

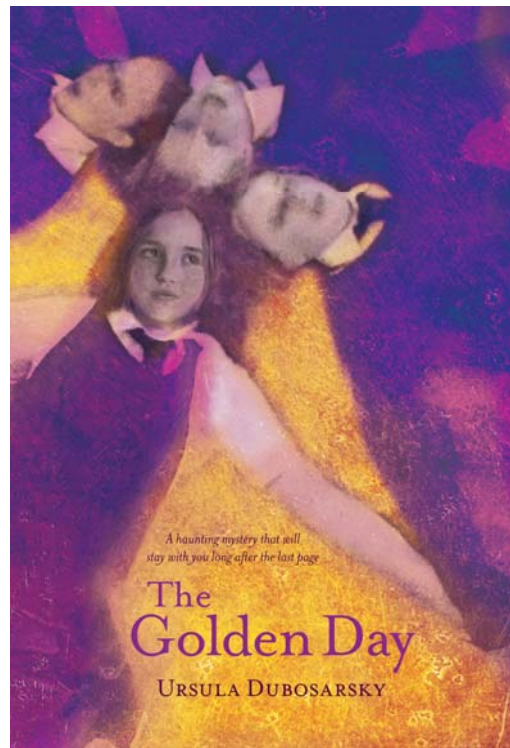
Teachers' Notes
by
Fran Knight

The Golden Day
by
Ursula Dubosarsky

ISBN 978 1 74237 471 0
Recommended for ages 10-14+ yrs

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INTRODUCTION

SYNOPSIS

On the very day of the hanging of Ronald Ryan, eleven little schoolgirls set out with their teacher, Miss Renshaw, to the Ena Thompson Memorial Gardens. Here the teacher meets the gardener, Morgan, while the girls spread out through the garden writing poetry and collecting thoughts. It has become a regular outing, one which the girls are meant to keep as their little secret with the young teacher. But on this day, Morgan takes the class into a cave near the water's edge to view the Aboriginal drawings on the cave wall. The group crowds into the small space, and several of the girls – tired, dispirited and a little cross – feel claustrophobic, and so the group returns to the sunlight, there to wait for Miss Renshaw. The wait stretches out and when she does not reappear, the group begins to wander back to school, hoping that she will be there waiting for them or at least return shortly. But she is not there.

So begins a mystery, one in which the girls feel constrained in what they can say about their excursion, lest they let their teacher down. They are interviewed by teachers, the chaplain and the headmistress, in collaboration with the police, all to no avail. Each child has her own idea of what may have happened, and Cubby, the main character of the story, is shocked when her friend Icara suggests that Miss Renshaw is dead.

The oppressive atmosphere of this small private school, tucked away on the banks of Sydney Harbour, is far removed from the world outside. The girls walk past slums, oblivious to the bare feet and smoking women, they are confused by a nude swimmer, know nothing of the Vietnam War or Aborigines or Ronald Ryan. They are cocooned, just like the insect in their teacher's amber necklace. The disappearance of their teacher is a burden to be carried throughout their school years: they see the incident not as a teacher lost or killed, but as their class losing their teacher. They feel responsible, and this forms a base for the rest of their school lives. But another surprise is in store for them, and the readers will need to make up their minds about the veracity of what happens.

Stunningly atmospheric, the story is brimming with allusions to death and decay, loss of innocence and subterfuge. The background stories used by both Ursula Dubosarsky and Charles Blackman, the artist whose work prefaces each chapter, give a layer of unsettledness which is impossible to ignore. Murder, particularly of children, hangings, capital punishment where the wrong man is hanged, pedophilia, conscription and the Vietnam War are all part of a backdrop of unease.

The novel is a stunning read that will intoxicate middle school readers.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

The new Australian Curriculum has been used as the basis for these notes. The English curriculum has three strands, Language, Literature and Literacy, so these notes are divided into activities for class and individual work reflecting this division. The curriculum also exhorts teachers to include poetry; this book allows for a generous helping and activities have been included. A Literature Circle at the end allows for classes to further explore similar novels and others by Ursula Dubosarsky.

To find out more about the English Curriculum, please go to <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home>

MEET THE AUTHOR

Ursula Dubosarsky has been published since 1988. A prolific author, her novels are often thought provoking and meaty, and involve the reader in an astonishingly involving and lasting read.

