



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary/lower secondary  
(ages 8+)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English and HASS
- **General capabilities:** Language, Literature, Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, 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 characterisation
- Encourage creative and imaginative writing

## THEMES

- History – Australian
- Relationships and family
- Racism
- Human geography - migration
- WW2
- Society - social change, equality movement/feminism
- Personal and social ethics

## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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9780143778226 (audio)

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## The Unstoppable Flying Flanagan Felice Arena

### PLOT SUMMARY

This is *Specky Magee* meets *The Boy and the Spy* - a funny, entertaining and moving story set against the backdrop of the Second World War in Australia, the women's movement and the little-known history of women's football.

The war seems a long way away to Maggie Flanagan. Her brother is somewhere across the sea, flying to protect England from the Germans and the Italians. But Maggie is more interested in kicking the footy and finding out who's going to play for St Kilda this season.

But when the war comes to Australia and Maggie sees what she's sure is a Japanese spy plan in the skies of Melbourne, it all gets very real. The Japanese attack Australia up north, 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 . . .

## 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 Boy and the Spy*, *Fearless Frederic*, *A Great Escape*, *Whippersnapper*, the bestselling Specky Magee books and the popular Andy Roid series.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

I've often said characters and their stories come and find you. Whenever I go in search of stories or push for a story to appear, it never does. Writing books for me has always meant stepping back, letting go and having faith that the ideas and characters will come when the time is right.

Back in 2019, I was visiting friends in the UK and while on a train to Scotland I came across a discarded newspaper on my seat and started reading it. There was an article in the sports section about women's football – soccer – during the First World War.

Matches played by women were hugely popular all over the UK at the time. It was fascinating to read how thousands turned out to watch these matches while the men were fighting overseas. One women's game at Everton had a crowd of 50 000 people! But once the war was over, the Football Association was worried that the women's game would take money and attention away from the men's game, and women were banned from playing. I began to wonder whether women in Australia had had a similar experience, but with Aussie Rules football . . .

Then 2020 hit, and we know where the entire world was that year – in lockdown! Back in Melbourne, Australia, I was on one of my daily walks at my local park when I bumped into an old friend. My friend told me how his daughter was a huge fan of Aussie Rules and the Specky Magee series and identified with the character of Tiger Girl. She hoped to one day play in the AFLW. My mind went back to the newspaper article about the history of women's soccer.

I rushed home and looked up 'Women in Australian Rules Football'. I was excited to learn that there were recorded accounts of women playing Aussie Rules as far back as 1880. Before I knew it, I was researching all-female games that were played in 1918, in the 1920s, 30s and 40s.

Maggie's voice came through to me loud and clear when I read about an all-women's game played as a wartime fundraiser in Perth in 1915. This is the game that Miss Kelly talks about.

You probably know how much I love my footy, but if even I hadn't heard about this amazing piece of history, then I was sure lots of other people hadn't either.

While writing this book I learned so much about my city and about the culture of the 1940s. Most people didn't think that women could or should play contact sports and they often thought that there were lots of jobs and activities that were only for men. The war changed all that. At least for a while.

After the war, the same things happened here to women who had taken jobs as had happened to the women footballers in the UK. They were expected to hand their jobs back to any man who wanted one.

I gained a deeper understanding of the challenges women faced during this era, and of how fear and ignorance could bring out the worst in people. And it wasn't just difficult to be a girl who wanted something a bit different with your life. It was hard to be a boy who didn't fit the mould as well, like Gerald. It was also tough to be someone who didn't have a cultural background from the UK, like Elena.

Yes, they really did lock up Italian Australians in camps, and they didn't have to prove that you had done anything wrong. Australia locked up German and Japanese Australians too and many others.

But I also wanted to communicate the idea that it's often during a crisis that we come together with a sense of community spirit and show the very best of ourselves. I wanted to place my story at a time when Australians felt directly threatened at home. That was definitely the case during World War II and most especially in 1942, the year British Singapore fell to the Japanese and northern Australia was attacked so many times.

It sounds like I made it up, but the spy plane is absolutely real. Maggie wasn't seeing things. The RAAF base in Laverton in Melbourne's west reported the plane and it was seen over the Melbourne docks, Williamstown, South Melbourne and Port Melbourne. And it wasn't the only enemy plane to fly over Australia, taking notes and photographs.

