

# Classroom Resources



**ISBN:**  
9780733343148

**NOTES BY:**  
Sue Warren and Jemma Myers

**PUBLICATION DATE:**  
November 2024

## All the Beautiful Things

Katrina Nannestad

### BOOK SUMMARY

A heart-wrenching, impeccably researched historical novel for middle-grade readers.

The Nazis want everyone to be the same. If you're different, you don't belong.

Not belonging is dangerous ...

Anna's little sister, Eva, is frail and needs time to learn new things. She has a huge heart and a gift for loving, but Hitler doesn't value such riches. And so she's hidden away. Safe for now, but with the threat of discovery always near.

Anna does her best to bring joy and light to Eva's small life. But soon, more children need hiding. Risks are taken – by Anna, by her best friend Udo, by a Nazi seamstress and feisty Brunhilde. Until Anna wonders if any of them will make it through the war ...

Loyalty and love. Family and friendship. Understanding and tolerance. Right and wrong. Multi-award-winning Australian author Katrina Nannestad explores it all in this thrilling and powerful historical novel.

### KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- AC9E5LE03
- AC9E6LE01
- AC9E6LY01
- AC9HS6S03

### THEMES

- Families
- WWII
- Choices
- Resilience

**Recommended Reading Ages:** 10+

**Resources Created For:** Upper Primary

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# Classroom Resources

## Before Reading

- Using the front cover only, discuss the following:
  - Make some predictions as to setting from clues such as the snow and the buildings in the background.
  - What do students make of the army truck and soldiers? What does this imply?
  - Students may also notice someone hiding in the sack on the sled. Why might a child be hiding in such a way?
- Establish a class Learning Wall to record reflections, questions and answers, relevant information, quotes, examples of writing techniques and speculations, and arrange a bulk loan of appropriate resources including other Katrina Nannestad titles, as well as non-fiction on this period. Encourage students to add questions or reflections they might have during the reading to a Wonder Wall.
- Have a quick-fire activity such as Hot Potato to determine students' background knowledge of World War II in general.
- What do students know about life for the German people and those groups persecuted during the war? Record this on the Learning Wall.
  - Have they read other books set in this period?
  - How many of these described life for the average German population?
  - How many related to people in danger or in hiding?
  - Why did people have to hide?

## During Reading

Write brief chapter summaries as you read. Keep them short and include only key plot/character development points.

- Include important quotes that reflect these key points.

### Setting

The book is set in World War II between 1943 and 1945, in the Bavarian Alps, the market town of Berchtesgaden and the area of the Obersalzberg, which was the location of Hitler's holiday residence, the Berghof.

- How is the war going for Germany at the start of *All the Beautiful Things*?
  - How does this change over the course of the novel?
- Use Google Earth to virtually explore this area.
- Why do you think Hitler and other high-ranking members of the Nazi Party set up homes in this part of Germany?

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## Language and literary techniques

1. Pause at the end of Chapter 1 to establish what the reader already knows and how much of the narrative is foreshadowed. Consider what the reader learns about:
  - a) The setting
  - b) The risk to people with disabilities
  - c) Hiding
  - d) How Anna feels about the presence of Hitler and the other Nazis in her town
2. Organise topic specific vocabulary groupings on the class Learning Wall. Possible topics include:
  - Time-period specific vocabulary
  - Aspects of daily life mentioned
  - Vocabulary related to the war
  - German
3. There are many ideas and terms seen in *All the Beautiful Things* that may be new for students. Ask them to record these words and phrases, using a table like the one below:

Word/phrase	Dictionary definition	Example of how this is seen in the text
Persecution		
Eugenics		
Subterfuge		
Hypocrisy		
Aryan		

4. Introduce the term aphorism: *a short clever saying that is intended to express a general truth* (Cambridge Dictionary). Discuss aphorisms students may already be familiar with – e.g. out of sight, out of mind; people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. Find examples in the novel that express the following sentiments:
  - a) Appearances can be deceiving
  - b) Courage is fear mastered
  - c) The end justifies the means
  - d) Actions speak louder than words
  - e) Where there is darkness, there is light
5. Throughout *All the Beautiful Things*, there is much made of the contrast between the quality of life (food, clothing, homes, etc.) for the Nazis living in Berchtesgaden and the quality of life for the rest of the people living in the town.
  - a) Ask students to collect examples of these differences as they read the novel.
  - b) Use these examples to create a 'Study in Contrasts' to convey these very different lives through both writing and illustrations. For example, the Nazi wives and Mutti or Frau Gelhaus. This could take the form of a poster, comic strip of a 'day in the life of' or picture book.

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6. Anna imagines meeting Hitler and having her jigsaw discussion with him.
  - a) Using persuasive techniques they have learnt about, ask students to write a paragraph persuading Hitler of the importance of difference in a society.

## Characters

1. *All the Beautiful Things* has a relatively small number of significant characters set against the bigger backdrop of the town's population.
  - a) As they read, students may find it helpful to record the differing levels of importance of the characters in the novel using a table or chart like the one below. This could be a communal record on the class Learning Wall or a Google Doc/Sheet, or individually in their workbooks.

