



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
- Analyse how language and writing evoke mood, tone, tension and characterisation
- Encourage creative and imaginative writing

THEMES

- History – European
- Relationships
- Society
- Personal and social ethics

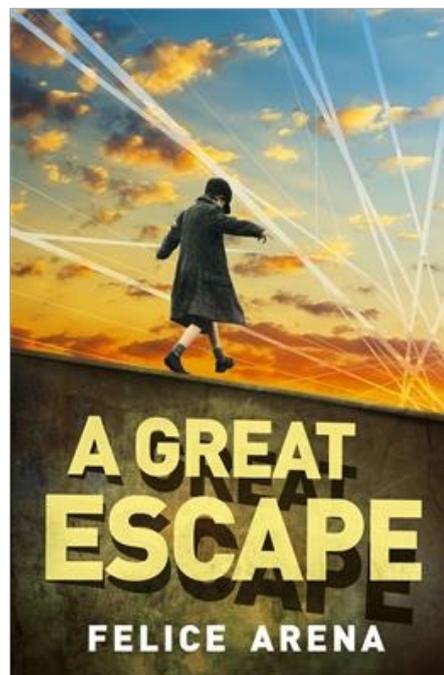
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A Great Escape Felice Arena

PLOT SUMMARY

A story of true-life heroism and the unbreakable bonds of family, by the acclaimed author of *Fearless Frederic* and *The Boy and the Spy*.

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

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 . . .

An exciting escape adventure set in East Berlin at the time of the Cold War.

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*, *Whippersnapper*, the bestselling Specky Magee books and the popular Andy Roid series.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Ideas strike you at the oddest times and places. Many of my stories have come to me while I've been travelling or on the move, when I can allow my mind to drift and let my imagination run. And my stories are so often born out of curiosity and asking questions.

A few years ago I visited Germany and went to Berlin. I did all the touristy tours and, like millions of visitors to that incredible city, I learnt a bit about its fascinating history. I was particularly taken by the Berlin Wall and the idea that someone would cut a city down the middle and stop families from seeing each other, stop people going to work or to visit their friends. I asked my local friends a lot of questions. Why did the government do that? How did they do that? And then I asked myself a question: What if this were to happen today? How would I react? What would I do?

I wondered what I would be willing to sacrifice to see my family again. Or to be with my friends. Would I risk living in a refugee camp? Would I live in poverty? Would I leave the people I cared about who wanted to stay? Would I even risk or sacrifice my life like so many East Germans did to get to the West?

One thing I knew – I would do anything to be with my family.

After the wall went up, East Germany became an increasingly dangerous place to be. The terrifying Stasi, the secret police, helped by people like Max who turned on their friends, made East Germany a very scary place to live.

There have been lots of films and books about the Wall and the Cold War between the Soviets and America and its allies, and I had a moment of doubt – thinking perhaps it wasn't my place, especially as an Australian, to write a story centred around this famous episode in European history. Even though the East German refugees' dangerous quest for freedom and escape appealed to my sense of adventure, I put the story aside for a while.

Then one day I was talking to my neighbour in my building. He's a German Australian in his seventies who loves to walk his Labrador. One day we were talking about books, and I said I was thinking of writing a story set in Berlin. 'Oh, Berlin,' he said. 'I'm from Berlin. Did you know I was a guard on the Wall?'

I couldn't believe it! What are the chances? I took this as a sign that I should start writing this story. I threw myself into researching more about the escapes and

watching videos of people who shared their harrowing experiences. And, of course, along the way I was able to knock on my neighbours' door to ask him questions.

The escapes mentioned in this story are based on real-life events (successful and unsuccessful). I have taken liberties with the timeline and the details – not all of them occurred within the two weeks covered in Peter's story. I hope you will be curious to do your own research on the actual people who risked their lives to be safe or to be with their loved ones, and learn more about refugees everywhere who take those risks today.

The saddest thing for me about Peter's story is that I knew when I was writing it that it would take twenty-eight years before he would be able to cross the border again.

Like millions watching around the world, I saw the Wall come down live on television in 1989. I clearly remember the elation and tears of families and friends being reunited after so many years apart.

I like to think that Peter was among them, rushing to embrace his family. Perhaps he would have children of his own, who would be meeting Margrit's kids for the first time. I imagine Sabine, Elke and Otto there too. Or perhaps one of them had migrated to a country like Australia to start a new life like my neighbour did. I would love to know their stories!

I hope that readers will come away from this story with hope in their heart, knowing that goodwill and kindness will eventually find a way to break through any barriers that divide us. We all want a life in which we can be free to grow, play, laugh and love.

And, by the way, my German neighbour's name is Peter and his Labrador is Otto. Thanks, Peter. They sounded like pretty good names to me!

