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BOOK

Teachers' Notes
by Ananda Braxton-Smith

The Year it all Ended
by
Kirsty Murray

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83 Alexander Street
Crows Nest, Sydney
NSW 2065
Australia

PO Box 8500
St Leonards
NSW 1590
Australia

ph: (61 2) 8425 0100
fax: (61 2) 9906 2218

info@allenandunwin.com
www.allenandunwin.com

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PLOT SUMMARY

In a prologue set in 1912 Adelaide, we meet Tiney Flynn, eleven-years-old, and her beloved older brother, Louis, and cousin, Will, known in the family as the Wolfcubs. One clear morning Tiney and the Wolfs catch the early tram to Glenelg beach where, in spite of mixed bathing being forbidden, they spend a glorious hour in the sea. It is an hour Tiney will never forget.

The first chapter jumps forward to Armistice Day 1918. World War I has ended and Tiney is turning seventeen. Surrounded by her family in their peaceful home, 'Larksrest', she is a happy young woman given to quoting the poetry of Mary Gilmore and developing crushes. Louis signed up in 1914, and he is expected home from Europe any day. Adelaide is full of sunshine, triumphant crowds and ringing bells but black clouds are gathering over Larksrest.

The war has been won but there are new battles on the home-front. Tiney and her sisters are German-Australians through their mother's line. Their family have emotional, cultural and family connections with Germany while simultaneously being proud Australians. Before the war they were just another of the European-descended families among the many that were building the young Australian nation. Now they can be perceived, and treated, as though they were the enemy.

Before the war Cousin Will was sent to study in Heidelberg. While at university he was conscripted into the German army and has fought his war on the German side. In addition, Will's younger brother Paul has spent the war interned, first on Torrens Island and then at Holdsworthy detention camps for German-Australians. He has been interned since he was seventeen-years-old and has returned to the family a politicised young man: he is now a pacifist and a socialist.

Meanwhile, many of the young men Tiney grew up with are returning to Australia. They are damaged by the war in ways no-one is equipped to treat. They suffer shell shock and cannot sleep. They have attacks of rage, attacks of fear, attacks of futility. They have returned to a country split by social and class struggle, unemployment and the Spanish Flu. Anti-German sentiment is intense and widespread, even making its way into new laws that ban speaking German.

Tiney Flynn is patriotic and politically naïve. She is devoted to her family: her three older sisters and her parents, and her Barossa Valley uncle and aunt and cousins. Her sisters, Nette, Minna and Thea are all unquestioning patriots. All four girls have contributed to the war effort in any way they were able, and generally believe the war to have been a moral action fought by good men for decent

reasons. Nette's patriotism is of a particularly nationalistic flavour, and she has been handing out white feathers to men not in uniform.

But then the family receive news that both the Wolfcubs, Louis and Will, have been killed in action. They are informed that Australian soldiers' bodies will not be repatriated for burial. Louis is buried in a war cemetery in Builles-Courcelles, a small village in France. Cousin Will has been buried as a German in Belgian soil. The two Wolfcubs will never be coming home.

This news changes everything at Larksrest. Mama embroiders all the time. Papa spends his time alone making a scrapbook of Louis' life. Nette marries shell-shocked Ray after news that the man she loved is dead, killed in action. Minna runs away to Melbourne to escape a mentally disturbed returned soldier, and painter Thea leaves to join other artists in Melbourne. Tiney spends her time plotting ways in which the whole family might travel to Europe and visit Louis' war grave.

But her family is broken and in the end Tiney must make the pilgrimage for them. She sails to Europe and travels through the devastated landscapes of post-war Europe. While travelling Tiney meets remarkable people, some of whom are historic figures such as radical nurse Ettie Rout. After some difficulty (the war cemeteries are not yet prepared for visitors) she finds Louis' grave, but the visit is not as she expects. It does not bring her peace of mind. In fact, she finds herself more disturbed.

After visiting Louis she goes in search of Cousin Will's war grave in Belgium and then travels on to Berlin. Her journey through these blackened post-war landscapes that spread over every border, landscapes in which everyone is suffering regardless of nationality or moral intent, opens Tiney Flynn to a more nuanced view on the war and war in general.

A note on the historicity and how it can be used:

The Year it All Ended is a heavily researched book, built on both primary and secondary source materials. It explores voices that are attenuated in educational treatments of WWI. These voices include those belonging to 'enemy aliens' and pacifists.

To tell its story *The Year it All Ended* uses both actual contemporaneous people, and fictional people who inhabit historical political, social and philosophical positions. For the purposes of supportive learning in history, this text can be entered from two directions according to preference. Students can locate a historic person, such as nurse and sexual health campaigner Ettie Rout, and use that

person as an access point for understanding their political or philosophical positioning. Or they can locate the philosophical or political positioning of a fictional character and through study of their views, come to know historical persons through a general study of ideas. [See below for links to biographical websites.]

