

These notes are for:

- Upper Primary (years 3-6)
- Middle years (years 6-8)

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- History
- Art

Example of:

- Picture book
- Historical narrative
- Parallel narrative structure

Values:

- Care & compassion
- Understanding, tolerance and inclusion
- Empathy
- Generosity
- Courage
- Persistence & resilience

Themes:

- War and peace
- WWI (the Western front)
- Australian history
- Cultural diversity
- Survival
- Memory and the past
- Family
- Childhood

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

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Do Not Forget Australia

Do Not Forget Australia

Author: Sally Murphy
Illustrator: Sonia Kretschmar
ISBN: 9781921529863
ARRP: \$29.95
NZRRP: \$32.99
March 2012



Synopsis

Henri lives in the French village of Villers-Bretonneux. Billy lives in Melbourne, Australia. These two little boys, who live thousands of kilometres apart, share one story that unites Villers-Bretonneux and Melbourne in history.

This moving and inspiring picture book is based upon the true story of a group of Victorian schoolchildren who raised money to help rebuild a French school destroyed in WWI. As well as giving vivid insights into the lives of Australian soldiers on the French battlefields, *Do Not Forget Australia* promotes strong core values of empathy, generosity and compassion.

Author/Illustrator Information

Sally Murphy was born in Perth and now lives in Corrigin, in the wheat belt of Western Australia. In 2001 she decided to dedicate herself to her dream of becoming a children's author and has now published nearly 30 books. As well as writing for children, Sally is also a children's book reviewer who runs the review site www.aussiereviews.com. Sally's work has been widely acclaimed, with her verse novel *Pearl Verses the World* (illustrated by Heather Potter) winning the children's book category for the Indie Book of the Year awards, 2009, and the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards, 2010, Best Book for Language Development, Upper Primary. *Toppling* (illustrated by Rhian Nest James) has won the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards, Children's Book – Mary Ryan's Award, 2010 and the Western Australian Premier's Book Award in the Children's Book category.

The child of German immigrants, **Sonia Kretschmar** first developed an appreciation of illustration through the storybooks sent to her by her grandmother. At the age of four she decided to become an illustrator after she successfully drew her first duck. She went on to study Visual Communication at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Sonia's work has appeared in many magazines and books, including the award-winning *Tensy Farlow and the Home for Mislaid Children*, written by Jen Storer. She was a finalist for the 2011 Archibald Prize, with her portrait of children's author Cassandra Golds. Sonia's first picture book for Walker Books Australia was *Song of the Dove* by Errol Broome, which was based on the life of the Italian composer Bellini. Sonia is based in Melbourne, Australia.

How To Use These Notes

These notes provide a variety of discussion questions and activities that can be used with *Do Not Forget Australia*. Please select according to the level, learning style and targeted outcomes of your students.

Sally Murphy on writing *Do Not Forget Australia*

When my son Tom was in year 9, he was preparing to go on an Anzac student trip to France and Belgium. At one of the parent information sessions I saw a photo (from a previous trip) of a group of Aussie students posing for the camera under a big yellow sign that said “Do Not Forget Australia”. The sign, I was told, was in a school in France.

I’d seen photos of that sign before, had even heard of the town Villers-Bretonneux, but this was the first time I’d stopped and thought how amazing it was that there was a sign in a French school reminding students to remember Australia. I couldn’t stop thinking about that sign and wanting to know more about how it got to be there. I started researching the events of World War I and thinking about how I could tell that story using child characters.

Months later, on Anzac Day, 2008, I wrote the first draft of my story. Four years later I’m really pleased to be sharing the story through *Do Not Forget Australia*. I’m hoping it will remind Australians not to forget Villers-Bretonneux.

Sonia Kretschmar on illustrating *Do Not Forget Australia*

In researching this book, I had the opportunity to look at lots of old photos and postcards. The Australian War Memorial has a great resource of images online (<http://www.awm.gov.au>), as well as the National Library of Australia (<http://trove.nla.gov.au>). I love to do as much research as possible (short of catching a plane there), even to the point of doing a virtual tour of the modern Villers-Bretonneux via Google Street View! I think this helped me to get a much better understanding of the place.

In approaching the pictures, I needed to show two parts of the world simultaneously without confusing the reader, so I imagined the Australian images should be warm and bright, and the world of WWI France to be cool and smoky. I hope I also captured some of the emotion the characters would have felt at that terrible time.

