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PLOT SUMMARY

When Jake meets the ghost of a young Roman, he is sent on a mission to recover stolen treasure from a group of thieves known as the Nighthawks.

It will take all their detective skills and courage, but Jake and his friends Tilly and Rabbit will uncover much more than gold and silver, and the stakes are higher than they could ever imagine.

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RECOMMENDED FOR
(ages 8+; years 4 to 8)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

• Learning areas: English and HASS • General capabilities: Literacy; Critical and creative thinking; Ethical understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

Investigate historical, geographic, civic and economic concepts and ideas, develop critical and creative thinking, analyze how language and writing evoke mood, tone, tension and characterization, encourage creative and imaginative writing

THEMES

History – British and Roman • Relationships and family
• Loss, grief and resilience • Human geography – empire • Personal and social ethics • Social sciences - archaeology

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Hunt for the Nighthawks

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Felice Arena is one of Australia's best-loved children's writers. He is the author and creator of many popular and award-winning children's books for all ages, including the acclaimed historical adventures *The Boy and the Spy*, *Fearless Frederic*, *The Great Escape* and *The Unstoppable Flying Flanagan*, which was longlisted for the ARA Historical Novel Prize. His series include the bestselling *Specky Magee* books and the popular *Besties* and *Sporty Kids* series with Tom Jellett. Felice is also the author and illustrator of the picture book *My Big Secret*.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

I have often said that my characters and story ideas come and find me. I don't go in search of them. When the time is right, they appear as if by magic. And this is exactly what happened to me for this story.

A couple of years ago, I was in England visiting my good friend Dr Rob Wiseman. Rob is an archaeologist at the University of Cambridge. One day he invited me to visit a site where he and his colleagues from the Cambridge Archaeological Unit were excavating. The archaeologists had discovered an ancient Roman farm and burial site.

Heading out to witness a 'dig' was a new experience for me, and as I marched across a muddy meadow in the Cambridgeshire countryside, I was buzzing with excitement. My only association with archaeological digs and ancient sites was what

I had seen in films when I was a kid – like the *Indiana Jones* movies. Not exactly realistic! As a grown-up I remembered the occasional news item about the discovery of a man who had been frozen for 5000 years in the Alps, or the remains of a king found in a car park.

But what stopped me dead in my tracks that day was getting to see an 1800-year-old Roman skeleton, unearthed and staring up at me!

I had never seen a real-life human skeleton before, other than behind a glass cabinet in a museum.

I was flabbergasted. I had so many questions. Who was

he? What had his life been like? Did he have a big family? And what would he think if he appeared now after centuries lying beneath a world that has changed so much?

I felt very humbled to be to be part of a small group 'welcoming' this stranger back to the world. My head was spinning. And it continued to do so for days after my visit to the dig.

I talked endlessly about it with Rob, wanting to know more. We got onto the subject of other ancient finds throughout the British Isles and how metal-detecting is a popular pastime in the UK. He told me about how metal-detectorists have to get permission from the landowners and report their discoveries to the authorities. Rob also talked about 'nighthawks'. He explained how these unlawful folk were not only committing an illegal act, a crime, but were also robbing all of us of the stories of civilisations that had come before us. Archaeologists like Rob help us understand our origins, our cultural heritage, and even where the human race might be heading into the future.

For weeks I let all this information percolate, asking myself 'What if . . . ?' (which writers tend to do). What if the ghost of that Roman staring back up at me was present and watching the dig? What would he say to me? Then the idea of Marcus emerged. But what if some nighthawks found the burial site first? Who would they be? Who would be my main character? Hello, Jake! And what about his friends? Before I knew it, I was writing my next book – this adventure!

Marcus is a fictional character. But some of the other Romans mentioned in my story are based on real people. Septimius Severus was emperor of Rome from AD 193 to 211. He was born in north Africa and served across the Roman Empire: from Syria in the east, the Balkans, Italy and Gaul (modern France). In AD 208, he led over 40,000 men to Britain in an unsuccessful attempt to conquer Caledonia (Scotland). Along with his troops, Severus also brought many key people in the Roman government, which would have been based in



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York. In my story, one of these important government officials was Marcus's father, Lucius Cestius Gallus.