The Year it All Ended also provides access to general learning about:

- women's involvement in WWI;
- historiography: the discussion of writing history. History as a study of acts of successful aggression verus history as a set of accumulating perspectives. The so-called 'history wars';
- the class warfare and social shifts of Australia's early twentieth century, including those rarely mentioned in official histories, such as the rise of socialism;
- the post-war treaties and agreements that humiliated and impoverished Germany, providing conditions for WWII.

THE YEAR IT ALL ENDED IN THE CURRICULUM

THE YEAR IT ALL ENDED & THE GENERAL CAPABILITIES

The Year it All Ended will support and enrich learning across the following capabilities: literacy, critical and creative thinking, personal and social competence, ethics development and practice, and intercultural understanding.

THE YEAR IT ALL ENDED AND THE CURRICULUM: AN OVERVIEW

Literature 1: Historical fiction & primary sources

The Year it All Ended is an historical novel and family epic, grounded in broad social and political research. Author Kirsty Murray has used her own family history as an entry point into the material. The story is strongly rooted in family drama and WWI is experienced through the grief and joy of Tiney Flynn and her sisters.

In addition to its main focus on the aftermath of WWI, the text explores the social and grassroots political lives of the early 1900s including its poetry and art, fads and fashions, its shifting gender roles and class struggles.

Ms Murray has accessed many primary and secondary historical sources to re-create the early twentieth century of *The Year It All Ended.* The text offers opportunities to note how primary source research informs fiction as well as non-fiction texts and provides a space to receive histories in more immediate ways than through our academic accounts. Emotion and stories are ways of remembering.

The Year it all Ended makes use throughout of the poems of Mary Gilmore, an important Australian poet. Tiney Flynn quotes Gilmore throughout and others recognise the lines. Sometimes they join in the recitation. Tiney unconsciously recognises in those who know and love Gilmore's poetry a kindred spirit and she is comforted. This facet of the story provides opportunities to discuss a range of artistic responses to war—including nationalistic, patriotic, and protest forms of visual art, music and literature. [See below for list of titles created during or just after WWI.]

Literature 2: The implied author

The Year it All Ended is a text from which much may be learnt about contextualisation of an author's work, and the location of its *implied author*. The story is set in the past but it has not been written until much later. It uses elements of the author's own family history to create its plot, and both primary and secondary historical sources inform its setting and social aesthetic.

The text is a contemporary fictional retelling of a history about which people had, and still have, strong feelings. As with all stories about the past, it is refraction in an agitated pool, not a reflection in still water. The story is being narrated through the voice of a young woman of 1918, but is being authored by a woman of 2014. Attitudes to war, women, pacifism, art, music, gender roles, and sexuality have all changed in the last century.

Ms Murray has noted her desire to write the lives of the women of this time, inspired by the experiences of her great-aunt. One of her stated aims in writing *The Year it All Ended* was to note the contribution of women to WWI, but that initial aim expanded:

> *In February 2010, the bodies of 250 Australian soldiers were reinterred in a specially constructed Military Cemetery at Fromelles Pheasant Wood. But like my grandmother and her sisters, the mothers, sisters, wives, lovers and girlfriends of these men are dead too. They lie in graves across Australia. They died after a lifetime of contribution to their communities. The stories of their fortitude in the face of grief and their suffering are largely forgotten. Thinking of those women and how they are so often overlooked in Australian history and fiction inspired me to write* The Year It All Ended*, to refocus the historical lens and look at the many people who are left out of the picture.*
>
> [Author's Note *TyiAE* pp247/8]

The past created in *The Year it All Ended* is a past comprising the focus of Ms Murray's particular historical 'lens', followed by her interpretation of that focus. On one plane of critical reception the novel exists as a cryptic encoding of the author's reception of the research, and her personal sensibilities as they relate to the subject. Her contemporary 'lens' has been turned upon WWI, and the result is a novel with a discernable attitude to its subject or themes. This attitude is called the *implied author*.

The implied author is not in a straightforward manner the person who has authored the novel. Sometimes the actual author is unaware of their implied author—he or she is just trying to tell their story clearly and strongly, but actual authors are human beings. They are often working sub-consciously. This makes both authors and texts even more interesting. The texts can be read as cultural events arising from time, place and consciousness.

Obviously there is a ground of shared sensibility between the actual author and the implied author in that a particular person has created the text. However, an implied author can be located without knowing anything about an actual author. The implied author is composed only of textual elements.

