

Magabala Books • Teacher Notes

Alfred's War

Written by Rachel Bin Salleh

Illustrated by Samantha Fry

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

Alfred's War is a powerful story that unmasks the lack of recognition given to Australian Indigenous servicemen who returned from the WWI battlelines. Alfred was just a young man when he was injured and shipped home from France. Neither honoured as a returned soldier or offered government support afforded to non-Indigenous servicemen, Alfred took up a solitary life walking the back roads – billy tied to his swag, finding work where he could.

Alfred was a forgotten soldier. Although he had fought bravely in the Great War, as an Aboriginal man he wasn't classed as a citizen of his own country. Yet Alfred always remembered his friends in the trenches and the mateship they had shared. Sometimes he could still hear the never-ending gunfire in his head and the whispers of diggers praying. Every year on ANZAC Day, Alfred walked to the nearest town, where he would quietly stand behind the people gathered and pay homage to his fallen mates.

Rachel Bin Salleh's poignant narrative opens our hearts to the sacrifice and contribution that Indigenous people have made to Australia's war efforts, the true extent of which is only now being revealed.

- The first children's picture book that recognises the courage and sacrifice of Indigenous servicemen
- Destined to be an Australian classic
- Stunning writing and illustrative debut from author and illustrator
- Well-suited to the Australian Curriculum

THEMES

- World War 1

AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

Written in third person, past tense, *Alfred's War* is suited to mid-upper primary school audiences. It shares the story of Indigenous soldiers who fought beside their fellow Australians during wartime, but whose services quickly became forgotten during peacetime. In addition, the text introduces readers to citizenship and veteran affairs inequalities, as well as the policies of the period that discriminated against Aboriginal Australians. It does this in a sensitive and gentle manner, the illustrations working seamlessly with the text to allow readers to arrive at their own conclusions about the injustices of such policies. In so doing, it recognises the Australian Indigenous servicemen, opening this chapter of Australian history to young readers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

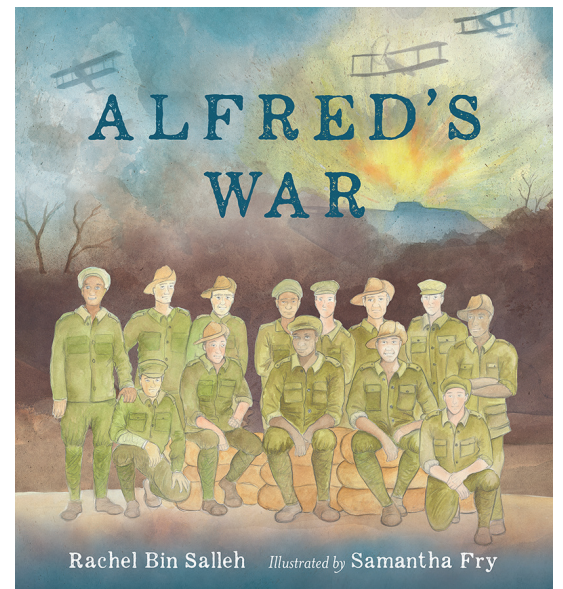


Rachel Bin Salleh is descended from the Nimunburr, Bunuba and Yawuru peoples of the Kimberley region of Western Australia. She has worked in publishing for over 20 years and is passionate about Indigenous people telling their stories. Rachel lives in Broome with her family. *Alfred's War* is her first book.



Samantha Fry grew up in the Northern Territory and lives in Darwin. She is descended from the Dagiman people from Katherine and as a child lived in remote communities across

the Top End. Samantha is an accomplished artist and talented designer. This is the first book she has illustrated.



LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This book and the classroom activities provided are primarily relevant to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Learning area	Year level
English Years 3-6	
Humanities and Social Sciences	Years 3-4; 6

The appendix highlights relevant content descriptions, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities that relate to the text and classroom ideas provided.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

English

- Using the illustrations on the front cover, discuss which war this book is about? What clues help to date this story? Why do you think it is unclear which soldier is Alfred?
- Why does Alfred live outside? Why do you think he keeps moving around, sometimes sleeping in parks or under trees? What does this tell us about Alfred's sense of belonging and acceptance? In what ways would this have conflicted with Alfred's sense of connectedness to his country?
- Why do we only see Alfred's face properly for the first time several pages into the text? How does this reflect his lack of recognition and identity in the eyes of white Australia at this time? How do you think such attitudes have changed over the past 100 years? What do you think still needs to change?
- How do the illustrations help tell the story of *Alfred's War*? Which is your favourite illustration? Why? Why are such soft colours used to help tell his story? How does this reflect Alfred's humility and grace?
- In the role of Alfred, write a journal entry that shares your thoughts as you head to the city to enlist. In addition, write the letter to your family telling them that you are off to war. How might these two pieces of writing be similar and different from one another?
- How is the fact that Alfred has to live on the outskirts of town a reflection of the way in which many Indigenous soldiers were ignored once home?
- Using a suitable graphic organiser, compare *Alfred's War* with Valerie Everett's *The House That Was Built in a Day: Anzac Cottage*. How do these two picture books share the different ways in which returning soldiers were treated?
- Why is the page opening below wordless? How does this help to fully immerse readers in the battlefields of World War 1? Use a Y Chart to brainstorm what Alfred would have seen, heard and felt at this time. Use this chart as the impetus for a piece of descriptive writing about his experiences.