I know that we don't follow this story to the end of the war. I like to think that everyone came home safely, especially Pat. But sadly, so many people didn't and if you've ever heard of the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea, you'll know that there were very tough times ahead for Australians fighting there.

But Maggie's prayer did come true. The war did end in 1945. And now Australia, Japan, Germany and Italy have been at peace with each other ever since. And I'm off to watch St Kilda play in the AFLW. I bet that would blow Maggie's mind!



Oh, and one more thing. When I was kid, there was a nun at my primary school called Sister Johanna. At lunchtime she would dazzle us with her footy skills. Her torpedo kicks were the best I'd ever seen!

For years, right into my adulthood, I often found myself wondering where Sister Johanna was and how she was doing. Well, in 2018, at a writers' festival in Queensland, I was approached by a woman who had come to sit in one of my sessions. And, yes . . . it was Sister Johanna! She was surprised that I remembered her, but I told her how I couldn't forget someone who was so inspirational to so many of us kids, and how she was my very first footy hero. She was my Sister Clare.

I hope you enjoyed this story, and that the next time you kick a footy or watch an AFL Women's game, you'll think of the unstoppable Flying Flanagan.

### 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 Maggie and what she knows about her older brother's situation and what has happened to him). How does that affect the tension and suspense we feel reading the story?
- 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.
- How does the book's title relate to its content? What are the two strands of the story that the world 'Flying' refer to? Who could 'Flying Flanagan' refer to?

### KEY STUDY TOPICS

#### Researching historical information

- Read the note from the author at the end of the book. The author talks about where the inspiration came from, but where in the story can you see that he has researched using historical methods and evidence?
- 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.
- Watch [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuUoYogOT\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuUoYogOT_U)

What are the big differences between Melbourne city then and now (or a big city anywhere in Australia)? How did people dress differently and travel differently? Present your findings as an Information text.

- Watch the trailer for the film *The Wizard of Oz* here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNugTWHnSfw>

Choose your favourite modern movie and watch the trailer for that. Compare and contrast the two. A trailer is an ad for a movie. What different things do the two trailers focus on? What's the same?

- After watching that video, think about the music that was playing. How is it different to the music of today?
- Look up: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-08/a-1933-womens-aussie-rules-match-between-carlton-and-richmond/9405870?nw=0>

This is from 1933, earlier than WW2. What differences can you see between this image and the modern women's game? What are the similarities?

- Now watch this video of the same game. It was incorrectly labelled 'Women's Rugby' 1933', but it was the game Nurse Nancy played in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKuglR13jGI>
- Listen carefully to the voice over. What comments are made that would be unacceptable today? What is the tone of the voiceover? Discuss what social attitudes might have made this commentary seem acceptable.

- For most women, wearing shorts or even trousers was still unusual in 1942. What do you think would have felt strange about wearing pants at that time? Think about who traditionally wore trousers and what the standards of modesty were for women at the time.

- Gerald is a newsboy and you can find the real-life headlines that he would have been reading out on the Trove website. Here is the front page of the *Argus* for the day after Darwin was bombed, shortly before the book begins:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/8233704>

You can read any front page from the *Argus* for the period in which the book is set. Choose one headline, read the article and write a tweet that summarises what happened that day.



