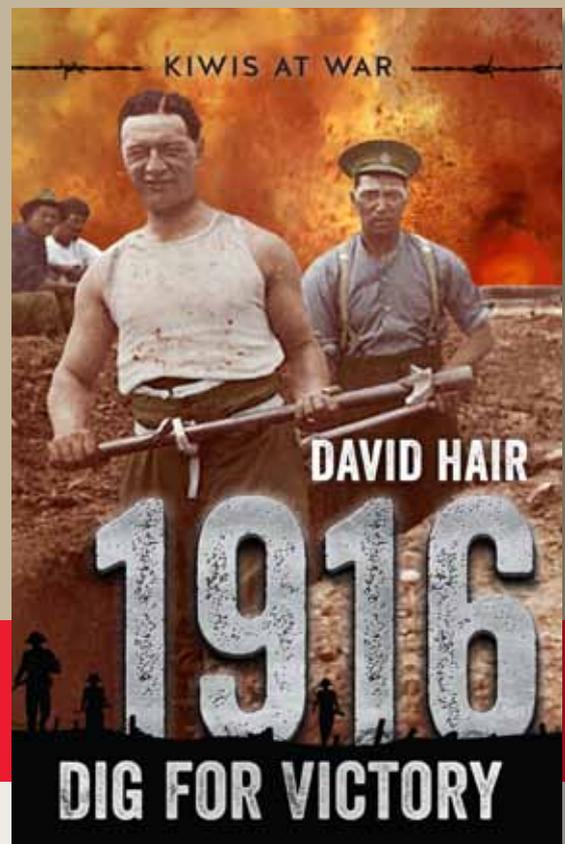


Kiwis At War 1916: Dig for Victory

By David Hair

- Reading • Listening • Writing • Social Studies
- Problem Solving • Forming an argument
- Researching • Design



Synopsis

Set in World War One, *1916 Dig for Victory* follows a couple of young soldiers in the Pioneer Battalion, one Maori and the other Pakeha, as they dig trenches and learn about life in 1916 war-torn France. Thrown together with nothing in common but a homeland, they bond while dealing with bullies, foreign lands and customs, being away from home, and dodging shells and bullets in Armentières and the Somme offensive.

Traumatised veterans and wide-eyed new recruits have come from all corners of New Zealand, a country so young it barely conceives of itself as a nation, to fight for Mother England, a place most have never even seen. They've arrived in a war like no other: the Great War, a maelstrom of fire, poison gas, artillery, and newly created weapons such as aircraft and tanks. The men of the NZ Pioneer Battalion are armed only with their picks and shovels, but are determined to dig their way into history, yard by yard.

Eighteen-year-old Leith McArran knows who he is: a Scot from Dunedin, the son of a soldier. Orphaned sixteen-year-old Tamati Baines, on the other hand, knows only that soldiers get fed and paid, and that's enough for him to lie about his age and join up. They form a unlikely friendship based on shared humour, hardship, and shared dangers.

But on the war-wracked fields of the Somme, they're going to have to learn fast or die. Especially when Tamati discovers an inner landscape of signs and portents that could be the difference between survival and annihilation for the entire battalion.

The story begins in Egypt in early 1916, where the New Zealand soldiers evacuated from Gallipoli are recovering. New recruits are flooding in too, and the New Zealand forces are being reorganised for redeployment elsewhere. As part of this, a new unit has been formed – the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion, whose role is to do logistical work behind and in the lines – digging trenches, building roads, fortifications, accommodation and such tasks. The unit is formed from two sources – half from the Otago Mounted Rifles, who are veterans of Gallipoli and who suffered terrible casualties. The other half are to be Maori and Pacific Islanders, who for various political reasons are not being permitted to join combat units. Most of them are newly arrived, apart from a few who fought in the infantry at Gallipoli.

Both groups resent being non-combatants, and initially resent each other. After a period of training, they are shipped to the Armentières sector of northern France, to begin their duties alongside the rest of the newly formed New Zealand Division. There are a number of clashes as the new unit is made to come together under the watchful eyes of their commanding officers, Colonel Augustus King and Major Peter Buck.