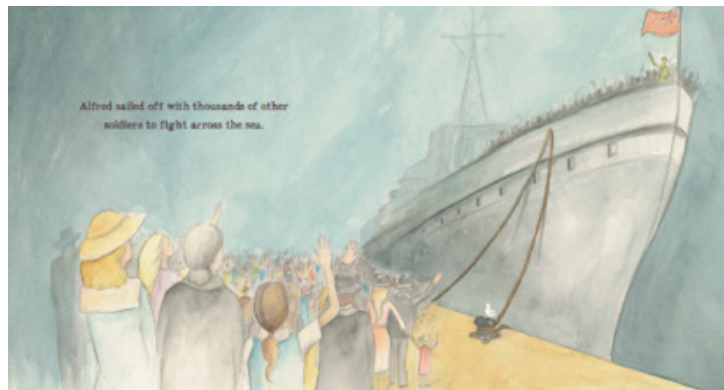
- Why doesn't Alfred talk about his experiences when he arrives home? Why do you think he 'curled into a ball and slept in the shadows' some days? How does this part of the text help young readers to better understand the horrors of war and its impact on soldiers? Why is it important that the story continues beyond the war itself?
- Why do you think Alfred chooses to stay in the shadows on Anzac Day before quietly joining the people gathered? Why doesn't he join the Anzac march?
- Why is the story called *Alfred's War*? What else do you think Alfred is fighting?



- On the last page opening, Alfred is shown with his mates in a photograph in which he is an equal. Why is this an effective way to communicate this important message of the story?
- Re-write this story from Alfred's first person point of view.
- How does a text such as *Alfred's War* help the reconciliation process? (For more information on reconciliation, see the Reconciliation Australia website <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>)
- Write a persuasive letter to the Prime Minister outlining the concerns you have with the way in which soldiers like Alfred were treated.
- Using *Unsung Hero* by Trish Albert from the *First Australians, Plenty Stories* series, create your own picture book about World War 2 Indigenous soldier, Eddie Albert. Alternatively, research another Indigenous serviceman or woman and retell their story.
- What is the author's purpose in creating this text? Why is this an important story to share with younger audiences?

Humanities and Social Sciences

- Why did so many young men volunteer to fight in World War 1? What were they hoping would happen when they went abroad?
- Examine primary source posters used to entice young men to enlist. What persuasive techniques were used in these posters? Why were they so successful? <http://www.ww1propaganda.com/world-war-1-posters/australian-ww1-propaganda-posters>
- In what ways is Alfred's story one that reflects the stories of so many Indigenous people in Australia since 1788?
- Alfred grew up on a mission. Research more about these missions. Why would the governments of that era have treated Aboriginal people in this way? Write a reflection to share your opinion of such practices.
- Using the link below, read the diary entries of Private HV Reynolds who fought in World War 1. Use the primary source photographs and questions given by the Australian War Memorial to put yourself in the shoes of this soldier. <https://www.evernote.com/pub/jholloway127/diaryofananzac#st=p&n=d34fa007-2c41-4178-8d3d-a3782fc1536d>
- Find original photographs on the internet of ships leaving Australia bound for World War 1. Compare these photographs with the illustration below. How has the illustrator captured the mood of this moment through her illustration? What must it have been like to be standing on the docks waving away loved ones? How would you feel as a soldier aboard the ship? Write a journal entry to share your thoughts.



- Using the historical information at the end of the text, take notes about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans. Use these notes to write a paragraph sharing this history. As an extension, visit the Australian War Memorial's website for further details. <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/indigenous>
- Create a timeline that shows the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders being granted citizenship.
- How are the rules and laws of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders different from those of early Twentieth Century 'White' Australia?



APPENDIX - LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year	Curriculum Area
3	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others (ACELT1596) • Create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, for example perspective, distance and angle (ACELT1601) <p>Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the point of view in a text and suggest alternative points of view (ACELY1675 - Scootle) • Identify the audience and purpose of imaginative, informative and persuasive texts (ACELY1678 - Scootle) <p>Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)</p> <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of Country/Place to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples who belong to a local area (ACHASSK062)
4	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make connections between the ways different authors may represent similar storylines, ideas and relationships (ACELT1602 - Scootle) • Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension (ACELT1605 - Scootle) • Create literary texts that explore students' own experiences and imagining (ACELT1607) <p>Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)</p> <p>Civics and Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The differences between 'rules' and 'laws', why laws are important and how they affect the lives of people, including experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHASSK092 - Scootle)
5	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts (ACELT1608 - Scootle) • Create literary texts that explore students' own experiences and imagining (ACELT1607)
6	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse and evaluate similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots (ACELT1614 - Scootle) <p>Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)</p> <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, women and children (ACHASSK135 - Scootle) <p>Civics and Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shared values of Australian citizenship and the formal rights and responsibilities of Australian citizens (ACHASSK147 - Scootle)
<p>Cross-Curriculum Priorities</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture</p>	