The implied author is not found in any one character; various characters across the story will voice the attitude through dialogue and argument. The implied author cannot be found in a plot alone, although in a final analysis of the text the action will manifest the implied author. It is located most easily in the text's theme, and in studying the story's beginning and its resolution. Stories start somewhere and they end somewhere.

It is important to note that in any reading, the implied author is the only author with whom a reader is having a relationship. The relationship is between the reader and the text, not the reader and the person who wrote the book. The location of an implied author is only achieved through close reading of the text itself. Any personal authorial information provides only added interest.

Modern History:
Turning point – the First World War

The Year it All Ended deals with the aftermath of the turning point in history known as the First World War. It also deals with unresolved elements of that dispute that eventually led to the Second World War. The story provides an opportunity to explore a nominal time of peace, within which the seeds of the next war are being vigorously watered. Two aspects of the post-WWI era, as represented in this text, resonate with our contemporary world. The resonances

are strongest when compared with the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the USA's World Trade Centre.

First, during WWI there was a flourishing of the notion of an 'enemy within'. This is an enemy that hides inside a community and works secretly for its downfall. This notional enemy may plainly be anyone, anywhere, anytime, dependent on a state's particular conflicts in any given period. But the notion is always suspicious of persons of 'enemy' descent—by which is meant their blood lineage—regardless of individual political position. Regardless even of multi-generational settlement and contribution to a state.

In Australia during WWI German-Australians became this perceived 'enemy within'. After 9/11 throughout the West, people of Middle Eastern descent (or appearance) took on that notional role. Since then the notion has grown nationally irresistible. Holding the correct xenophobia has always been linked to patriotism.

[See link below to Tom Lehrer's very amusing satirical song 'National Brotherhood Week']

Secondly, after WWI there was the potent community feeling that after the war nothing could or would ever be the same again. Everything was changed. This was a sentiment only partly occasioned by the shattered landscapes around people. Australian cities were intact but the sentiment of major change was the same. All the old comfortable certainties were gone, trust was broken and innocence shattered. This is how people feel after most traumas.

After the terrorism of the USA's 9/11 the sentiment was the same: after the planes hit the buildings, the world became an entirely different place to that of 9/10. That we live in a totally different, much more dangerous world to that of our parents has become a contemporary catch-cry. But our parents and their parents lived through WWII, and our grandparents' families through WWI.

Is the threat of violence and irregular justice any more likely now than it was in 1910, or 1950, or 1980?

A note on the critique of democracy in *The Year it All Ended:*

It is true that today's world is a different place to the world of a decade before. And it was true for the survivors of WWI. But as happens in *The Year it All Ended,* many of the social changes we were afraid would be foisted on us by enemy action—changes involving the loss of hard-won freedoms, the loss of recognisable justice, and the increase in government intervention in private life—have been implemented by our own governments.

The post-WWI period of *The Year it All Ended* is rife with governmental broken promises, half-truths and xenophobic law-making. The returning soldiers are

learning that their democratically elected representatives will deploy them freely as weapons, but will not recognise them as human beings when and if they return from duty. After fighting for freedom in Europe they must now fight for it again at home.

Pondering such ironies of our democracy might provide students with the motivation to research contemporary post-war and post-terrorism social landscapes, with the purpose of locating reality among the many 'truths'. The *Year it All Ended* provides a reminder of the legacies of war wherever and whenever they occur—and for *whatever reasons* they occur. Wars that are fought for 'good' reasons such as freedom leave behind as much suffering as wars fought for 'bad' reasons such as genocide or wealth. In addition, the text shows us again how at their end these wars leave behind the mess that leads directly to the next war. [See below for links to short article on Treaty of Versailles.]

ACTIVITIES

LANGUAGE & LITERATURE: GOLDEN NOSTALGIC HAZES IN *THE YEAR IT ALL ENDED*

Vocab Stop!

Nostalgia

Meaning: a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past
Origin: late 18th century (in the sense 'acute homesickness'): modern Latin (translating German *Heimweh* 'homesickness'), from Greek *nostos* 'return home' + *algos* 'pain'
[http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/nostalgia]

Nostalgia is more than enjoyment of remembering. It is a feeling for and about the past that contains a large portion of longing. Nostalgic longing is always for a return to a particular past. However, nostalgic pasts are always a creation of the imagination fuelled by suffering. Such pasts are characterised by what they *cannot admit*: they are a glorified past, never a real one.

Literary nostalgia is a device used by authors to lend affective weight to change occurring within their stories. The changes that provoke use of literary nostalgia involve perceived losses, in particular perceived losses of 'innocence'.

Innocence is allied to youth and is a state of not-knowing. Its loss is most often connected to the acquisition of sexual knowledge but is a much bigger idea at heart. Innocence is also what a country might lose in wartime, or a person might

lose growing up under abuse: unquestioning trust is one of innocence's main elements.