- Look at this photo of Melbournians at a Carlton game for American Independence Day and read the info:  
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C343432>  
Why do you think Australians would want to celebrate an American holiday with the American soldiers and learn an American game? Make a poster advertising the event and telling people why they should come.
- Read this account of Catholic school life in the 1940s:  
<https://localhistory.kingston.vic.gov.au/articles/43>  
How does it differ from your school life now? Write a diary entry from the point of view of Maggie if she were brought forward in time to live in 2022.
- In the 30s and 40s, it was not unusual to leave school at 15 and take on a job, and those jobs were gender based. Research the jobs that were specifically for men and for women before the war allowed women the opportunity to choose men's roles. Choose a job and write a persuasive text about why you should be employed.
- Aussie Rules continued to be a favourite sport in Melbourne during the war, but it became difficult to field teams as all the men were sent to war. You can find information on football during the war here:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\\_rules\\_football\\_during\\_the\\_World\\_Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_rules_football_during_the_World_Wars)  
The servicemen did introduce the Australian game to other countries and cultures, though. Write a newspaper article from someone in one of the countries mentioned who is seeing Aussie Rules for the first time. How is it different to the sports they would have played?
- From the end of the book until the end of the war, the MCG was used as a military base not a sports stadium. You can read about that here:  
<https://www.mcg.org.au/the-stadium/mcg-history/second-world-war>  
In pairs, present your new knowledge as an interview with a footballer who has signed up to the military.
- The bombing of Darwin brought the war home to Australians in a way nothing else had. It would have been very frightening to have the enemy so close to Australia. Singapore fell to the Japanese in February and it was called the 'worst disaster' of the war. Write a diary entry from the point of view of Maggie about how she feels during this time. What would her concerns have been?
- Racism against Italians was intense during the 30s and 40s. In the 30s it was harder and harder for Italians to get here. The Fascist Italian government (who were allied with Germany and Japan during the war) banned people from leaving the country, and in 1932 the Australian government changed the migration act to class Italians as 'white aliens' and make it harder for them to get here. During the war they were considered to be traitors, just because they were Italian. They were locked up in camps and not released until the war ended. Elena's dad would have been sent to Tatura in Victoria. You can read about it here:  
<https://wwiiathome.com.au/tic.html>  
Write a letter from Elena's dad to Elena from the camp.
- Have you wondered why and how people become refugees or migrants? Do you know of a group of people, like the Italians in the 30s and 40s, who escaped danger or hardship to come to Australia, and then faced discrimination when they got here? What were they fleeing and what did they have to overcome to get to safety? What problems did they face when they got here? What would you have done in their place? Present your findings in the form of an information text.
- The spy plane over Melbourne is real! It was spotted at the airbase at Laverton and from other parts of Melbourne. You can read about it here:  
<https://www.ozatwar.com/japrecce/recce02.htm>  
Imagine you were awake and saw the plane. In groups of three, write a play of your reaction and act it out. Or draw a comic of your response.
- Does your family have an amazing or fun sporting story? Ask family or friends to recount that story or family history and in small groups tell your true-life account.

### Storytelling

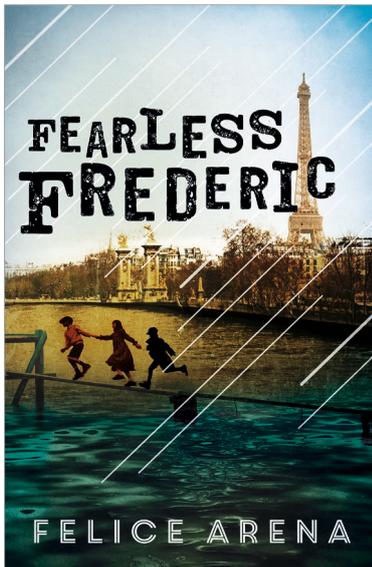
- Write a short story from the perspective of Elena on her first day at school, Gerald when his bag is stolen, or Mickey when he's getting the strap.
- How does the story of Elena compare with the story of Gerald? Why do you think they get along and understand each other's feelings? Consider their different situations and personalities and write several diary entries for each describing a key part of the story (of your choice).
- We see Nora's triumph in the billycart ride from Maggie's point of view. Retell that part of the story in first person or intimate third person from Nora's POV.



- Choose an incident in the story and write it from a different perspective – choosing any character mentioned in the story.
- Elena's story is incomplete in the novel. Write a story about what you think happened to her after this.
- What do you think happened when the war ended in 1945? Write a scene set on the day Gerald's family came home or the day Elena was reunited with her dad.
- What does the cover tell you about the tone and content of the book?
- Is there an ethical dilemma in the book? What is it and what would you have done?
- Maggie's actions when she breaks into Grumpy Gaffney's could have had huge consequences. She knew she wasn't doing the right thing at the time. Write a reflective piece from her POV about what could have gone wrong or did go wrong.
- Do you agree with Maggie's mum that girls shouldn't play footy? Write a persuasive text telling Maggie's mum why she should be allowed to play.
- Choose one of the women on the football team and tell us what difficulties you think she might be facing in her life. Write and present a monologue to the class from her POV.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

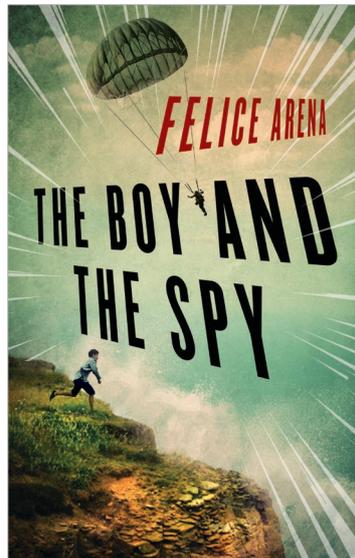


*Fearless Frederic*  
by Felice Arena

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.