During this time, Leith's friendship with Tamati initially antagonises men on both sides of the racial divide and leads to some unpleasant bullying. Gradually though, their example helps break down the barriers between the Maori and the Otago men, especially when they move into the lines and come under fire. Leith is intrigued by Tamati's claims that he is a "true dreamer" who can see the future, and becomes worried for Tamati that

he is too sensitive to survive the harrowing life in the trenches. In Armentières, in their off-hours, they meet Vanessa Cardui, an enchanting half-Polynesian girl who works at a local tavern, and who is engaged to a senior British Intelligence officer.

The boys take part in trench-raids on the German lines, and begin to develop suspicions about some unusually accurate German artillery that culminates in a deadly bombardment that causes hundreds of casualties among a group of infantry preparing to raid the German lines. They become convinced that a spy is operating in the area.

The unit is moved to the Somme, and the Pioneers are the first to go in, taking over the trenches from a Scottish unit and preparing it for the New Zealand Division. Soon after arrival, they experience the worst of the war, and the German artillery begins to target their sector with increasingly destructive barrages. The 'Big Push' is coming, a second round of offensives in the ongoing Battles of the Somme.

On the eve of the Big Push, a terrifyingly accurate artillery barrage kills a number of men, including Leith's brother Calum. Shocked and grieving, Leith must nevertheless act when Tamati finally cracks an intercepted code and realises that the spy could be none other than their friend Vanessa's fiancé, Timothy. Tamati and Leith slip out of camp to warn her before they hand over what they've found to their officers.

However they are mistaken – Timothy is indeed the spy, but Vanessa is fully aware, and helping him. A deadly confrontation almost costs them their lives, but also results in the death of the two enemy agents. Afterwards, Leith returns to active duties, and Tamati – his real age of 16 finally discovered – is shipped to England and then sent home.

About the Author

David Hair is a New Zealand fantasy writer, currently living in Bangkok. He spent most of his working life in Wellington, in financial services. David became a fulltime writer after the publication of his first novel, while accompanying his wife Kerry on a government posting to India.

David's first novel *The Bone Tiki* won Best First Book at the 2010 NZ Post Children's Book Awards, and *Pyre of Queens* won the LIANZA Young Adult award in 2012. He has 10 YA novels and 4 adult novels published: in New Zealand, the UK, the USA, and India; and his adult fantasy novels have been translated into German, Dutch, Turkish and Bulgarian. David has a BA in Classical Studies and History, and a diploma in financial planning. Travel is an important part of his writing and he has lived in India and the UK, and travelled in Asia, Europe and America.

Writing Style

1916: Dig for Victory is a sensitively written and compelling novel. The story follows fictional characters through their war experience and uses actual events to frame the narrative. The novel is an engrossing way to learn about the experiences of New Zealand soldiers during World War I. The main characters, Leith and Tamati, come from very different backgrounds but they form a quick and easy friendship. There are themes that may require some support for younger readers, for example, the racist attitudes that were prevalent in New Zealand and the armed forces at that time. Through the experiences of Leith, Tamati and their fellow soldiers, readers will come to understand more of what it was like to be a soldier, and the inner struggles they faced. They will also discover the tight bonds of friendship that carried men through such harrowing times.

Maps, a timeline, glossary, historical notes and author's notes will assist readers in understanding the events, environment and language of the day.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

SHARING THE NOVEL:

During the shared sessions, encourage the students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of the words and ideas presented in the novel. Have them describe the setting of the story and identify which elements are fictional and which relate to real events. Encourage the students to make predictions about what will happen next and to identify important themes and ideas.

INTRODUCING THE NOVEL: COVER

Tell the students to study the front cover and read the back cover blurb. Then ask:

- What can you tell about the setting of this book? Which war does it involve?
- What kind of novel do you think it is? Is it realistic or fantasy? Is it serious or funny? What sort of ending might the book have? What makes you think this?
- The photo on the front cover is a real photo from World War One. What roles might these people have played in the war?

