

The Reindeer and the Submarine: Inspired by True Events

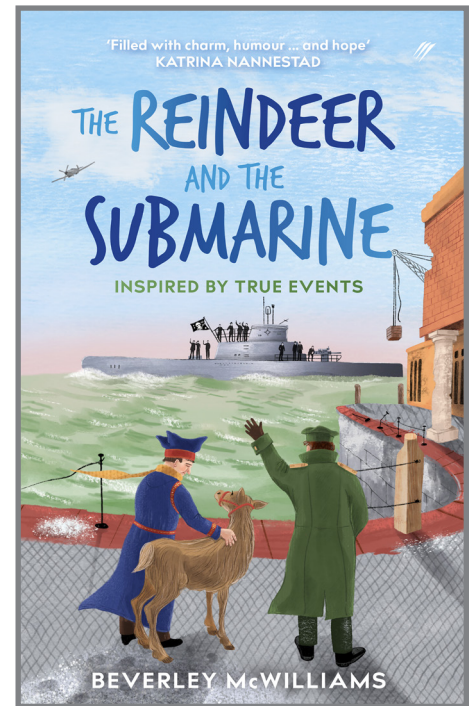
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

'Sometimes things have to change even though we might not want them to.'

An orphaned reindeer with no antlers, Pollyanna is raised by Igor, a Sámi herder, and is more at home in the company of people than other reindeer. When she discovers Igor is leaving for war, Pollyanna decides to follow, but en route, she is captured and gifted to the crew of a British submarine, the HMS *Trident*.

Life onboard the Trident brings more than a few surprises, and Pollyanna with her love of food gets into all kinds of mischief. But she also makes friends, becomes part of the crew, and uses her courage and cheekiness to comfort her companions in the dark days of the war. Eventually all journeys come to an end however, and Pollyanna finds herself facing a new adventure.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beverley McWilliams loves sharing history with young children. In August 2019, she published her debut picture book *Born to Fly*, which tells the story of South Australian aviator Captain Harry Butler. *Born to Fly* was a CBCA Notable book.

Beverley's writing has also been published online and in magazines. She is a regular contributor to *The School Magazine*, Australia's longest-running literary publication for children.

Beverley is the South Australian event coordinator for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, and a member of the Australian Society of Authors and Writers SA.

She was born in Yorkshire but now lives by the beach in beautiful South Australia with her family and menagerie of pets who provide endless inspiration.

The Reindeer and the Submarine (2022) is her first middle-grade novel.

Find out more about Beverley at: www.beverleymcwilliams.com.

THEMES

- Friendship
- Courage
- Individuality/embracing differences
- Resilience
- Teamwork

STUDY NOTES**THEMES****Friendship**

- What qualities makes a good friend?
- Why is it important to have friends who are different from you?
- Make a list of the many special friendships Pollyanna shares during the book. Choose one of these friendships. How does this friend help Pollyanna and how does Pollyanna help her friend?

Courage

- Why do you think Pollyanna believes she's not brave?
- Sometimes you can be brave in invisible ways. On several occasions, Pollyanna shows great bravery to protect her friend, Misha. Discuss one of these instances.
- Sometimes we need the support of others to have courage. Find an example in the story where someone's support helped Pollyanna show courage. Find an example of Pollyanna helping someone else be brave.
- What do you think it means to be a hero? Make a list of qualities and characteristics you associate with a hero.

Individuality/embracing differences

- Pollyanna struggles to fit in with her herd because she has no antlers. Discuss how differences can make someone feel like an outsider.
- Why is it important to embrace an individual's differences?
- How do Pollyanna's feelings about having no antlers change over the course of the story? Discuss what triggers this change.
- Everyone is unique, and that's what makes us special. Create a mind map of what makes you special (use images, drawings and words).

Resilience

- Discuss what it means to be resilient and what tools we can use to help us 'bounce back' in difficult times.
- From losing her mama to leaving her home, Pollyanna faces many obstacles in her life. How does Pollyanna show resilience?
- Think about a time of your life that was challenging. How did you handle the situation? Make a list of skills you could use to build resilience.