For information about her, several websites can be explored

<http://members.dodo.com.au/~dublsar/> (Dodo)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ursula_Dubosarsky (Wikipedia)

<http://www.puffin.com.au/contributors/ursula-dubosarsky> (Puffin)

<http://www.ursuladubosarsky.com>

Class activity:

Using the information sourced from these websites, write a blurb for the back cover of her new book, telling readers a little information about her and her publishing history. This can only be 100 words long to fit the fold-in cover.

OR

Write a small piece about Ursula Dubosarsky for the blurb on a website about Australian authors (200 words)

OR

Prepare and deliver a short talk for your class or group about this author, inviting people to read several of her books

THE GOLDEN DAY: BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Ursula Dubosarsky cites a number of things which influenced the writing of this novel in her thoughts about the book. She saw Charles Blackman's painting, *Floating Schoolgirl* many years ago at the National Gallery in Canberra, but was also interested in the Vietnam War, conscription, Ronald Ryan, capital punishment, the death of a Moss Vale schoolgirl in 1952, the disappearance of Juanita Nelson in 1975, the death of schoolgirl Samantha Knight in 1985, Henry Handel Richardson's *The Getting of Wisdom* and Freud's ideas about the 'mystic writing pad'. All of these thoughts and ideas percolated together to create a base for her novel. With many of these unfamiliar to today's readers, a brief introduction to these topics before reading the novel would stand the class in good stead. A website run by the author now supports *The Golden Day* and details these influences and more: <http://thegoldenday.info/>

1 Charles Blackman (1926-)

Charles Blackman is one of Australia's foremost artists, his paintings selling now in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. A member of the post World War Two *Antipodean* group of painters, he promoted the idea of abstract expressionism. In the 1950s he saw a number of schoolgirls walking past the garden in which he worked, and this, along with the story of the Gun Alley murder of a schoolgirl in 1921 in which an innocent man was hanged for the crime, gave him the background for his series called 'Schoolgirl', painted between 1952 and 1954.

These paintings show an array of schoolgirls and are used as the chapter headings for this novel. The one which Ursula saw in Canberra, *Floating Schoolgirl*, shows a uniformed girl floating above a darkened city, her broad-brimmed hat shielding her face.

Preparation for class activity:

- 1 The Wikipedia site gives a bare outline of Blackman's life and work. It can be accessed at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Blackman
Run off a copy for the classroom
- 2 In Google, type in *Charles Blackman schoolgirl*, and a link will give images of all the paintings in this series. Copy them and have them displayed in the classroom.
- 3 Recent Sotheby's catalogues have full page images of several of the Schoolgirl series for sale. The accompanying notes give an outline of Blackman's life and work, particularly in reference to this series. It may be worth getting such a catalogue for the class
- 4 *Delicious* magazine (November 2010) has a write up of Melbourne's latest Artist Hotel, *The Blackman*, recently opened with prints of Blackmans' works on the walls. (<http://www.artserieshotels.com.au/blackman>)

Activity: Set groups in the class various tasks to complete and share before reading the novel

Make a time line of Charles Blackman's life

List all of his works

Find out where some of his paintings are displayed (there may be some in your art gallery that can be visited)

Find out what price his work is getting at auctions

Why does he despise the prices now received for his work? What is he doing about it?

Some of the class may like to copy one of his works for display

2 Historical events influencing the novel

Gun Alley murder in 1921

This murder influenced Charles Blackman's series of Schoolgirl paintings. The State Library of Victoria has a page devoted to this story

http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/ergo/the_gun_alley_murder (State Library of Victoria)

The death of a Moss Vale schoolgirl in 1962

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/11/29/1070081591022.html> gives the Sydney Morning Herald account of the murderer's death in jail in 2003 and recounts the murders he committed

The hanging of Ronald Ryan 1967

There is much information about this case on the internet and in history books. Much of the information on the internet is grisly, concerning his hanging and his possible innocence. Ronald Ryan was the last man to be hanged in Australia and is the centre of many discussions still about capital punishment. A summary can be found at http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/ergo/ronald_ryan (State Library of Victoria)

The death of Prime Minister Harold Holt (1967) and the dismissal of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and his government (1975)

The novel is bookended by these two significant events in Australian political history. The drowned man in the first sentence of the book refers to Harold Holt; at the end of the book, the people in Martin Place looking at the newspaper headlines are just finding out about the dramatic dismissal of Gough Whitlam by the Governor General, John Kerr.

The death of Juanita Nelson in 1975

The Australian Dictionary of Biography Online gives an account of Juanita Nelson and her life and death. <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A150556b.htm>

The death of Samantha Knight in 1985

There is a chilling Wikipedia entry for Guider, who killed Samantha Knight in 1985. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Guider

It shows him at an Aboriginal site in Sydney.