CHAPTER ONE: HOME BY CHRISTMAS

- What does 'the mercury was jammed above 40' mean? What colour is dun? (p.12)
- What is 'square bashing' and why were the soldiers asked to do it? Why would the air seem heavy when Leith thought about his father? (p.13)



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

- What does the army give the soldiers for every ailment? What happened to Leith's younger brother? (p.14)
- Why were the letters censored? What does it mean to be 'unpatriotic'? Can you give an example of something a soldier may have written that would be deemed 'unpatriotic'? Why might Leith's father, Lachlan, react in anger at the news of his sons joining a new battalion? (p.15)
- Why was Lachlan distrustful of Maori? How did Leith feel about his new battalion? What made him unhappy? (p.16)
- What is a 'dickens of a job'? Why would Colonel King have a 'dickens of a job' pulling the men together? (p.17)
- What did Lachlan mean when he'd said to Calum, 'Army life will be the making of you, boy'? Why had Sergeant McCauley 'taken against' Leith? What does 'cajole' mean? (p.19)

CHAPTER TWO: A NEW BATTALION

- How do you think the Maori soldiers were feeling about joining men who had come from an unsuccessful campaign? (p.22)
- Leith found the haka both intimidating and insulting. Do you think that was the Maori soldiers' intention? (p.23)
- Who are the 'brass hats'? What happens that makes Leith and Calum feel some connection to the Maori soldiers? What was the soldiers' new 'weapon'? (pp.24–25)
- Why was digging trenches regarded as 'an insult to their manhood'? Why was Leith nervous to go and look for the butcher? What does 'comeuppance' mean? (pp.26–27)
- Why might Leith have been quick to point out to Tamati that he wasn't English? (p.28)
- Why had the Maori soldiers buried the meat? Why did Colonel King say it wasn't necessary to dig up the meat? What do you think the consequences of McCauley seeing Leith wink at Tamati might be? (pp.29–30)
- What does 'you're on latrines' mean? Why were the men encouraged to write home? (pp.31–33)
- Why would the major be concerned about Tamati's age? Why do you think Tamati wanted to join the army, even if he was underage? (p.36)
- What did Leith learn from doing latrine duty? Why did Calum want the leave pass? (p.37)
- What clue did the soldiers get about where they might be going next? What is the 'steel serpent'? (p.38)

CHAPTER THREE: LAST DANCE

- What is an 'EnZedder'? What is an opium den? Why doesn't Leith want to join Calum and Ces? What does he want to do instead? (pp.39–42)
- What is the Aotea Club? Who goes there? What does Leith feel self-conscious about? (pp.43–44)
- What does 'fraternised with officers' mean? Why does Leith think the nurse is 'well above him'? Why would Leith have been 'ashamed to have missed it'? (pp.45–47)
- What does Sister Burlace mean by 'Not everyone who fights uses a gun'? (p.49)

CHAPTER FOUR: SAILING WEST

- What is a U-boat? What is a U-boat designed to do? (pp.51–52)
- What did Wally Kidman mean by 'a sorting out with the brown boys'? (p.53)
- What did the Maori soldiers and the Scottish soldiers have in common? (pp.54–55)
- How did Leith's image of war differ from the reality that he had experienced at Gallipoli? (p.57)
- Why did Leith get put on mop duty? How did he get let off it? What is a taniwha? (pp.59–61)
- What is a klaxon? What does it mean if you hear one? (p.62)

CHAPTER FIVE: CATTLE TRUCKS TO THE FRONT

- What do the soldiers see from the train that lets the reader know they're passing Paris? (p.67)
- What is a 'tableau'? What did the tableaux of scenes around the station seem to be saying? (p.70)
- Why was Tamati picked as the runner? (p.72)
- What does the expression 'gets my goat' mean? What is a 'quarter-master'? (p.74)
- What does 'C'est la guerre' mean? What does Prof Murdoch mean when he says it? (p.77)
- Who are the 'froggies'? Why might they be called that? (p.79)
- What is 'buttressing a strong point'? (p.80)
- Why were aircraft a novelty? What is a bi-plane? What does 'bawling them all out' mean? (p.81)
- What does Tamati think the red butterflies signify? What, or who, is 'the Karaiti'? Who is the Maori god of war? (pp.84–85)