Teamwork

- 'Everyone worked together in a frenzy of action, desperately trying to stop the leaks which sprung from seams. They were battered and bruised and covered with oil, but no one faltered.' (p 133) Teamwork is vital on board a submarine. The men work in 'watch' teams and although they have specific roles, they often perform each other's jobs when needed. As the above quote shows, successful teamwork could mean the difference between life and death on a submarine. What skills do you think are most important for successful teamwork?
- What teams are you part of, and how do you contribute to those teams?
- Find some examples of teamwork in the story. How did the teams work effectively and what did they achieve?
- Work in pairs. One person closes their eyes. The other person uses commands to guide their partner across the classroom, being careful to avoid any obstacles.
- Using paper cups, cards or blocks, work in small groups to create the tallest structure.

ENGLISH

- *The Reindeer and the Submarine* is written in first-person narrative and told from the point of view of Pollyanna, a reindeer. What distinguishes first-person, second-person and third-person narrative?
- Why might writers choose to use first-person narrative?
- Why do you think the author told the story from a reindeer's point of view? How might the story differ if it had been told by a human character?
- Select a scene from the book and tell it from the point of view of another character. Rewrite the same scene using

third-person narrative.

- Choose an animal and write a short story from their point of view.
- Discuss the meaning of the following terms and identify literary techniques used in the book:
 - Simile
 - Metaphor
 - Alliteration
 - Personification
 - Imagery.

Can you think of any other literary techniques?

- Why do you think it is important to use literary techniques in writing, and how do these techniques affect the way you feel?
- Identify literary techniques used in the book. How can vocabulary enrich a story and its setting?
- Can you deduce what the following words mean from their context? Check your conclusions against the glossary.
 - joik (p 23)
 - lavvu (p 25)
 - the mess (p 66)
 - stocker (p 73)
 - galley (p 84)
 - helm (p 133).

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCE (HASS)

- As a class, discuss what you have learned about World War II from reading the story. Was there anything that surprised you?
- Further research one of the following topics mentioned in the story:
 - Rationing – What was rationing in World War II? What foods were rationed and why? How did rationing differ in Australia compared to Britain?
 - The Reindeer Battalion – What was the reindeer battalion, and why was it formed? What tasks were assigned to the battalion? Why was the work of the reindeer so important?
 - London Zoo during World War II – What impact did the war have on London Zoo? Which animals were removed from the zoo and why? Why do you think it was important the zoo remained open during the war?
- Imagine sharing your home with more than fifty other people and not even being able to open a window! What day-to-day challenges do you think the men faced? How would you feel about living on a submarine for weeks?
- How do you think the men would have felt about having a reindeer on board? What would they have been concerned about?
- Why do you think periscopes are so important on board a submarine?
- From the information available in the story, draft a map of the inside of the submarine and label the different rooms.
- As a class, discuss the contributions animals have made in war.
- Why do you think animal mascots were so important?
- Consider the relevance of war memorials and why we should remember what happened in wars.

GEOGRAPHY

- ‘The lights curved, curled and danced across the sky.’ (p 1)—what do you think Pollyanna is referring to here?
- Imagine going to school in the dark and trying to go to bed when it’s light. As a class, discuss what it would be like to live and work in the arctic.
- Locate Polyarny, Lofoten, Lerwick and Blyth on a map. Plot the journey of HMS *Trident*.
- Discuss the importance of recognising different cultures and the impact of our modern world on traditional cultures.

TECHNOLOGY

- Morse code is a system of encoding messages using dots and dashes to show letters, numbers and punctuation. The dots are short sounds known as *dits*, and the dashes are long sounds known as *dahs*. Do you think morse code is used as widely today as it was during World War II and why?
 - Look up the morse code alphabet and write a message using the code. Swap messages with a classmate and have a go at solving each other's message.
- Can you think of other ways people communicated over distances before the use of telephones?

THE ARTS

- Silhouettes were often used by artists in World War II. Look at some examples of silhouette art and discuss why these images are so effective. How does this art make you feel? Why do you think this was a popular form of art during World War II?
 - Create your own piece of silhouette art. First, paint a background (for example, yellows/oranges for sunset or blues for the ocean). Then use one of the silhouettes attached or make your own.
- 'The control room buzzed with action. Eyes pored over charts and gazed at gauges. Hands adjusted controls. Wheels swung and orders echoed. This was different from the other dives. It was faster, steeper. The submarine shuddered as we hurtled forwards and down.' (p 127) How do you think Pollyanna is feeling at this moment? How might her emotions differ from those of the crew who understand the submarine is under attack?
 - In small groups create a freeze frame of an action scene such as the one above. Remember to use body shape and positioning to show ideas and emotions. Develop these freeze frames through thought tracking, expressing feelings and thoughts of your character using words.