As a culture we have accumulated sentimentality around notions of 'innocence' but in a mature person or society loss of innocence is necessary. Innocence is only another word for ignorance of reality. If we remain ignorant of reality, how can we live responsive and meaningful lives? For both people and societies, innocence is not practical or beneficial. It allows easy manipulation by other people on one hand and on the other, it allows a refusal to engage with the world.

The appearance of nostalgia in a work of literature is not an accident and in good literature it is not merely affective. Kirsty Murray has chosen to bookend the main story of *The Year it All Ended* within two sections, called 'Before' and 'After'. The events of 'Before' occur before WWI and those of 'After', a short time after WWI but before the outbreak of WWII. These two sections use purposeful repetitions of emblems, language and action in order to trigger comparisons.

A close reading of the two sections would provide material for learning how to recognise literary nostalgia, its affect and purpose. A form of literary nostalgia is used in public life, by politicians simplifying issues of great complexity and nuance in order to win votes from a frightened populace. Such simplification is an appeal to our desire for 'innocence'. Close reading and analysis will also ultimately reveal a purpose that relies for its apprehension on a level of cultural knowledge in the reader.

Activity 1a: simple textual analysis – locate the nostalgic tones

- **Read closely** the first passage below, *'Before'*
- **Note:**
  - repeated words or phrases
  - colour or texture words
  - light effects
  - the main action, reduced to one sentence
  - anachronistic (out-of-time) words or usage
  - suspicious 'perfections' of the scene: what is the scene not showing us? What is missing that you might reasonably expect to see?
- Discuss your notes in small groups, focusing on the *affect* such repetitions and language choices generate.
  First ask yourself: how does the passage make you feel?

'Before'

The beach was dazzling; turquoise and blue water, white and gold sand with a few promenaders strolling along its length. The sea was calm and still, a mirror reflecting the morning sky … the boys burst out of the sea and each grabbed one of Tiney's arms. They swung her into the air, over the clear ocean, up and up. Tiney would never forget the feel of Will and Louis' arms about her, the water rushing past her face, the sunlight cutting through the surface, the blue, blue sky above. She would hold the memory of the two young men, the air, the sky and the sea, like the perfect jewel of her childhood, for the rest of her life.

[TYiAE pp 4/5]

Activity 1b: Comparative textual analysis - compare and contrast

- **Read closely** the following passage, 'After'
- **Note & discuss** *as above*
- **Compare & contrast** your notes on each passage. Look for:
  - use of the same words or phrases
  - repeating emblems or action
  - doubling of characters (characters named the same, or aged or gendered similarly)
  - differences between the two beach scenes
- **Discuss** your **notes** in small groups: you will notice the scene is almost a repetition of 'Before'. Focus on the differences. What is there in 'After' that wasn't there in 'Before', and vice versa?

'After'

Martin, Louis and Tiney walked into the clear, still water. The tide was out and even twenty yards from shore, the water was only waist-deep. Martin let Louis climb onto his shoulders and leap into the air. Tiney looked up and watched as Louis jumped, suspended for a second against the bright sky before he plunged into the silvery water.

They splashed and laughed and then turned their backs to float on the calm blue of Holdfats Bay. Martin's hand brushed against hers and Louis kicked a silvery spray of seawater into the air. Tiney looked up at the sky above her, like the vault of heaven, and sighed with happiness.

[TYiAE p243]

Activity 1c: *The Year it All Ended* & pre-nostalgia

In *The Year it All Ended* the final section, 'After', recreates the pre-war morning of the first section, 'Before'. The main text sits between these two golden nostalgic hazes, interrupted by the harrowing years of what was being called as early as 1918 the First World War [see QI quote below]. Understanding of the implications of this final section relies on readers knowing that the Second World War began in 1939.

In the section titled 'After', Tiney is enjoying another nostalgic day at the beach. It is also another 'innocent' day, in that she is ignorant of what is coming. The Louis with whom she plays on this day is not her brother, but her cousin Will's little son. This Louis is illegitimate. He is born of a Jewish mother and so culturally a Jew himself. In 1939 he will be just the right age to fight in WWII.

And so another Louis will go to war. On and on. Before and after.

Any moment in time is always before something; any moment is always after something. Every action in every moment is laying the conditions for the next.

- **Questions for a class discussion** leading to deeper understanding of the uses of nostalgia & pre-nostalgia in *The Year it All Ended*:
  - What do you think of this apparent re-establishment of pre-WWI conditions at the end of the story? Do you like this ending? Why? Does it feel like a 'happy ending'? Has the text led you to expect a happy ending?