I based Marcus's father on an important Roman senator called Cestius. He had lived at the same time as Septimius Severus, but historians know very little about him. He commanded a legion, and was later governor in southern Gaul. Cestius also appears to have been in charge of the Roman treasury – exactly the sort of important government official who Septimius Severus might have brought with him to Britain. There is no direct evidence that he ever came to Britain – but I thought it would be fun to use a bit of creative licence.

Marcus would have been born around AD 199 and would have come to Britain with his father in 208. His father would have been killed in the early stages of the invasion, and Marcus would have died around AD 217 – when he was seventeen or eighteen years old.

You can probably tell how much I've loved researching all this. I hope you've enjoyed reading it just as much.

By the way, if you are interested in metal-detecting, it's important to understand the rules where you live. Although metal-detecting is legal in most of Britain, elsewhere it may be illegal or you might need a licence. A reputable archaeology club or metal-detecting group, like the one Tilly was a part of, is a good source of information. And always remember to report what you find so we don't lose those stories from the past.

Writing Style

- What is the writing style the author has used? Consider how and when information is revealed, and the use of the intimate-third-person perspective (for example, in relation to Jake and what he knows about Marcus). How does that affect the tension and suspense we feel reading the story?
- How does the intimate third person work in the mystery or detective genre? Why is it a strong choice for these genres? Compare its use to first person (consider unreliable and reliable narrators) and third-person omniscient

(consider decisions around what to reveal and what to hold back from the reader).

- Discuss what tense is used in the storytelling and what the effect is for the reader. What is another way this story could have been told? Compare and contrast to another book you have read recently.
- What effect does present tense have on the reading? How does it compare to past tense? Consider pacing, tension, immediacy etc.
- How does the book's title relate to its content? Why is the word Nighthawks evocative? If you don't know what they are, what feelings or expectations does the word leave you with?
- What associations do you have with the word Hunt? Think of its different meanings and how they might relate here.
- The copy line on the cover is: Buried secrets. Haunted treasure. Is this an effective copy line? Why might it tempt you to pick up the book and why?
- Read the blurb and consider what you think it is doing to persuade you to pick up the book. Can you think of an alternate blurb that would work better for you?
- What does the cover tell you about the content of the book? Consider the colour scheme, any visual elements, the scene or characters represented, the treatment of the title, and the mood and tone.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Researching historical information

- Read the note from the author above. The author talks about where his inspiration came from, but where in the story can you see that he has researched using historical methods and evidence? Where can you see his personal experience reflected? Find three quotes and match them with points from the author note to back up your answer.



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- Discover the difference between a primary and a secondary source. List the types of primary sources the author might have used to research the book.
- What secondary sources could you list that might have helped him to learn about the Romans in Britain? What would be your list of sources if you were writing an historical fiction? Where would you go to find information?
- You can find images of Roman coins here: <https://slll.cass.anu.edu.au/classics-museum/catalogue/object-clusters/roman-coins>

Can you find the coinage of Septimius Severus? Why did the Roman Emperors put images of themselves on coins? Why do you think that we still have the heads of leaders on our coins? Who is on our coins now and why?

- <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2010/jul/08/hoard-roman-coins-somerset>
Amateur archaeologists in Britain really do make extraordinary finds. Read the article above and write a newspaper article in a similar style about Jake's find, make up a quote attributed to Uncle Hugh in his official role at Cambridge University.
- Read the article above and write a diary entry from the perspective of Dave Crisp, hobby metal detectorist from Wiltshire, the day he found one of the largest coin hordes in the UK.
- You can make your own Roman coins. The author's website has a tutorial available here: <https://www.felicearena.com/hunt-for-the-nighthawks>
- Archaeology is the study of the human past using material remains. These remains can be any objects that people created, modified, or used. You can find images of archaeologists at work here (includes images of a skeleton and an Egyptian mummy): <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/archaeology/>
- Choose one archaeological technique mentioned in the book and do some research.

Present a poster and a short speech to teach your class about it and one historical example of its use. (Examples include, Remote sensing, scanning and surveying, field walking and metal detecting, excavation, research.)