In the Classroom

Before Reading *Do Not Forget Australia*

- Look closely at the front cover of the book. As a class, discuss your expectations of the book. What do you think the story will be about? Where and when might it be set? What genre do you think it will be (e.g. fantasy, suspense, comedy, historical fiction)? Provide reasons for your responses.
- As a class, brainstorm things you know about France. Have the teacher or a class scribe write all ideas on the white board, then, working in pairs, transform these ideas into a mind map, with information grouped under appropriate headings such as “geography”, “food”, “history”, “art”, “politics”, etc.
- Listen to the story being read aloud, without looking at the illustrations. Then, read or listen to the story being read again, this time looking at the illustrations. How did the illustrations add to, or change, the meaning of the story? Did they look as you expected them to, or were there significant differences between the way you imagined the story and the way Kretschmar presented it?
- On a globe or map of the world, locate Melbourne, Australia and Villers-Bretonneux, France. Work out approximately how many kilometres there are between them. How long would it take to travel between the two cities by plane? By boat? Trace the various routes Australian soldiers who fought in France may have taken to Villers-Bretonneux. How long might their trip have taken? What modes of transport might they have used?

Guided Reading Questions

Use these questions to stimulate discussion while you read through the book as a class.

- Look closely at the endpapers. Why do you think the designer has chosen to use khaki green for the background? What images can you see in the design? Why do you think these images have been included?
- Why is Billy feeling glum the first time we encounter him? How do his reasons for being sad compare with Henri's?
- What similarities do you notice between Billy's and Henri's lives? Do you think this is deliberate on the part of the author? What message might she be trying to send by emphasising these similarities? In what way does way your life resemble Billy's and/or Henri's?
- Compare the illustrations showing Henri's life in Villers-Bretonneux with the illustrations showing Billy's life in Melbourne. How are the colours different in each? What do you think Kretschmar is trying to emphasise with this contrast? Think particularly about the mood or atmosphere the different palettes create.
- Look at the illustration showing Adele and Henri visiting the soldiers' graves. What flowers can you identify? What do these flowers represent or symbolise? Can you think of any other famous symbols?
- What do you think will happen after Billy receives the postcard from his father? What would you do in his position?
- Look at the pictures of the Victoria School towards the end of the book. What details in these pictures remind you of Australia?
- "Henri remembered something else. He remembered the continent he had forgotten as a boy." How has Henri's attitude towards Australia changed since the beginning of the book? Have any of your attitudes changed after hearing this story? Have you learnt anything new?
- After finishing the story, what questions would you like to ask the different characters?

After Reading the Book

Discussing the Structure

- Sally Murphy uses a parallel narrative structure in the book, putting Henri's story alongside Billy's, and jumping back and forth between the two narratives. Why do you think she uses this structure? What is she trying to emphasise about the lives of the two main characters?
- *Do Not Forget Australia* combines elements of both fiction and non fiction. List the parts of the story that are historical fact and those that may be the author's creative interpretation.

Exploring the Language

- Henri says of the war, "It was this war that grumbled and rumbled through his dreams." The author has used rhyme to help highlight Henri's feelings of fear and uncertainty, as he worries about his father and what might happen in the future. Can you find any other places in the book where the sound of words helps enhance their meaning? Can you identify the technique the author has used? For instance, alliteration, repetition, rhythm and short sentences.
- Discuss the use of imagery (descriptive language) in the sentence, "It was as if a giant had squeezed the schoolhouse in its hand and scattered the splintered remains." How is this more effective than if the author had simply written, "his school was little more than a pile of rubble", and then moved on? What extra feelings or ideas does this imagery conjure up for the reader? Can you locate any other examples of imagery in the book? Why do you think the author has included them?

Visual Literacy

- Choose a page from the book and, as a class, analyse the body language and facial expressions of the various characters. What emotion do you think the illustrator is trying to convey for each character? Is this emotion conveyed through their face, a movement or gesture, their posture, or a combination of all or some of these things? Where is each character looking? Does their gaze draw our attention to any other part of the picture? Or does any part of their body direct our attention to another part of the picture? For instance, are they pointing at something, or moving towards it?
- If you were illustrating the story, which pictures (if any) would you do differently? Why? Choose one passage from the book and create your own illustration to accompany it.