OR

  - How does the nostalgia feel to you at this reiteration? Do you feel a resistance to its golden haze? Does it feel out of place, a 'cop-out', or too easy? Why?
  - Consider the cast of characters on the beach with Tiney. What or who is absent from the final scene? What or who are the new elements in the scene?

A Note: In the section called 'Before' Tiney Flynn was the child on the nostalgic beach. In the section called 'After' there are new children on the beach. The day of Tiney Flynn's 'After' is the day of these children's 'Before'.

LITERATURE: THE USE AND MEANING OF BEACHES IN *THE YEAR IT ALL ENDED*

Vocab Stop!

Emblem

Meaning: an object or picture used to suggest a thing that cannot be shown. A person or thing that represents an idea.
Origin: Middle English, from Latin *emblema:* inlaid work, from Greek *emblēmat-*, *emblēma.* First Known Use: 15th century

[http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emblem]

A literary emblem has much in common with a literary symbol, except that the emblem is more personal. Symbols tend to universality and the subconscious. Emblems are like the image on a banner or flag, standing for something specific and personal. In Australian literature there have been two noticeably recurring emblematic settings for stories: the bush and the beach.

Oceans and coasts are emblems of great meaning and importance in Australian literature. Most of us live around the edges of the continent. We overwhelmingly spend our holidays on the beach. When we're middle-aged we chase the sea-change. We love the beach but ever since white settlement we have turned anxious eyes to the horizon, from which direction the various boat people of our history have arrived.

First, the boats brought convicts and their guards, then settlers and farmers. They brought the white settlers food, medicine and comfort. They brought family members. Then they brought refugees: at first from the wars in Europe, and later from those in Asia and the Middle East.

The Year it All Ended starts and ends with a beach. Beaches were central to the action of WWI. Most of the invasions of German-held territory had to be achieved by sea. Our founding national war-story, Gallipoli, is set on a beach. Between the two bookend beach scenes, Tiney Flynn moves through a series of beach or ocean settings. But from Glenelg Beach to Christie's Beach, to England's Beachy Head and the channel crossing, all these literary beaches call us back to that first scene on the beach before the war.

Activity: Creative writing - two beaches

There is nothing like writing an emotion-infused landscape to instil understanding of the emotional persuasiveness of texts. This activity will give students an opportunity to create a strongly emotional text without ever referencing the direct language of emotion.

The sea is a potent literary symbol for most cultures but the beach is a particularly Australian emblem. Our country is surrounded by sea and bordered in beaches. We have no real borders. We have no close neighbours; the sea is our neighbour. We have as a nation developed a relationship to the beach beyond beauty or sport. *The Year it All Ended* uses the beach to simultaneously stand in for the brief golden afternoon of our 'innocence' and the blood-red sands of our shame. It also stands in for both the desire for autonomy and the tides of sexuality, which call us to relationship. It is a flexible emblem.

In this activity students write two literary beach scenes. Each scene takes place on the same beach. The landscape is invested with emotional meaning; its sand, water, rock, weed and other elements are recreated as emotional symbols, or emblems of feeling. The aim is to write the beach before and after some *changing event,* that is an event after which the beach is the same but the consciousness of the protagonist has changed. Two hundred words per paragraph will be plenty.

Note: This activity may be experienced over two sessions. Projecting personal emotion into literary landscape requires some time to feel the feeling before it is transformed into a suitable emblem. Or you can just run the activity over one intense class. Whichever you choose, save critiques and analysis for a later session. First and foremost this is an activity in which having a creative 'go' is paramount. The idea is not to be a great writer of beaches, but to understand how emotion can be tacitly layered into texts.

- **Decide** the event you will be writing your beach around. This can be something big like an apocalypse of some sort, or something personal like breaking up with a friend, or something small and intense and idiosyncratic. It doesn't matter. What matters is that you are clear what has happened.
- **Make notes** on the features of your beach. You can either go to a real beach and write it, or create the beach from your inner store of remembered beaches.
- **Write the first beach**. Here are some tips:

- First contemplate the emotion you are going to project into the landscape. *How does that emotion feel in the body*? Be specific and concrete. Sharp? Heavy? Fluttering? Tight? Make a list of as many words as you can. *How does the emotion feel in the mind*? Does it make your mind buzz or race in a circle? Does it stop all thought for a time? Does it make you think of running away, hitting somebody, hugging somebody?
- Starting with phrases only, endow your water and sand and rocks, and any people on the beach, with elements of the emotion you are writing. Don't hold back. Enjoy the *whipping* waves, or *sulky* sea, or the gulls *laughing* on the rocks
- When you have finished generating the descriptive phrases, work them into a paragraph.