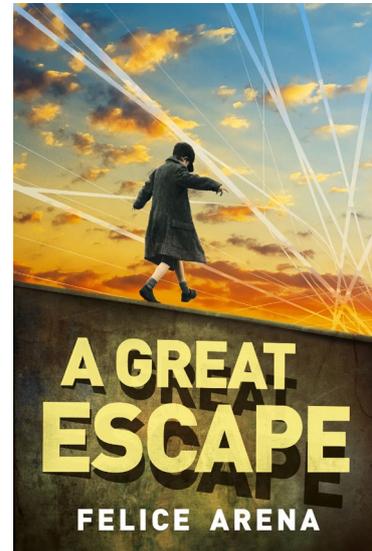


*The Boy and the Spy*  
by Felice Arena

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.



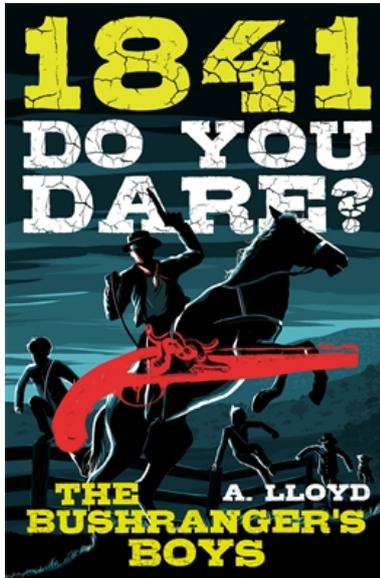
*A Great Escape*  
by Felice Arena

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?





*Do You Dare: The Bushranger's Boys*  
by A Lloyd

Do you dare . . .  
Confront a bully?  
Steal to protect someone?  
Hide a bushranger?  
It's an adventure in Australian history.  
Do You Dare?

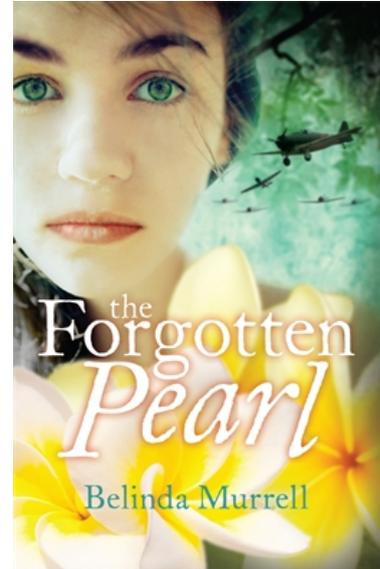
An exciting, action-packed adventure set in 1841.



*The Fighting Stingrays*  
by Simon Mitchell

Winner of Young People's History Prize, NSW Premier's History Awards, 2018

Charlie, Masa and Alf are best mates – they're the Fighting Stingrays. But when Japan enters World War II, the Fighting Stingrays are told that one of their own is now the real-life enemy. Drawn into a dangerous game of cat and mouse in the Torres Strait, their friendship and loyalties are tested as the threat of invasion looms closer.



*The Forgotten Pearl*  
by Belinda Murrell

An exhilarating wartime adventure from bestselling author Belinda Murrell.

When Chloe visits her grandmother, she learns how close the Second World War came to destroying her family. Could the experiences of another time help Chloe to face her own problems?

## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	AGE	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
The Unstoppable Flying Flanagan	Felice Arena	9781761044366	8+	\$16.99		
A Great Escape	Felice Arena	9780143794042	8+	\$16.99		
Fearless Frederic	Felice Arena	9780143786757	8+	\$16.99		
The Boy and the Spy	Felice Arena	9780143309284	8+	\$16.99		
History Mysteries: Diamond Jack	Mark Greenwood	9780143309260	8+	\$12.99		
History Mysteries: The Lost Explorer	Mark Greenwood	9780143309277	8+	\$12.99		
Do You Dare: The Bushranger's Boys	A Lloyd	9780143307563	8+	\$14.99		
Do You Dare: Eureka Boys	P Matthews	9780143308454	8+	\$14.99		
The Fighting Stingrays	Simon Mitchell	9780143784104	8+	\$17.99		
The Forgotten Pearl	Belinda Murrell	9781742753690	8+	\$15.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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