CHAPTER SIX: THE ESTAMINET

- What does Leith realise about himself as the fight begins? How does Dansey respond to the fight? Do you think the news Dansey gives Leith when he is speaking to him about the fight may have been one of the reasons Kidman started it? (pp.91–93)
- Who is 'Jerry'? Why are they called that? (p.95)
- What were three things the soldiers could smell? Why are the trenches so wet? What animals are in there with them? (pp.97–98)
- What does 'Jerry shells anything that clanks or glows' mean? (p.100)
- Have you heard the word 'conchies' before? Do you know what it means, or can you guess what it's short for? (p.101)
- What happened to the soldiers' bodies in the trenches? (p.103)
- What time is '0300 hours'? What is a 'cache'? (p.106)
- Why do you think Madame Grenoble wanted the soldiers to sing a different song? (p.108)
- What sign does Tamati notice from his dream? (p.110)



- What had happened to the telephone line? How does Leith think it happened? (pp.111–112)
- What does Tamati see that upsets him so much that he can't carry on with the task? What does Calum predict is going to happen to Tamati? (pp.113–114)

CHAPTER SEVEN: DIGGING UNDER FIRE

- What does 'shell the trenches' mean? Why are the Germans shelling the trenches more? (p.115)
- How do the officers get a promotion in rank? What rank has Calum been promoted to? Why were the companies rearranged? How did the soldiers feel about the changes? (pp.118–120)
- What does the Major organise to keep up the soldiers' spirits? (p.122)
- What is Major Timothy Croft-Healy's role and why was it necessary? Why didn't Tamati like him? (pp.126–127)
- What does 'little cameos of horror' mean? Why are Tamati's hands shaking? (p.128)
- What does Vanessa say to Tamati about his dreams? Do you agree with her? (pp.129–130)
- What is 'shell shock'? How does a soldier get shell shocked? (pp.131–132)

CHAPTER EIGHT: TRENCH RAIDERS

- What is Tamati asked to do? How do they prepare for the job? (pp.134–135)
- What does Tamati notice that brings the soldiers to the factory? Why is he on the roof? How does he get to safety? What does Rewiri suggest Tamati do to get sent home? (pp.136–138)
- What was the aim of the raid? (p.139)
- What does 'The watchful tension ate at his marrow' mean? (p.140)
- What is 'recon'? What is 'no-man's-land'? (pp.141–142)
- What does 'poor old Toka's gone west' mean? (p.145)
- How does Leith get a promotion? Why do you think Leith was surprised at Tamati's reaction? (p.146)
- What is a 'Fly Boy'? Why are they called 'insane shirkers'? What does that mean? (p.148)
- What was the argument for the soldiers joining the RFC, and what was the counter-argument against them joining? (pp.149–151)
- What is the reason and purpose for the scouting party? What is the role of a scout? Why were the scouts not allowed to carry weapons? (pp.152–155)
- How were the Germans able to know what the Pioneers were planning? Why did O'Neill tell the soldiers to forget what had happened that night? What did the wires mean to Leith and Tamati? (pp.156–159)

CHAPTER NINE: PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES

- What are Tamati's dreams warning him will happen soon? (p.165)
- What food is Leith missing? When does he tell his father he expects to be home? Did he intentionally write 'Sommewhere' instead of 'somewhere'? (p.170) Why?

CHAPTER TEN: TURK LANE

- What is a 'plum target'? What is their new assignment? Why can't the soldiers be given more information about the rest of their division? (pp.176–179)
- What is 'the Big Push'? What will it mean for Tamati, Leith and their fellow soldiers? After wanting to see real war action for so long, how do you think they are feeling now that it's here? (pp.180–184)

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE SHOOTING PARTY

- What is a 'deserter'? What is 'court martialled'? What is a 'firing squad'? (pp.187–188)
- Hughes is going to be executed by his own army for attempting to run away from the fighting. What does Leith mean by 'Hughes must have chosen to come. Why can't they just send him home?' Do you think this is a fair punishment, or do you agree with Leith? (pp.189–191)
- What advice does Tyler give Leith? Were you surprised that Tyler would want to help Leith? What do you think his motivation to help him was? (pp.194–196)
- Why were some of the bullets blanks? Why would the soldiers be offered time with the chaplain? What is the chaplain's role? Why did Leith swap his rifle with Tamati's? (pp.196–197)
- What does the Padre mean by 'What doesn't break us makes us stronger'? (p.201)