Conscientious Objection

<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rn/2002-03/03rn31.pdf>

Is a pamphlet from the Parliamentary Library which outlines what Conscientious Objection is and how many Australians have applied for and been granted an exemption from serving in war.

The Vietnam War

A government site which details the Vietnam War can be found at <http://vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/> There is a brief outline of the war and its effects on Australia. On the left hand side of the home page other topics, like conscription, can be accessed.

Class activity: Put the class into small groups to research the link about one of these events. They are to write a brief report and present it to the class. Some may like to use a Power Point presentation

3 Books and Ideas

Henry Handel Richardson's novel *The Getting of Wisdom* had an influence on *The Golden Day*. *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding explores the consequences of children left without an authority figure, just like the girls in this book. *Picnic at Hanging Rock* by Joan Lindsay is about lost schoolgirls rather than a lost teacher, but shares the threatening, opaque suggestion of a crime of sexual violence. Some students may like to read these novels as part of their work on *The Golden Day*.

Sigmund Freud was a psychoanalyst who developed the idea of a mystic writing pad to explain why people accumulated sensory perceptions from the outside world which permeated to their deep unconscious memory. He likened this to the mystic writing pad used by children which leaves a faint impression of all writing that has gone before. An explanation can be found at <http://elab.eserver.org/hfl0257.html>

Class activity: See if class members have access to a children's mystic writing pad to experiment with in the class. After they have read the novel, ask the class where this idea may fit in.

THE GOLDEN DAY: LITERATURE

FEATURE OF THE TEXT: STRUCTURE

A feature of this novel is the structure of the story. It is a straight chronological structure which can easily be divided into 4 sections. The first three, encompassing chapters 1 to 17, are set in 1967, and consist of four chapters setting the scene, the next seven chapters with the girls keeping their teacher's secret and the last six chapters showing the fall-out once the secret is revealed. The fourth section, chapters 18 to 20, is set eight years later in 1975 and reveals to a degree how Miss Renshaw's disappearance has affected them all.

Class activity:

Ch	Overview	Discussion points	Writing exercise
1-4	These chapters set the story in its place and introduce the characters and what they are doing.	How does Dubosarsky make us aware that something bad is about to happen?	Choose one of the places where these chapters are set and write a paragraph description of it using a florid style.
5-11	The girls keep their secret about the activities of their teacher.	How does Dubosarsky make us believe that this class would keep such a secret?	Using the voice of one of the children in the class, write out what you think happened in the cave.
12-17	The secret is out and the girls learn more about what has possibly happened.	How does Dubosarsky release pieces of information about what may have happened to the teacher?	Write a newspaper account of the story or write out an interview with the headmistress.
18-20	Eight years later the girls finally finish school.	How obvious is Dubosarsky's use of the 'mystic writing pad' as a device for explaining what has happened?	Write a diary account of one of the girls about what happened in the Continental Café.

FEATURE OF THE TEXT: POETRY

One of the features of Dubosarsky's book is the infusion of quotes from various sources such as hymns, the Bible, clapping games, poetry and songs. All of these help form a background to the story.

Before the chapter headings, part of a poem by John Shaw Neilson is used, 'Schoolgirls Hastening'. Written in 1922, the poem describes schoolgirls and the path to death. It can be accessed on the Internet.

- When the girls are waiting for Miss Renshaw to emerge from the cave, several begin to play clapping games. These are quoted in chapter 6: *Hide and Seek*.
- A quote from Milton's *Paradise Lost* is used (*Paradise Lost* Book XII) which alludes to Miss Renshaw and Morgan (this can be found in chapter 10: *The Secret*)

- The author has said that she was heavily influenced by lines 357-400 of Wordsworth's 'Preludes' when writing Chapter 14: *Ebb and Flow*.
- At Miss Renshaw's memorial service a hymn is quoted. (This can be found in Chapter 16: *Holding Hands*)
- In Chapter 19: *Transformation*, a quote from Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, 'Ulysses' is used. This can be found in many anthologies of English verse in your library.
- During afternoon tea at Madame de Pompadour's Continental Café (Chapter 20: *Schoolgirl Flying*), there is a quote which reflects how people change. This is from 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14, Verse 40 in the Bible.
- Robert Louis Stevenson's poem, 'Night and Day' is used as an end piece to the book. This poem can be found in the book of Stevenson's poems, *The Child's Garden of Verses*.