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 Otto, his plan to escape and what Peter and the readers know).
- 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 does it refer to? Does the title reference any other books or movies that you can discover?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Researching historical information

- Read the note from the author at the end of the book. Where in the story can you see that the



author has researched using the historical methods and evidence?

a time you have made a decision that has changed things for you or your family.

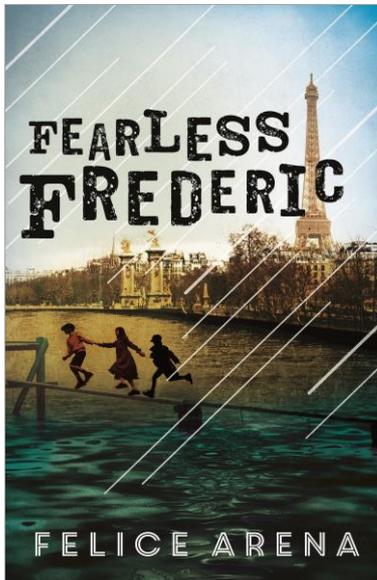
- Look up images of 1961 Germany and look for photographs and films of the wall going up. Can you think of a modern new report of a wall being built to keep people in or out?
- Look up more interesting information about this period of history. Including information from one website, one online newspaper and one book and create a poster to share what you have found with the class.
- Research some stories of East Germans who tried to escape into West Germany and how they escaped (or didn't escape). Share their escape in the form of comic or a timeline.
- Does your family have a story of being a refugee or escaping a dangerous country? Ask family or friends to recount that story or family history and in small groups tell your true-life account.
- Have you wondered why and how people become refugees? Do you know of a group of people who have escaped danger to come to Australia? What danger were they fleeing and what did they have to overcome to get to safety. What would you have done in their place? Present your findings in the form of an information text.

Storytelling

- Write a short story from the perspective of Sabine after she has escaped to the West, Manfred after he has been captured or Sabine's mother after she leaves Berlin.
- How does the story of Otto compare with the story of Peter or Elke? Consider their different family situations and write several diary entries for each showing what their motivations for staying or going might be.
- Otto's story is incomplete in the novel. Write a story about what you think happened to him after he jumped. Where was the escape like and what happened immediately after?
- Choose an incident in the story and write it from a different perspective – choosing a character mentioned in the story.
- 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?
- Peter's action at the beginning of the now have huge consequences. Write a reflective piece about



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

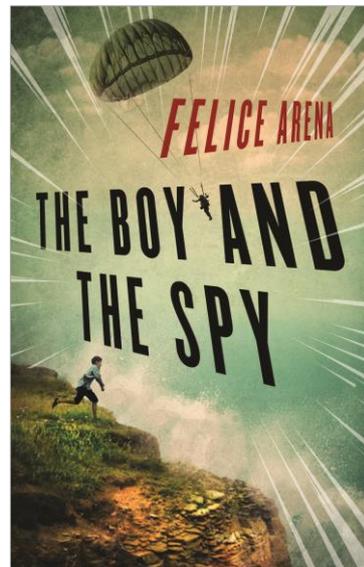


Fearless Frederic
by Felice Arena

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.



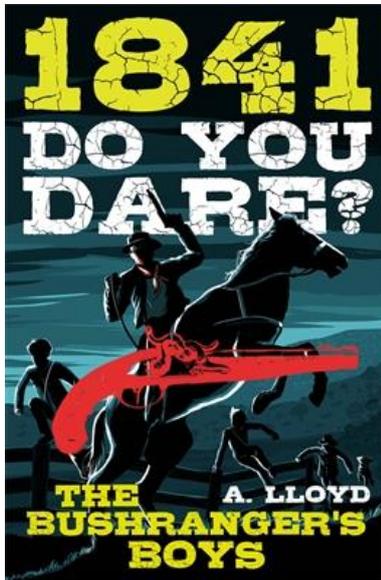
The Boy and the Spy
by Felice Arena

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.





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?

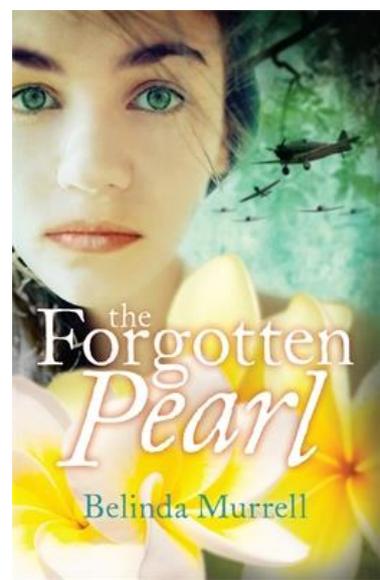
An exciting, action-packed adventure set in 1841.



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	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
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		
TOTAL						

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