- She takes a trowel and some stakes and twine out of her backpack, and marks a neat square on the dirt . . . 'Now, help me dig out the area inside the square and shovel out the dirt – and Rabbit, keep an eye on that signal.' . . . Tilly and Jake remove the soil slowly and carefully with their trowels. Tilly makes notes in her book from time to time. . . Jake's trowel suddenly strikes something solid, something metal. Tilly crouches down and they carefully clear the dirt from around the metal object.

Jake learns that digging at a site is slow painstaking work. Discover what it takes to delicately unearth valuable artefacts by trying to take the chocolate chips out of a chocolate-chip cookie without breaking them. What techniques would you use?

- Read one of these short biographies of a famous archaeologist and do some research on their greatest find. Create an infographic to teach the class your new knowledge.
https://www.ancientodysseys.com/post/5-archaeologists-you-should-know-about?srltid=AfmBOortGxQ_UJ70Tlsma468ad2m9RJL7L99-g1xmdgn32uCZuMScpjY
- Write a biography for Uncle Hugh in the same style. Or a biography of Tilly after she's grown up and followed in his footsteps. What period of history do you think she would explore and why?
- Have you heard of the Indiana Jones movies? Watch the trailer for the first movie then create a compare and contrast document considering Uncle Hugh's and Tilly's methods and approach to historical artefacts and Indiana's. Who do you think is the better archaeologist?
- One of the most famous archaeological finds in Australia is Mungo Man, found in 1974 in western NSW. His remains proved that Australian Aboriginal people had lived here for more than 42 thousand years. He had been carefully buried and his burial is the oldest known ritualistic burial in the world.



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His remains were studied and held by the Australian National University until his remains were returned to his ancestors in 2017 and reburied. You can read about this and the reasons for what is known as 'protection of cultural heritage and repatriation of human remains' here:

<https://humanities.org.au/power-of-the-humanities/mungo-woman-and-mungo-man-honouring-australias-deep-history/>

Why do you think we need to have a different approach in Australia compared to the UK (in particular when it comes to Aboriginal remains and artefacts)?

- You can see a video about Lake Mungo and learn about the archaeological finds here: <https://www.nma.gov.au/learn/kSPACE/lake-mungo-45000-years-ago/kids>

What is the most interesting thing you learned?

- Think about the conversation Marcus and Jake have about the Caledonians:

'The Emperor mounted an invasion force of forty thousand men to take on the raiding Caledonians –'

'But, hang on,' Jake interrupts. 'The Caledonians were in Scotland first, right? So you mean Septimius Severus was invading the Caledonians? You guys were the ones raiding, trying to steal their territory from them . . .'

Jake trails off when he notices Marcus's expression suddenly turn to stone. He is frowning so much, and clenching his jaw so tightly, Jake thinks he might explode.

'No,' huffs Marcus. 'I did not mean that . . .'

Who is right? Do some research to help you understand why a Roman might think they have a right to take Caledonia (Scotland) and make it part of their Empire. Can you think of a more modern example of an Empire with this point of view? Write a persuasive text from Jake's point of view.

Storytelling

- Jake has the power to talk to ghosts. Where would you set a sequel to this book? Can you think of another historical ghost he might meet?

What period in time might he or she come from? And why might they still be lingering in the real world? Write a blurb for your sequel.

- Practise your visual storytelling by creating a cover for your sequel or draw a scene from the book in graphic-novel form.
- You can find images and videos of the settings from the book at the author's website here:

<https://www.felicearena.com/hunt-for-the-nighthawks>

Imagine you are in one of these locations and write a diary entry of your day there.

- If you were making the film of this book, what music would you choose? Select a scene and choose an appropriate song. Write a few paragraphs telling us why you think the song suits the mood, pace and meaning of the scene.
- Write a short story from the perspective of Rabbit when he overhears Tilly and Jake talking about the ghost, Tilly when she discovers that her hero Mr Brown is a villain, or Shauna when Jake walks into Uncle Hugh's office.
- Tilly, Rabbit and Jake are very different people, but they have one thing in common – absent parents who they miss very much. Consider their different situations and personalities, choose one character and write a diary entry about one day when they especially miss their parent.
- Can you find a scene where Tilly, Rabbit and Jake show resilience? Explain why you think they were resilient and how in a letter to their mum praising them.
- Re-write the final scene at the tree from Marcus's point of view. What would it be like to watch Jake, Tilly and Rabbit setting him free?
- Choose an incident in the story and write it from a different perspective – choosing any character mentioned in the story.
- Jake doesn't want to help Marcus initially. Write a persuasive text explaining why he should help him.
- Is there an ethical dilemma in the book? What is it and what would you have done?