Student activity: Choose one of the quotes that Dubosarsky uses. Find it and write the whole quote out, and the poem or story it is from, making sure you use the correct referencing style. Think about why she has chosen that particular poem, song, game or quote to use. Find out more about that quote:

- Where does it come from?
- Where does it fit in the whole poem, song or game?
- Find out a little about the author of that quote.
- Present a short report giving information about the quote you have chosen.
- Include in your report why you think Dubosarsky chose that particular piece of writing to include in her novel.
- What does that quote add to the story?

FEATURE OF THE TEXT: USE OF CHARLES BLACKMAN'S PAINTINGS

A feature of the text is the use of the titles of Charles Blackman's paintings and drawings to preface each chapter. Each of the paintings and its title sets the scene for the chapter, heralding what will happen. A close look at the chapter headings and Blackman's paintings is a point of examination to further understand the novel and its complexities.

Class activity:

Ch.	List the chapter headings in each group.	Describe the painting which heralds each chapter.	What do the painting and its title show about the chapter?
1-4	'All in a summer's day' 'Into the beautiful garden' 'Poet under tree' 'Four schoolgirls'		
5-11			
12-17			
18-20			

Individual activity: Choose one of the paintings which prefaces a chapter. Redraw it. Describe the painting and give a brief outline of the chapter, explaining why the author used this particular painting to preface the chapter.

DISCUSSION POINTS FOR WHEN THE NOVEL IS READ

- Why does Dubosarsky link the story so strongly into a time and place?
- What impact do you think the stories of the murders of school children had upon this author?
- How well do we know these girls at the end of the novel? How much does Dubosarsky want us to know?
- Why do you think Dubosarsky chose Blackman's paintings to name the chapters in her book?
- Why have the girls grown apart during the eight years since Miss Renshaw's disappearance?
- How does Dubosarsky show the greater religious influence of the times?
- How does Dubosarsky show how different the school is from the one you are in now?
- Why and how does Dubosarsky use the teacher's amber necklace as a symbol?
- How much of the novel do you think reflects the author's past?
- What impact did the Vietnam War have on these children?

THE GOLDEN DAY: LITERACY

PURPOSE OF TEXT

While reading the novel it may help to think about various aspects with the following questions:

Why do you think Dubosarsky wrote this novel?	Who is the novel aimed at and why?	Can you think of other novels which have a similar theme?
What may have influenced Dubosarsky to write this story?	Are there any ideas in the novel which you would like to research further?	What do you think would stay in the readers' minds?
Has the novel impelled you to research some of its ideas?	Find out what else Dubosarsky has written.	How far is the story factual?
What other stories for children revolve around death?	This novel could fit several categories of story: <i>historical, crime, schooldays</i> ... Where do you think it fits and why?	Why has Dubosarsky used young children as her main characters?

COMPREHENSION

- A** Draw a lifeline (or timeline) for one of the characters in the novel. Each student can take a different character (one of the 11 girls, or the teachers or the judge or Mrs Ellerman, or Cubby's parents or Morgan), and draw up their timeline with reference to what is told about that person in the story. The lifeline could include birth, early life, education, work or schooling etc. These could be enlarged and displayed.

- B** What do you think really happened?
Imagine that you are a gossip columnist or TV reporter or Police Officer or a parent at the school or one of the older students.
Write a letter to a friend or a report for the TV, newspaper or coroner about the incident and what you think happened.
- C** Imagine a future for the four girls who had afternoon tea at the end of their year 12 exams.
- D** Imagine that you are investigating the death, as a cold case. Who would you prefer to interview and why? Write the report to the coroner about what you think happened using your imaginary interview.

THE GOLDEN DAY: LANGUAGE

DESCRIPTION: SETTING

Dubosarsky describes each setting with such detail that it is emblazoned on the reader's mind. Any page looked at reveals the extent to which she describes things minutely. The detail makes the setting spectacularly real.

Setting	Discussion points	Written activities
School	Reread the sections which describe the school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 1, <i>All on a Summer's Day</i>, gives little snippets, especially on page 4 The other teachers are mentioned on page 4 Page 5 says where the school is situated Page 12 talks of the windows Pages 2, 3 and 7 mention aspects of the girls' uniform 	List all the words which describe various aspects of the school and the girls' classroom and their uniform. What impression do you get of the school from these words?
Ena Thompson Memorial Gardens	Reread the sections which describe the gardens. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2, <i>Into the Beautiful Garden</i>, particularly talks of the gardens and what is there Chapters 3 and 4 tell of the girls within the gardens Chapter 4 has a change of tone towards the end where the girls are about to go into the caves 	Gather some of the words which describe the gardens. What sort of atmosphere Dubosarsky is creating using these words.
Cave	Reread the sections which describe the cave. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5, <i>Schoolgirl and Shadow</i>, particularly describes the cave and how the girls feel about being in it How does Dubosarsky build the feeling of dread? 	Look carefully at the words used to describe the cave. How different are they from those used to describe the gardens. How do you feel as the girls enter the cave?
Icara's house	Reread the chapters describing Icara's	How different is Icara's house