- **Share** these first literary beaches in small groups. What feeling do the beaches invoke in those listening? Listeners should not critique or analyse the beaches; only their immediate emotional response is useful at this point.
- **Write the second beach** following the directions and tips above, keeping in mind the *changing event* that has occurred between the first and second writings. How can you show in the landscape, the changes in emotion?
- **Share** the two beaches with a different small group. **Read** the two beaches directly one after the other. In a general sense, what sort of *changing event* do the listeners feel has happened between the two literary beaches? They do not have to know the details, only the change in mood and atmosphere

  TIP: Listen for:
  - what has changed and how?
  - what is new? What is the same?
  - how has the choice of words changed?

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND LITERACY: *THE YEAR IT ALL ENDED* AND THE POETRY OF WAR & OF PROTEST

Tiney Flynn quotes several times from *The Passionate Heart* (1918), Mary Gilmore's second collection of poetry. This collection expressed the poet's horror at the events of World War I. Mary Gilmore was a patriot, but she was also a socialist

and pacifist. The poems emphasise the waste of war rather than its glory, and she was an advocate for the men who fought and returned to governmental neglect. The poem 'Gallipoli' is an account of that now nationally definitive battlefield with its devastation hidden by the new green of spring.

[Info from *adb.anu.edu.au/**biography/gilmore**-dame-**mary**-jean-6391]*

Mary Gilmore was an Australian poet and advocate for the working class, aboriginal autonomy and what would today be called environmental issues. She worked as a teacher and writer, and for 23 years was editor of the women's pages of the *Australian Worker* newspaper. In 1908 she became women's editor of *The Worker*, the newspaper of the Australian Workers' Union. She was also the union's first woman member. She died in 1962 at 97 years of age. Her war poem 'These Fellowing Men' chimes throughout *The Year it All Ended*.

DO NOT FORGET TO READ THE POEMS ALOUD!

Activity 1: close reading of Mary Gilmore's 'War'

In Gilmore's poem 'War' a woman remembers seeing her son off to WWI. She recalls the pomp of the march, although on that day she was apprehensive and uneasy. Now she has been told her son is dead and he will not be repatriated for burial at home. The poem ends with a terse image that undercuts all possible ideas of glorious deaths and heroism.

War

by Mary Gilmore (1932)

Out in the dust he lies;
Flies in his mouth,
Ants in his eyes ...

I stood at the door
Where he went out;
Full-grown man,
Ruddy and stout;

I heard the march
Of the trampling feet,
Slow and steady
Come down the street;

The beat of the drum
Was clods on the heart,
For all that the regiment
Looked so smart!

I heard the crackle
Of hasty cheers
Run like the breaking
Of unshed tears,

And just for a moment,
As he went by,
I had sight of his face,
And the flash of his eye.

He died a hero's death,
They said,
When they came to tell me
My boy was dead;

But out in the street
A dead dog lies;
Flies in his mouth,
Ants in his eyes.

Some considerations towards a discussion of 'War':

- While reading 'War' aloud listen for the beat of the lines. Why would Gilmore choose the rhythm of the military march to frame her poem? What other rituals were regularly accompanied by a slow beat of the drum?
- Find the phrases that suggest her son's attitude on the day he marched off to the war. Find the words and phrases that suggest the mother's apprehension about the excitement of that day.
- Gilmore frames the poem between repeats of stanzas about the dead dog. Why? Consider the non-repatriation of Australian soldiers after WWI.

Activity 2: close reading Siegfried Sassoon's 'Aftermath'

Siegfried Sassoon was a homosexual Englishman who joined up on the day war was declared. He was courageous under fire. He was so courageous that as well as his 1916 Military Cross he was awarded the nickname 'Mad Jack'. While recovering

from dysentery back in England he grew increasingly disheartened by the politics of war. While home he met the pacifist group led by Bertrand Russell and Lady Ottoline Morrell. While recovering next from being wounded by a sniper, Siegfried Sassoon wrote his *Declaration Against the War* [see below] and planned to resign his commission. His friends, worried about a court martial, dissuaded him and he returned to the front. In 1918 he was mistaken for a German and was shot in the head by a member of his own company. He survived.

Siegfried Sassoon was a prolific war poet, and also wrote a series of memoirs. He died at 80 and has a slab in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey. This poem, 'Aftermath', speaks to the soldier's experience of returning to civilian life after the experience of bloody war.

Aftermath

by Siegfried Sassoon (1919)

Have you forgotten yet?
For the world's events have rumbled on since those gagged days,
Like traffic checked while at the crossing of city-ways:
And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow
Like clouds in the lit heaven of life; and you're a man reprieved to go,
Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.

But the past is just the same-and War's a bloody game...
Have you forgotten yet?
Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you'll never forget.

Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz-
The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?
Do you remember the rats; and the stench
Of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench-
And dawn coming, dirty-white, and chill with a hopeless rain?
Do you ever stop and ask, Is it all going to happen again?'