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- Jake, Rabbit and Tilly's actions when they break into Mr Brown's house could have had huge consequences. Write a reflective piece from Jake's POV about what could have gone wrong and did go wrong.
- What do you think it means when Jake puts the coin on his dad's grave? What does it represent for him? And why do you think he has chosen a modern, shiny new coin?
- A man steps into Uncle Hugh's office. He has a large jagged scar over his right eyebrow and Jake can't help wondering how he got it. He tries not to stare.

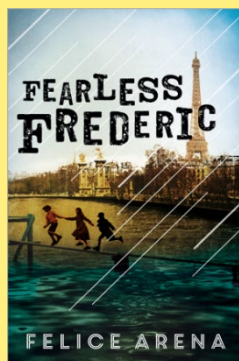
Skinner has obviously had a run in with Nighthawks before. What do you think happened? Write an exciting short story about his adventures. You can be as imaginative and adventurous as you like, even take your influence from Indiana Jones or other fictional archaeologists you have heard of.

- Choose one of the Nighthawks and tell us why they have turned to crime. What was their motivation? Do they regret what they've done or would they do it again? You can imagine them as a total villain or as someone who has just made bad choices – it's up to you! Write and present a monologue to the class from their POV. Try to capture their personality, tone and emotion when you present your monologue.



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Further reading from Penguin Random House



Fearless Frederic by Felice Arena

When the river rises and the city of Paris begins to disappear under water, Frederic decides to help those who can't help themselves. But as his heroic acts escalate, so does the danger.

Frederic will have to battle an escaped zoo animal and fight off pickpockets and looters but, as the waters subside, can he find justice for his father and discover what courage really means?

An exciting story set in Paris at the time of the great flood in 1910.

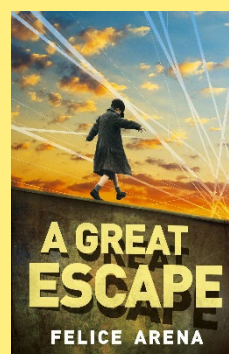


The Boy and the Spy by Felice Arena

Leap into the adventure of a lifetime . . .

Things have never been easy for Antonio, but now it seems like the war will never end. So when Antonio is caught up in the dangerous world of freedom fighters and spies, will it change his life or destroy him?

A thrilling story set on the island of Sicily, Italy, against the backdrop of WWII.



A Great Escape by Felice Arena

A story of true-life heroism and the unbreakable bonds of family, set in Cold War Germany.

When Peter's family leaves for a trip across the border, he stays behind. So when the government builds a wall through the city, guarded by soldiers, tanks and ferocious dogs, he's trapped. Everyone says he might never see his family again. But Peter has a courageous plan . . .

It's a great escape, but will Peter survive it?



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The Unstoppable Flying Flanagan by Felice Arena

The war seems a long way away to Maggie Flanagan and she's more interested in kicking the footy and finding out who's going to play for St Kilda this season.

But then the Japanese attack Australia, raining bombs on Darwin and Broome, and American soldiers start appearing on the streets. Worst of all, it looks like the football season will be cancelled!

When Maggie decides to stage an all-girl football game to raise money for the troops, she's breaking all the rules. Everyone knows that girls can't play footy! But the rules aren't going to stop the unstoppable Flying Flanagan ..



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Order form

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Hunt for the Nighthawks	Felice Arena	9781761355653	Year 4-8	\$17.99		
The Unstoppable Flying Flanagan	Felice Arena	9781761044366	Year 4-8	\$16.99		
A Great Escape	Felice Arena	9780143794042	Year 4-8	\$16.99		
Fearless Frederic	Felice Arena	9780143786757	Year 4-8	\$16.99		
The Boy and the Spy	Felice Arena	9780143309284	Year 4-8	\$16.99		
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