	<p>house.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 8, <i>Floating Schoolgirl</i>, tells of Cubby first going to the house • Chapter 9, <i>Within Without</i>, gives more detail about the library • Chapter 14, <i>Ebb and Flow</i>, shows Cubby and Icara going to Icara's house, then rowing down the river to Fairyland 	<p>from Cubby's? What impression does Dubosarsky create for the reader of this house? What is she telling us about Icara and her family? What is Fairyland? What does it mean to Icara?</p>
Restaurant	<p>Reread Chapter 17, <i>Mythological Fish</i>, which describes the restaurant. What is the significance of the chapter title? What words and phrases does Dubosarsky use to underline Cubby's feeling of inadequacy?</p>	<p>How does Cubby feel during her lunch at the restaurant? What does Cubby learn about Icara that makes her re-evaluate her friend?</p>

(This table is reproduced as Blackline Master 1 at the end of these notes.)

DESCRIPTION: CHARACTERS

Dubosarsky evokes a character in a few words and phrases.

With the class, re-examine some of the main characters and the way Dubosarsky describes them.

Main characters

Character	Discussion points	Written or discussion activities
Cubby	<p>Chapter 1, <i>All on a Summer's Day</i>, introduces the girls, particularly Cubby.</p> <p>In this chapter Dubosarsky gives a picture of Cubby which remains for the rest of the novel. Describe her using the words found in the chapter.</p>	<p>Cubby is only about 8 years old. How do we know how old she is? What gives her age away to the reader? How does this impact upon the novel?</p>
Icara	<p>We know from Chapter 1 that Icara has taken Cubby in hand. Chapter 2 gives us a view of Icara in class. Why might Miss Renshaw not like her?</p>	<p>Icara is far more sophisticated than Cubby. Why does she seem older? Why does she talk of her mother being in Los Angeles? What different words does Dubosarsky use to describe Icara and Cubby at the end of the novel?</p>
Miss Renshaw	<p>Chapter 1 gives a neat description of this character in two short paragraphs on page 4. List the words used to describe the woman. One simile stands out, evoking a picture in the reader's mind of a strong determined woman. What other similes could have been</p>	<p>Describe Miss Renshaw to another person in the class. What is there about her that would make a class admire her? What may have happened to her?</p>

	used?	
Morgan	We know a great deal about Morgan from Chapters 2-4. List his characteristics. In the last chapter, where Miss Renshaw describes what has happened to him, the image given of Morgan is of a 1960's hippie living in a commune. Look again at that chapter and list the characteristics given of this man.	Write a newspaper article about Morgan, implying that he is a suspect in the disappearance of Miss Renshaw OR Write a short story about the death of Miss Renshaw as a major unsolved crime OR Write a letter from Miss Renshaw or Morgan explaining what happened on that day

(This table is reproduced as Blackline Master 2 at the end of these notes.)

Minor characters

Dr Strangemeadows	Chapter 7, <i>Schoolgirl Crying</i> , has this teacher talking to the class.	How does the class view this teacher? What description does Dubosarsky give to show how imperious she is?
Mrs Arnold	Reread page 50. Who is Mrs Arnold and what place does she hold in the school.	Why are the students in awe of her? Have you met teachers like this? What words are appropriate to use to describe them?
Miss Summers	Reread Chapter 10, <i>The Secret</i> , for an image of Miss Summers. She reappears in other chapters, and then again in Chapter 18, <i>Always Teatime</i> .	What part does Miss Summers play in the novel? Chapter 18's description of her made me laugh. What has she become within the school?
Martine	Chapter 4, <i>Four Schoolgirls</i> tells of Martine's background.	How does Martine's background impact upon the novel?
Icara's father	In Chapter 9, <i>The Exchange</i> , Cubby first meets him Chapter 17, <i>Mythological Fish</i> , shows him with Cubby at the restaurant. Why is this incident so fearful for Cubby?	Why does the judge cause Cubby feelings of trepidation? What descriptive words and phrases are used to show this? How does Dubosarsky use words to underline Cubby's feelings of inadequacy?
Miss de Soto	Reread page 56. Why is this teacher sent to the class?	What image does Dubosarsky give us of this woman? What words are used to describe her?