CHAPTER TWELVE: BUTTERFLY IN A JAR

- What does Croft-Healy mean when he calls Tamati, Leith and Prof 'colonials'? Do you think seeing Vanessa may be a sign that Tamati's dreams of butterflies foretelling his death could come true? Why do you think it made a difference to Leith who had picked the firing squad? (pp.210–211)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: MODERN WARFARE

- What injuries did Leith sustain? How do you think Leith feels about his promotion? (pp.217–218)
- Why did Ihaka join the war? What had made him change his mind about his reason? What differences does Ihaka notice about warfare in older times compared to this war? (pp.220–223)
- How did the soldiers get the nickname 'diggers'? Who gave it to them? Have you heard of anyone referred to as 'diggers' before? (p.227)



- What does Tamati see from his dream? What does he think the landships are an omen of? What does he mean by 'gigantic steel grim reaper'? (pp.231–232)

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: PLAY FAIR

- What is 'furlough'? Why doesn't Leith want furlough when it is offered by the padre? (p.238)
- What is a 'cipher'? What did Prof need to break the code he had intercepted? (pp.242–245)
- How does Tamati crack the code? What was the key word? Why does the key word mean he can't tell Croft-Healy? What did the cracked code say? (pp.246–248)

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: THE RED BUTTERFLY

- How does Leith break the lock on the shed door? What does Leith find in the shed? (pp.254–255)
- Why did the Major tell Leith that he was to pretend that the events of the previous evening had never happened? What do you think the consequences would have been for the soldiers, the war effort and for the people still at home while their loved ones were at war, if they had shared what had happened? (pp.260–267)

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: CASUALTIES AND EPILOGUE

- 'Ka mate, ka mate! Ka ora! Ka ora!' (I may die, I may die! I may live! I may live!) – where else do you hear this line? (p.279)
- Where does Leith ask to be transferred to? What sign, or omen, tells him that his request is the right one? (p.280)

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: CENSORSHIP

Throughout the novel, Tamati and Leith are careful about writing their letters in case the censor finds them to be unpatriotic. They can't write anything that complains about their army life, or the way the army is run. Choose an event from the novel and write a fictional letter home.

ACTIVITY 2: THE WAR EFFORT WANTS YOU!

In the novel, Lord Kitchener dies. Lord Kitchener was famous because it was his face on the posters calling civilians to join the war effort. Research images online for 'WWI recruitment posters' to find examples. There are good examples here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25332968>

Design a poster encouraging young people to join in a fictional war effort today. What encouraging words might you use? What would motivate young people to join a war effort in modern times?

ACTIVITY 3: CRACKING THE CODE

Leith's friend Prof used intercepted Morse code to try and crack the Germans' communication. It wasn't as straightforward as just matching the symbols with letters and numbers. Prof had to work out what cipher was used, and then he needed to find the key word to know where to start. Write a simple message that might have been sent in the novel. Research Morse code and re-write your message for someone else to solve. You may like to challenge yourself by adding a cipher and making it really hard to crack.

ACTIVITY 4: COMPARE AND CONTRAST

The soldiers were ill-equipped by today's standards. Their uniforms offered little protection from the harsh conditions. Using images of soldiers in uniform from 1916, create a diagram comparing the elements of the soldiers' uniforms and weaponry from 1916 and 2016. There are images in the historical notes section of the novel for you to use, and you can search online images for more information. The New Zealand Army website is a good starting point for research:

<http://www.army.mil.nz/about-us/who-we-are/Structure/uniforms/default.htm>

ACTIVITY 5: EXECUTION

Leith, Tamati and several other soldiers are ordered to make up a firing squad to execute a soldier who deserted his post. This was a heart-breaking task for the soldiers to complete. Imagine that the soldier was given the opportunity to have a lawyer argue his case against his execution. You have been given the task of speaking for the soldier. Write a letter to the army explaining why he should not be executed and suggest another punishment.

Teachers notes written by Sarina Dickson



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SCHOLASTIC