Responding through Performance

- As a class, brainstorm a list of emotions or feelings Henri might have experienced during the story. For example, fear, sadness, confusion, determination and hope. Then, do the same for Billy. Find your own space in the room. As the teacher says each emotion, use your whole body to express this idea. Next, try to reveal this emotion just through one part of the body. For instance, the hands or face. Transform these different emotions into a dance symbolising Henri's journey.
- Compose a soundscape to represent the main characters' journeys. Work in small groups, with each group taking responsibility for one double-page spread of the text.
 1. Work out what the emotion the character would be feeling on your page.
 2. Brainstorm the different noises/vocal sounds/instruments/body percussion sounds that could be used to show this emotion. (Try to be creative and use everyday objects around you, as well as proper instruments).
 3. Work out what volume and pace would be appropriate for this emotion.
 4. Record your section of the soundscape. (It should be approximately 20 seconds long.)
 5. After each group has recorded their piece, play all the sections of the soundscape in order.
 6. Write a reflection on the soundscape. Did it sound as you imagined it would? What sounds or instruments worked well or didn't work well? Did the different parts fit together smoothly?

Creative Writing

- Henri asks himself, "All these things were part of his village, his life. Would they still be here when he came back?" Imagine that, like Henri, you were forced to leave your home, not knowing if you'd ever see it again, or if the next time you saw it, it would be destroyed. What would you take with you? What would you like to take, but be unable to? What memories would come into your mind as you took one last look around your bedroom, your garden or your school? Write a short story imagining what it would be like to be in Henri's position, focusing particularly on your thoughts and feelings.
- Using the template provided, write the postcard which Billy receives from his father.
- Towards the end of the book, Billy works in a newspaper office which prints an article entitled "Aussie Children's gift to French friends." Write this news article. Make sure you include the "5 Ws" (who, what, where, when, why) in the opening paragraph, and use a combination of persuasive and informative language.
- Look at the website of the Franco-Australian museum, situated on the first floor of the Victoria School (<http://www.museeausustralien.com/en/?Home>). Read the dedication plaque on the wall of the school. How does it make you feel to think that on the other side of the world people are remembering Australia? Imagine that you had been given the job of writing a plaque for your school to remind students of the sacrifices made in WWI. What would you write?

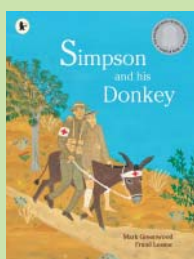
Learning about the Past

- What do we learn about the lives of WWI soldiers from this book? Do some additional research on the internet, then write a series of journal entries from the point of view of a soldier fighting in France. Some useful websites include:
 - http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/launch_vt_wwone_trench.shtml (You can take a virtual tour of the trenches on this site.)
 - <http://www.anzacday.org.au/history/ww1/overview/west.html>
- Look at photographs of the opening of the Victoria School at the Culture Victoria website (<http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/villers-brettonneux/>). Do these photographs remind you of any of the pictures in the book? Use Google Earth to take a virtual tour of Villers-Bretonneux today. How has it changed over the past century?

Responding to the story

- Billy “wondered if there was anything he could do to help the kids of Villers-Bretonneux.” As a class, brainstorm a list of conflicts, natural disasters and other events occurring in the world today. (You may like to look through a newspaper or watch the news to get inspiration.) Discuss what it would be like to live in one of these places. How would life be different to how it is in Australia? What hardships or challenges would you face? Billy and his schoolmates organised “button days” and other fundraising events to help raise money to rebuild the school in Villers-Bretonneux. As a class, come up with a list of ways you can help a particular group of children experiencing adversity or hardship.
- ANZAC Day is an important event on the Australian and NZ calendar, observed each year on the 25th April. However, there are some who believe that ANZAC Day is a celebration of war and should not be observed. What do you think? Should we “forget” ANZAC Day? Why or why not? Write an exposition/persuasive response arguing your point of view.
- As a class, discuss some things you can do in your school on ANZAC Day or Remembrance Day so that people “do not forget” the soldiers who died in WWI.
- Imagine that as an Australian student, you had been asked to visit the Victoria School in Villers-Bretonneux and deliver a speech on ANZAC Day about what *Do Not Forget Australia* has taught you. Write a 2-minute speech and deliver it to the class. Consider how you can use volume, pace, tone, expression, body language and posture so that your speech has the greatest impact on your audience.

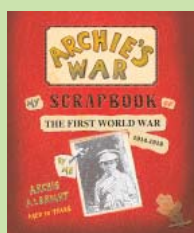
OTHER VISUAL TEXTS ABOUT WAR & PEACE



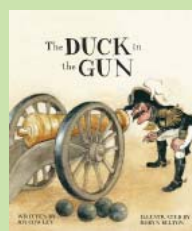
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SALLY MURPHY & SONIA KRETSCHMAR

DO NOT FORGET AUSTRALIA

A POSTCARD FROM WWI



In *Do Not Forget Australia*, Billy receives a postcard from his father who is fighting in the war in France. On the stencil below, write what this postcard might say.

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PLACE
STAMP
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