(This table is reproduced as Blackline Master 3 at the end of these notes.)

Class activity: Choose one of the minor characters and write up a brief description of that person from evidence presented in the novel.

IMAGERY IN WORD PICTURES

Dubosarsky uses words and images to build up the picture and atmosphere she is aiming for. Many language features are used to do this. A study of this book may allow the class to revise the language features (figures of speech and grammar) used by writers to create stunning imagery.

	Example	Student activity
Adjectives	An adjective describes a noun more completely. Miss Summers has 'a cap of silky red hair' (page 43) which gives a more complete image of her.	Choose one of the characters that appeals to you. Look for their description within the book. List half a dozen adjectives and adjectival phrases which are used to describe that person.
Adverbs	An adverb gives more information about a verb. 'Cubby thought sleepily ' (page 14) shows Cubby dreams in class, thinking of the Southern Ocean.	Look more closely at one incident in the story, and list half a dozen adverbs which enhance that description.
Metaphor	A metaphor is a word picture in which one thing is replaced by another image. The novel itself could be viewed as a metaphor for the loss of innocence. I was stopped short by the metaphor on page 4 'the little girls moved in a cloud ' and again by ' wedding-cake fountain' on page 6.	Take notice of the language of metaphor as you read. What metaphors are you aware of as you read?
Openers	A good opening sentence to a paragraph or opening phrase to a sentence reflects the author's skill. As you read take note of the way Dubosarsky opens her sentences, paragraphs and chapters. The first paragraph of this novel is stunning.	Why does the novel's first paragraph arrest the reader? Can you think of any other novels with such an abrupt or attention grabbing opening? (several novels that people quote are <i>Moby Dick</i> and <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>)
Repetition	Dubosarsky repeats words and phrases to reiterate the image she is creating. The class is always called 'the little girls'.	Ponder why she does this as you read, and collect any others which appear.
Simile	A simile is a device when one thing is compared to another. An example is on page 4, where Cubby is talking of her friend's brother who ' laughed like a kookaburra '	As you read, note any other images created by the use of a simile which grabs your attention.
Vocabulary	Many books for students are written with a limited vocabulary. Dubosarsky does not pander to her readers, instead using a wide vocabulary which makes the reader sometimes go to a dictionary, but above all, describes the setting, character or event in the most particular way.	As you read, take a note of some of the words you find interesting, arresting or new.

Class activity: Choose one of the topics below and write a paragraph or short story demonstrating some of the language techniques used by Dubosarsky to build a word picture.

- A night at the show with my family
- Lost in the mountains
- Riding a bike over a gravel road
- Swimming in a river near Darwin
- Avoiding someone I don't like
- The best meal I ever ate
- I thought I saw a ghost

LITERATURE CIRCLE: THE GOLDEN DAY

A Literature Circle occurs when a class is divided into small groups, each group reading one of the allotted books, setting the rules of the group and assessing themselves. A group is expected to read one book over 6 or so weeks, keep records about what they like about that book and report back to the class at the end of the unit. Ask your teacher-librarian for suggestions and help with this as they may be able to suggest other works to include, or do a book talk for your class to help them select the book each group will read. I usually have 6 or so copies of each of the books ready for the groups to select.

Once selected, the groups will have a lesson a week to read in class, and the leader of the group will allocate how much of the book will be read between lessons. At each session, the group will discuss what has been read so far and work out things like plot, story, characters and theme, to be able to present this to the class at the end of the unit. Proformas could look like this

Group names		
Novel being read	Author	Characters
When is the novel set?	Where is the novel set?	What is the theme of the story?

Week	Story	Background	Prediction
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Summary of story and its theme	The reasons my group enjoyed the story

**NOVELS SUGGESTED FOR A LITERATURE CIRCLE TO COMPARE WITH *THE GOLDEN DAY*.
(other novels by Ursula Dubosarsky could also be used.)**