Do you remember that hour of din before the attack-
And the anger, the blind compassion that seized and shook you then
As you peered at the doomed and haggard faces of your men?
Do you remember the stretcher-cases lurching back

With dying eyes and lolling heads – those ashen-grey
Masks of the lads who once were keen and kind and gay?

Have you forgotten yet?
Look up, and swear by the green of the spring that you'll never forget.

Some considerations for a discussion of 'Aftermath':

- Note repetitions of the line 'Have you forgotten yet?' Consider the entrenched cultural imperative of 'forgetting' trauma, the well-meant direction to 'move on'. The returning soldiers were encouraged to 'try and forget' their war. The events to which the poet refers grow increasingly grisly and sad throughout the poem. Consider the subversion of the forgetting imperative he effects in his plea to instead *never* forget.
- Sassoon's first stanzas speak to popular expectations of civilian life. Locate these expectations and note how light they are when contrasted with the weight of his memory.

Activity 3: Close reading of Bruce Dawe's 'Homecoming'

Finally here is a poem written by an Australian, Bruce Dawes. Dawes was born in Geelong in 1930. This poem was written during the Vietnam War, which was another controversial war for the soldiers themselves. It is an elegy for the dead which like Gilmore's 'War' utilises a funereal beat.

Homecoming
By Bruce Dawes (1968)

All day, day after day, they're bringing them home,
they're picking them up, those they can find, and bringing them home,
they're bringing them in, piled on the hulls of Grants, in trucks, in convoys,
they're zipping them up in green plastic bags,
they're tagging them now in Saigon, in the mortuary coolness
they're giving them names, they're rolling them out of
the deep-freeze lockers — on the tarmac at Tan Son Nhut
the noble jets are whining like hounds,
they are bringing them home
– curly heads, kinky-hairs, crew-cuts, balding non-coms
– they're high, now, high and higher, over the land, the steaming chow mein,
their shadows are tracing the blue curve of the Pacific
with sorrowful quick fingers, heading south, heading east,

home, home, home — and the coasts swing upward, the old ridiculous curvatures
of earth, the knuckled hills, the mangrove-swamps, the desert emptiness…
in their sterile housing they tilt towards these like skiers
– taxiing in, on the long runways, the howl of their homecoming rises
surrounding them like their last moments (the mash, the splendour)
then fading at length as they move
on to small towns where dogs in the frozen sunset
raise muzzles in mute salute,
and on to cities in whose wide web of suburbs
telegrams tremble like leaves from a wintering tree
and the spider grief swings in his bitter geometry
– they're bringing them home, now, too late, too early.

Some considerations for a discussion of 'Homecoming':

- Imagine the bodies in the coffins and their positioning in relation to the earth over which they fly home. Follow them with your mind's eye as the poem is read aloud.
- Consider the traditional use of the word *homecoming.* It suggests happiness, comfort, love and safety. Can you think of other resonances for the word *homecoming*? Consider the ironic use of homecoming and its subversion in Dawes' poem.
- Poetry and song provide for a particular mode of expression around a subject. What is poetry able to do which other forms of expression, such as articles or essays, cannot do without controversy? Consider the uses of each in talking about war and politics.

EXTENDED STUDY AND EXTRA CURRICULAR INTEREST

WHO NAMES HISTORY?

'Far from waiting until the Second World War had started, the First World War was rather pessimistically named as such in 1918.

British Officer Lieutenant-Colonel Charles à Court Repington recorded in his diary for 10 Sep 1918 that he met with a Major Johnstone of Harvard University to discuss what historians should call the war. Repington said it was then referred to as The War, "but that this could not last". They agreed that "To call it The German War was too much flattery for the Boche"' Repington concludes: "I suggested The World War as a shade better title, and finally we mutually agreed to call it The

First World War in order to prevent the millennium folk from forgetting that the history of the world was the history of war."

[http://qi.com/infocloud/the-first-world-war]

SEIGFRIED SASSOON'S DECLARATION AGAINST THE WAR

'I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this War, on which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purpose for which I and my fellow soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation. I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust. I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed. On behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against the deception which is being practised on them; also I believe that I may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the contrivance of agonies which they do not, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realize.'

[http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/education/tutorials/intro/sassoon/declaration.html]

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

WWI LITERATURE

Vera Brittain *Testament of Youth* [1933] – a memoir of her wartime experience spent nursing the injured and dying, and a memorial to her brother, fiancé and friends who died.

ONLINE **Ettie Rout *Safe Marriage: A Return to Sanity*** @ http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/16135?msg=welcome_stranger

This is nurse Ettie Rout's controversial 1922 book on sexual health.

Erich Maria Remarque *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928) – a novel.

