and the very real threat of a Turkish attack. What do you think kept the rear guard going?
- Do you think the men on the transport are aware of the danger the last men face?
- What affect would knowing everyone believed they were doomed have on the final men?

**Around 3:45am, December 20—The last man out/4am, December 20—The beach**

- After eight months and over 115,000 British deaths (British, Irish, Australian, India and New Zealand soldier), 40,000

troops were withdrawn in ten days without a single death. What might that say about the Gallipoli campaign?

- Why do you think Park is able to farewell the Turks with such respect? (p 59)
- Riddell and Park have been realistic about the possibility of dying. When do you think they really believed they had made it off the peninsula?

### Dawn, December 20—Farewell to Gallipoli

- What do you make of the letter from Birdwood to Park?
- Why might Park have been searching for Riddell? What might have happened to him?
- Birdwood mentions many have claimed to be the last man out. Why might they claim that title?

### Author's Note

- Discuss how war might be the greatest equaliser.
- Organise a class debate with the topic 'War is the greatest equaliser'.

### AFTER READING

- Write a newspaper article describing the Australian and New Zealand withdrawal from the Turkish point of view.
- Write a letter from a child, parent or wife to a soldier at Gallipoli. Include details that show the soldier's personality, home life and interests.
- Revisit the letters in *Last Man Out* and the letters on the following website: <https://anzac100.initiatives.qld.gov.au/remember/letters/index.aspx> Discuss what pictures they paint of the writer's experience of war. Using these letters as inspiration, as well as what you have learned from reading *Last Man Out* write a letter from a soldier or nurse at the front.
- *The Gallipoli campaign was a brutal, futile exercise.* Write a text response to the statement above. Use quotes from the text to support your writing.
- At the time Owen enlisted, Aboriginal people were not recognised as Australian citizens. It is estimated that between 400 to 800 Aboriginal men fought in WWI. In pairs, have students research the roles of Aboriginal people during WWI and write a report to present to the class.
- The author uses many descriptive tools to tell her story, including alliteration, similes and metaphors. Reread the text and identify descriptive tools that fit into the following categories:
  - Similies
  - Metaphor
  - Sensory writing
  - Onomatopoeia
  - Alliteration.
- What type of person do you think John Park was? Write an article for a newspaper about Park. As well as *Last Man Out*, using the following resources:
  - Photograph of Park (John Park photo, copy, p 8)
  - PDF JA PARK SGT honoured etc. (p 9)
  - *Last Man Out* to support your views.
- Choose one of the following characters:
  - Sapper Freddy Woods
  - Rankin
  - Owen
  - White.

Re-read the book, taking notes about each character. Use this information to create a character profile of each. Focus on their personality. Use quotes which give insight into their character (try to include both things they say and things other characters say about them).

- Rewrite a key scene from another character's perspective. For example, the No Man's Land incident, the tunnel explosion or leaving friends who are in the rear guard,
  - How does looking through the other character's eyes change your perception of the scene?

- Write a reflection about this after finishing the piece.
- Create an alternate cover for *Last Man Out*. Present your work to the class explaining how you have used visual techniques to promote this theme.
- Choose a key or favourite scene from the book and adapt it into a script. Use information from other parts of the book to make this a stand-alone piece. Change anything from the novel that might make it work better as a short drama/script. Remember to include actor direction notes. Then, perform the piece for the class.