Primary	Secondary	Peripheral
Anna	Manfred	The Pfeifer twins

- b) Construct a character web to show the connections between primary, secondary and peripheral characters.
2. For Anna, Eva and at least one other character have students create character profiles, which include the following aspects. For each point include an example or quote from the novel:
  - a) Feelings
  - b) Actions
  - c) Significant events
  - d) How do they change over the course of the novel?
3. Discuss the idea of a 'sympathetic character'. Compose a shared definition and put it on the Learning Wall.
  - a) Which of the characters in *All the Beautiful Things* might be described as sympathetic?
    - (i) For each character identified, students should provide at least two examples/quotes that support their opinion.
    - (ii) Which techniques has Katrina Nannestad used to make each of these characters sympathetic?
  - b) Alternatively, some of the characters in the novel are unsympathetic. Identify which characters could be described this way.
  - c) Choose two characters from the text, one sympathetic and one unsympathetic. Create a Venn diagram to explore their similarities and differences.
  - d) Why do authors include both sympathetic and unsympathetic characters in their writing?

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## After Reading

1. 'So how do we tell the monsters and the angels apart?' (p. 152) Introduce or review the word dichotomy. Pose the question: are people wholly or inherently good or bad? This concept is a thread throughout the narrative.
  - a) Consider not only Eva Braun but Manfred, Rachel, Brunhilde and any others with overt positive and negative traits.
  - b) Historical information reports that Adolf Hitler was very fond of children, and when possible created enjoyable Christmas parties and other events for his inner circle and their families (as seen in private films and photographs, not just propaganda). 'But Hitler doesn't care about hearts. I'm not even sure he has one.' (p. 18) How can a person like Hitler who can plan and execute monstrous acts be so kind and generous to children?
2. There are several characters who are outwardly obedient to the Nazi ideas and the Führer, but are secretly rebellious in either thoughts or actions. How does this shape the reader's view of the ordinary German people in relation to the Nazis and Hitler? The quotes below may be helpful when considering this question.
  - I'm lucky. I'm smart, tall, strong and athletic. I have fair skin, golden-blond hair and bright blue eyes. On the outside, I am the perfect German girl. On the inside, I am not. I hate Hitler. I hate the Nazis. Sometimes I even dare to mock or disobey. Where others would be punished, I am forgiven. Nobody can quite believe that such a good Aryan specimen as me could be anything but loyal to Hitler. (pp. 4 & 5)
  - I realise that a person can be both a hero and a traitor. It depends on your point of view. To Eva and Mutti, I'm a hero. To Hitler and Manfred, I'm a traitor. (p.183)
  - Gisela taps her Nazi Party badge. 'Not if he thinks you're a fan. Anyway, he won't be there.' ... 'A game?' I ask.  
'The one we play all the time – The Führer is My Friend.' (pp. 236 & 237)
  - '... We, the German people, are united in our loyalty to the Führer and our commitment to the war effort.'  
We're not.  
I hate Hitler. Mutti does, too. And Gisela, Udo, Dr Fischer, Gunther, Brunhilde, Frau Schwarz, Pastor Almendinger, the Pfeiffer twins. (p. 243)
3. Truth telling: There are various incidents when characters do not speak the truth or omit to tell all the details. We are taught that 'honesty is the best policy', yet that idea is not always reflected in *All the Beautiful Things*.
  - a) Why do Anna, Mutti and their friends lie?
  - b) When is lying, even by omission, justified?
  - c) How does *All the Beautiful Things* explore the idea that honesty may not always be the best policy?
  - d) Conduct a class debate on 'honesty is the best policy'.

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4. The author uses the motif of jigsaws to suggest that everybody matters and belongs. 'Germany is a jigsaw puzzle. Each person is a piece. Every piece is necessary.' (p. 36)
  - a) Collate all the references to jigsaws and make connections or identify parallels to contemporary society and world issues.
  - b) Have we as humans progressed in the matter of inclusion and equal rights for all?
  - c) How does it relate within the students' own spheres: school, city, country?
  - d) How can students advocate for a more complete 'jigsaw' in their own communities?
5. Codes were important during the war and used by military and the underground/resistance (those who were working in secret against the Nazis). Coded messages were created in knitting, by seemingly nonsense announcements on the BBC Radio with certain words used and other methods.
  - a) Gisela demonstrates code in her note to Anna's mother about the 'two dresses' while Udo, Pastor Almendinger and Dr Fischer use train tickets to hide coded messages. Official code-breaking such as The Enigma project was of huge importance.
  - b) Investigate various codes and use one/create one to send messages within the class.

## Activities

1. Have each student create a summary of the novel in both words/quotes and images on a blank jigsaw so that each piece creates a whole (available from craft suppliers); OR give each student a jigsaw piece (A4 size template) and have them write/draw quotes and vignettes to connect for a classroom display.
2. Paper dolls were particularly popular playthings in the 19th and 20th centuries as paper and printing were cheap. During the war, paper, like everything else, was in short supply. Anna makes doll clothes for Eva from found materials and creates stories around them.
  - a) Give each student a doll template (numerous freely available online) and have them collect found materials such as scraps of fabric, lace, wool/thread, buttons, sequins and tissue.
  - b) Design and create an outfit for their doll.
  - c) Write an accompanying story.
  - d) Create an art exhibit and hold a gallery walk for others.
3. Make a shoebox diorama to show one of the prominent scenes or settings such as the hidden room in which the little girls hide, the Seamstress Linz's shop or the barn at the Fischer farm.

## About the Author

Katrina Nannestad is an award-winning Australian author. She grew up in country New South Wales in a neighbourhood stuffed full of happy children. Her adult years have been spent raising boys, teaching, daydreaming and pursuing her love of stories. Katrina celebrates family, friendship and belonging in her writing. She also loves creating stories that bring joy or hope to other people's lives. Katrina now lives on a hillside in central Victoria with her husband and a silly whippet called Olive.

[www.katrinanannestad.com](http://www.katrinanannestad.com)

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