<i>Being Bindy</i>	Alyssa Brugman	Tale of two girls once friends, going their separate ways
<i>Cannily, Cannily</i>	Simon French	A boy must learn how to fit into another school quickly as his parents move often
<i>Cicada Summer</i>	Kate Constable	A withdrawn young girl is recovering from the death of her mother. Is her new secret playmate a ghost?
<i>Don't Call me Ishmael</i>	Michael Gerard Bauer	Very funny story of a boy experiencing bullying in secondary school
<i>Escape from year 8</i>	Mary Pershall	Funny story about girls in year 8
<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	William Golding	A group of school boys find themselves without any adult authority to tell them what to do
<i>Picnic at Hanging Rock</i>	Joan Lindsay	A classic tale of schoolgirls who disappear at a favourite picnic spot
<i>Shadows in the Mirror</i>	Cameron Nunn	Brutal story of bullying in a private school resulting in one boy's death
<i>The Getting of Wisdom</i>	Henry Handel Richardson	Classic tale of growing up to be oneself
<i>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</i>	Muriel Sharp	A classic tale of the impact of a teacher on a class
<i>The Red Shoe</i>	Ursula Dubosarsky	The defection of the Petrov family at the height of the Cold War
<i>Walking Naked</i>	Alyssa Brugman	Story of bullying among school girls. Parallels in the use of poetry and symbolism of names.
<i>Zizzy Zing</i>	Ursula Dubosarsky	While Phyllis is staying with her aunts a very old letter arrives

FOR THE MORE ADVENTUROUS

- 1 In the Literature section is a class activity about the poems, quotes and games Dubosarsky uses in her novel.
 - Imagine that you are her researcher. Present another group of poems, songs and quotations which you think would also suit this novel
 - What significance does the title hold for the reader?

- 2 Capital punishment is part of the background in this novel, through the hanging of Ronald Ryan in 1967, and the earlier hanging of the man tried for the murder of a schoolgirl, in the Gun Alley Murder in 1923, after which he was found to be innocent.
 - If Morgan had murdered Miss Renshaw and was indeed caught, how might the older girls have viewed the possibility of him being hanged?
- 3 Write a chapter which sees the four girls meeting again in ten years' time.
- 4 A body has been found in the water near the caves close to the Ena Thompson Memorial Gardens. Write the front page of a newspaper outlining the events of the day.
- 5 The school's enrollments have dropped significantly since this incident. Write a newspaper account of the closing of this school making mention of the disappearance of Miss Renshaw.
- 6 People's names in novels sometimes have a significant role in the story, and often authors spend some time selecting the right name for their characters. Think about some of the names in *The Golden Day*. Why Icara, or Cubby or Morgan? Why Dr Strangemeadows or Miss Renshaw?

ABOUT THE WRITERS

URSULA DUBOSARSKY

Ursula Dubosarsky is widely regarded as one of the most talented and original writers in Australia today. She is the author of many outstanding books, both for young adults and for children, and has won numerous awards for excellence. In 2007 *The Red Shoe* won the Queensland Premiers Award, the NSW State Literary Award: Young Adult, and was an Honour Book in the CBC Book of the Year Award: Older Readers. Ursula lives in Sydney with her family. She has a PhD in English literature from Macquarie University.

FRAN KNIGHT

Fran is a retired teacher librarian who loves adolescent fiction. She speaks at conferences, writes teacher notes and has articles in *The Literature Base*, *Magpies*, *ACCESS* and *Viewpoint* and has reviewed since the 1970s for *Magpies* and *Fiction Focus*.

In 2005, her book, *Ngadjuri: Aboriginal peoples of South Australia's Mid North Region* was published, following 20 years of research. Pledger Consulting has published ten books which reflect Fran's reading, containing lists of books in subject headings.

Fran's contribution to teacher librarianship has been recognised with the South Australian Teacher Librarian of the Year awarded in 2005, and Honorary Life Membership of SLASA (School Library Association of South Australia) in 2007.

Blackline Master 1:

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING: The Novel's Setting

Setting	Discussion points	Written activities
School	<p>Reread the sections which describe the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 1, <i>All on a Summer's Day</i>, gives little snippets, especially on page 4 The other teachers are mentioned on page 4 Page 5 says where the school is situated Page 12 talks of the windows Pages 2, 3 and 7 mention aspects of the girls' uniform 	<p>List all the words which describe various aspects of the school and the girls' classroom and their uniform.</p> <p>What impression do you get of the school from these words?</p>
Ena Thompson Memorial Gardens	<p>Reread the sections which describe the gardens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2, <i>Into the Beautiful Garden</i>, particularly talks of the gardens and what is there Chapters 3 and 4 tell of the girls within the gardens Chapter 4 has a change of tone towards the end where the girls are about to go into the caves 	<p>Gather some of the words which describe the gardens.</p> <p>What sort of atmosphere Dubosarsky is creating using these words.</p>
Cave	<p>Reread the sections which describe the cave.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5, <i>Schoolgirl and Shadow</i>, particularly describes the cave and how the girls feel about being in it How does Dubosarsky build the feeling of dread? 	<p>Look carefully at the words used to describe the cave.</p> <p>How different are they from those used to describe the gardens.</p> <p>How do you feel as the girls enter the cave?</p>
Icara's house	<p>Reread the chapters describing Icara's house.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 8, <i>Floating Schoolgirl</i>, tells of Cubby first going to the house Chapter 9, <i>Within Without</i>, gives more detail about the library Chapter 14, <i>Ebb and Flow</i>, shows Cubby and Icara going to Icara's house, then rowing down the river to Fairyland 	<p>How different is Icara's house from Cubby's?</p> <p>What impression does Dubosarsky create for the reader of this house?</p> <p>What is she telling us about Icara and her family?</p> <p>What is Fairyland? What does it mean to Icara?</p>
Restaurant	<p>Reread Chapter 17, <i>Mythological Fish</i>, which describes the restaurant. What is the significance of the chapter title? What words and phrases does Dubosarsky use to underline Cubby's feeling of inadequacy?</p>	<p>How does Cubby feel during her lunch at the restaurant?</p> <p>What does Cubby learn about Icara that makes her re-evaluate her friend?</p>

Blackline Master 2:

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING: Developing the characters

Dubosarsky evokes a character in a few words and phrases.

Re-examine some of the main characters and the way Dubosarsky describes them.

Character	Discussion points	Written or discussion activities
Cubby	Chapter 1, <i>All on a Summer's Day</i> , introduces the girls, particularly Cubby. In this chapter Dubosarsky gives a picture of Cubby which remains for the rest of the novel. Describe her using the words found in the chapter.	Cubby is only about 8 years old. How do we know how old she is? What gives her age away to the reader? How does this impact upon the novel?
Icara	We know from Chapter 1 that Icara has taken Cubby in hand. Chapter 2 gives us a view of Icara in class. Why might Miss Renshaw not like her?	Icara is far more sophisticated than Cubby. Why does she seem older? Why does she talk of her mother being in Los Angeles? What different words does Dubosarsky use to describe Icara and Cubby at the end of the novel?
Miss Renshaw	Chapter 1 gives a neat description of this character in two short paragraphs on page 4. List the words used to describe the woman. One simile stands out, evoking a picture in the reader's mind of a strong determined woman. What other similes could have been used?	Describe Miss Renshaw to another person in the class. What is there about her that would make a class admire her? What may have happened to her?
Morgan	We know a great deal about Morgan from Chapters 2-4. List his characteristics. In the last chapter, where Miss Renshaw describes what has happened to him, the image given of Morgan is of a 1960's hippie living in a commune. Look again at that chapter and list the characteristics given of this man.	Write a newspaper article about Morgan, implying that he is a suspect in the disappearance of Miss Renshaw OR Write a short story about the death of Miss Renshaw as a major unsolved crime OR Write a letter from Miss Renshaw or Morgan explaining what happened on that day

Blackline Master 3:

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING: Writing your own character description

Choose one of the minor characters and write up a brief description of that person from evidence presented in the novel.

The discussion points and activities in the table below might help you develop your description.

Character	Discussion points	Written or discussion activities
Dr Strangemeadows	Chapter 7, <i>Schoolgirl Crying</i> , has this teacher talking to the class.	How does the class view this teacher? What description does Dubosarsky give to show how imperious she is?
Mrs Arnold	Reread page 50. Who is Mrs Arnold and what place does she hold in the school.	Why are the students in awe of her? Have you met teachers like this? What words are appropriate to use to describe them?
Miss Summers	Reread Chapter 10, <i>The Secret</i> , for an image of Miss Summers. She reappears in other chapters, and then again in Chapter 18, <i>Always Teatime</i> .	What part does Miss Summers play in the novel? Chapter 18's description of her made me laugh. What has she become within the school?
Martine	Chapter 4, <i>Four Schoolgirls</i> tells of Martine's background.	How does Martine's background impact upon the novel?
Icara's father	In Chapter 9, <i>The Exchange</i> , Cubby first meets him Chapter 17, <i>Mythological Fish</i> , shows him with Cubby at the restaurant. Why is this incident so fearful for Cubby?	Why does the judge cause Cubby feelings of trepidation? What descriptive words and phrases are used to show this? How does Dubosarsky use words to underline Cubby's feelings of inadequacy?
Miss de Soto	Reread page 56. Why is this teacher sent to the class?	What image does Dubosarsky give us of this woman? What words are used to describe her?