When WWI breaks out Paul Bäumer enlists with his classmates in the German army.

Robert Graves *Goodbye to All That* (1929) – a memoir of his life up to leaving the United Kingdom vowing 'never to make England my home again'. His service in the First World War haunted him throughout his life.

Ernest Hemingway *Farewell to Arms* (1929) – a novel based on his experience in Italy during WWI.

Jaroslav Hašek *The Good Soldier Švejk (1923)* – a blackly comic novel in which the subversive Czech writer and anarchist combines wordplay and satire in a depiction of the futility of war.

Goodreads list of best WWI Literature @
http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/1363.World_War_One_Literature
A list of the best books on or about the First World War, voted for by members of the Goodreads community: 128 books so far.

Poems & songs of war

Mary Gilmore 'Gallipoli' @
http://alldownunder.com/australian-authors/mary-gilmore/gallipoli.htm

University of Oxford database of WWI poetry @
http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections

Tom Lehrer's satire 'National Brotherhood Week' @
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIlJ8ZCs4jY

Examiner online article: 10 Top Anti-War Songs from Vietnam War
http://www.examiner.com/article/10-top-anti-war-protest-songs-about-the-vietnam-war

Recent Government overview of the songs and poetry of war with links to the works themselves @
http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/songs-of-war-protest

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES / HISTORIES ONLINE

Biography of Mary Gilmore @
http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gilmore-dame-mary-jean-6391

Biography of Ettie Rout @
http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/65866

List of Australian WWI artists with links to their bios and work @
https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/war_artists/ww1.asp

Australian War Museum's overview of Australian women's contribution to and experience in war with links to particular women @
http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/women-in-wartime

Short history of Adelaide's WWI women's voluntary service, the Cheer Up Hut @
http://adelaidia.sa.gov.au/places/cheer-up-hut

Short article on shell shock @
https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/06/shell-shocked.aspx

Australian Defence Force overview of WWI with links to images @
http://www.army.gov.au/Our-history/Primary-Materials/World-War-One-1914-to-1918

Article on and extracts from letters of three Australian nurses stationed in Europe during WWI @
http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/11/24/3375151.htm

Biography of Vera Brittain, WWI nurse and author @
http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/brittain

Biography of Siegfried Sassoon @
http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/sassoon

PRIMARY SOURCES WWI

Colonel Gowenlock's account of Armistice Day as it happened on the front: account as it appears in *Soldiers of Darkness* 1936
http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/armistice.htm

University of Oxford's list of WWI poets with links to their biographies and works. Also links to the photographic, audio and film archives for WWI
http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections

Letter from 'Bert', a soldier stationed in Cairo in 1915. Page has links to other WWI letters
http://www.smythe.id.au/letters/15_1.htm

Collection of WWI letters, diaries and other archival material by soldiers @
http://www.lrhsd.org/cms/lib05/NJ01000316/Centricity/Domain/324/World_War_I_Primary_Sources.htm

ABOUT THE WRITERS

KIRSTY MURRAY

Kirsty Murray is the author of eighteen books for children and teenagers. Her novels have won and been short-listed for numerous awards including the WA Premier's Award and the NSW Premier's History Award. She has been a Creative Fellow of the State Library of Victoria and an AsiaLink Literature Resident in India.

Kirsty reads compulsively - both fiction and non-fiction. She is an active member of two bookclubs and likes nothing better than visiting bookshops and libraries.

To research the historical background of *The Year it All Ended*, Kirsty visited war graves in northern France and Belgium. She also travelled to Berlin, London and Paris as well as spending time in Adelaide and the Barossa Valley in order to create a sense of authenticity in the novel.

Kirsty was born in 1960 and grew up in suburban Melbourne. She lives there still with her husband, the puppeteer Ken Harper in a house full of books and puppets. Their blended family of six children have grown into dynamic adults and family gatherings now include two grandchildren.

Kirsty regularly gives talks and conducts creative writing workshops in schools and at festivals both in Australia and around the world. For more information, visit her website: www.kirstymurray.com

ANANDA BRAXTON-SMITH

Ananda is a community journalist and author. She has written four books for young adult readers. These include a history of the bubonic plague from 1347 - 1900 entitled *The Death: the horror of the plague* (2009), and two novels in the Secrets of Carrick series: *Merrow* (2010) and *Tantony* (2011). *Merrow* was a CBCA 2010 Notable Book, and was also shortlisted for a 2010 Aurealis award. She was a guest at the Reading Matters youth literature conference 2011, and speaks at libraries around Melbourne. With her husband she sings in a bluegrass band called the HillWilliams, and lives in Victoria's Dandenong Ranges with him and two young adult sons. Ananda is currently working on a third novel in the Carrick series.