

## These notes are for:

- Years 5, 6, 7 & 8
- Middle Years

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- HSIE/SOSE

## Example of:

- Junior Fiction
- Adventure Fiction
- First Person Narrative

## Experience of:

- Cultures and Other Lands
- Identity
- Gender Studies

## Values addressed:

- Honesty & Trustworthiness
- Care & Compassion
- Doing your best

## Themes:

- Friendship
- Heroes & Heroines
- Survival
- Environment

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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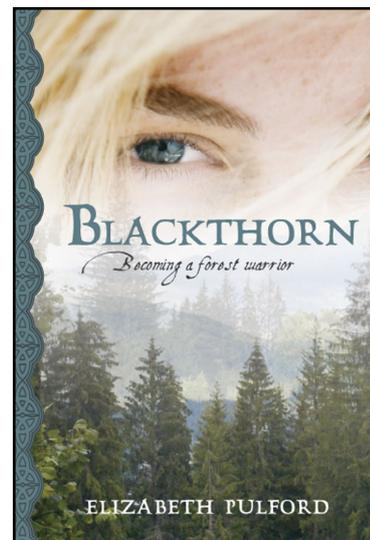
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## Blackthorn - Overview

### Blackthorn

By: Elizabeth Pulford  
 ISBN: 9781921529443  
 ARRP: \$14.95  
 NZRRP: \$16.99  
 No. of Pages: 222  
 New Edition August 2009



## Outline:

Young orphan Alyana leaves her Uncle's family to become the warrior she feels she truly is. Taking the name of Blackthorn, she meets a hunter called Boar, who takes her into his camp and teaches her the ways of the woods. Alyana constantly struggles with the hardships and isolation of the solitary life of a warrior. She is captured by her tribal enemies, uncovering a plan to destroy her Uncle's village. In an act of sacrifice, she saves the village and truly becomes a warrior. This is an atmospheric, action-packed story. Alyana is a strong-willed, resourceful heroine that will encourage young girls to challenge stereotypes and stand up for what they believe in.

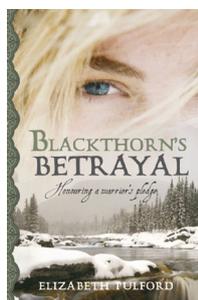
This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

## Author Information:

**Elizabeth Pulford** was born in Hamilton, Canada, but grew up in New Zealand from the age of two. In the early 1960s she left to spend eight years overseas, travelling and working in England and Europe. After marrying she returned to live in Dunedin, New Zealand.

Elizabeth began writing in her early 40s. Since then publications have included articles, poetry, short stories (for both adult and children) in newspapers, magazines and on the radio. Many of her adult short stories have won national competitions and her children's books range from early readers to young adult fiction. *Castlecliff and the Fossil Princess* was her first title for Walker Books Australia, *Blackthorn* is her second.

## Blackthorn's Betrayal:



*Blackthorn's Betrayal*  
 by Elizabeth Pulford  
 ISBN: 9781921529030  
 Arrp: \$14.95/NZrrp: \$16.99  
 No. of pages: 208  
 August 2009

Read *Blackthorn's Betrayal* the sequel to *Blackthorn* available now.

## Elizabeth Pulford on writing *Blackthorn*:

"*Blackthorn* happened quite out of the blue.

I was busy writing another book when all of a sudden I saw in my head this young girl running through the forest carrying a spear.

I paused in the writing of the other book and what followed very quickly was the prologue for *Blackthorn*. From that moment the young girl fascinated me. What was she doing in the forest? What was she running from? These, and what felt like another million questions kept at me, until I gave in and 'really' began to write *Blackthorn*.

I have always loved trees, parks and wild places, so Gurcross Forest felt familiar as a setting.

I am also fascinated by someone struggling against convention, because of their own choice. This was *Blackthorn* when she chose not to go with her relations and live in their village. Choosing instead a much harder path for herself, but one she felt more true to who she was, or indeed longed to be.

As I was writing the story I kept wondering if *Blackthorn* would give in. If she would ultimately surrender the way of the forest and return to live with her relations. But, like me, she has a very stubborn streak and this stood her in good stead when she felt like giving up. When the warrior in her had suffered enough!"

## Classroom activities for *Blackthorn*:

- View the cover of *Blackthorn*. The front cover shows the image of a girl. Who do you think this girl is? What is the effect of only having the eyes of the girl visible? Discuss the mood that this creates. A landscape is also depicted. What does/doesn't this tell you about the setting of the book? Discuss.
- Read the first chapter of *Blackthorn*. Seasons and the passing of time are described differently to the words we use now e.g. seven moons ago. Find these examples (there are also others throughout the book) and write down what you think they mean. Why do you think these words have been used instead of contemporary descriptions?
- This book is written in the first person. Read page 53. The narrator (Alyana) refers to herself as "I" (first person narrative) and then as *Blackthorn* (third person narrative). Why does she have these two personas? Why do you think she refers to *Blackthorn* in the third person? Write a description of yourself in the first person, then rewrite the same paragraph in the third person.
- Read page 81. *Blackthorn* is describing what she is doing. Using the same style of language write a procedure of something you do daily e.g. making breakfast "I put the toast in the toaster" or going to bed "I brush my teeth". Write at least six steps.
- *Blackthorn* and Boar are names taken from nature. Mind map other animal and plant names and what characteristics a person would need to have to be given that name. Are there any common names that you can think of that are used in modern day society? E.g. names of flowers. Discuss.
- Read chapter seven. Why is it important for *Blackthorn* to teach Sheba to stay? Do you think it is important to train dogs or other pets? Research working animals and how they help us in our society. Create a poster on a working animal of your choice.
- Do you think *Blackthorn* is a hero? What do you think a hero is and how does someone become a hero? Discuss. Research past heroines and female warriors and create a list of 6. Now think about women in contemporary society and who you might consider a hero – create another list of 6.
- For *Blackthorn* to become a warrior she must learn to survive in the forest and she must also be brave and courageous. Research contemporary and factual survival stories.
- *Blackthorn* often describes her surroundings and what she is doing in them. Read some examples of this and discuss Elizabeth Pulford's writing style, choice of words etc. Choose a favourite place of your own and write a detailed description of it.
- Break the class into groups and get each group to research a warrior from a different time and place e.g. Japanese samurai, knights of medieval Britain, the Apache, the Vikings. Look at the time in history, the tools and weapons they used, the clothing or armour they wore.
- *Blackthorn* uses many resources that come from the forest – food, shelter, tools, twine. Is there anything in your garden that you use or could use? Look at other tribal or nomadic cultures and how they use the land.
- Read the description of Helena on pp 197-198. Choose a classmate, friend or family member and describe them in this way. Helena is bird like, do your friends remind you of any particular animals?
- Write a review of *Blackthorn*.
- Visit Elizabeth Pulford's website;  
[www.elizabethpulford.co.nz](http://www.elizabethpulford.co.nz)  
 Using the details on her website create an author profile. Include details such as: where she lives, where she grew up, books that she has written, how she writes a book and any other interesting facts that you can find.