

# The Mud Puddlers

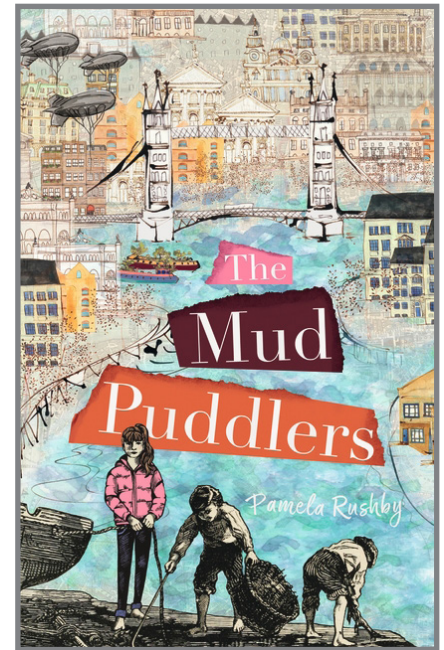
AUTHOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary



## SYNOPSIS

Twelve-year-old Nina is not happy. Her scientist parents are spending a year in Antarctica. And Nina's being sent to London to stay with her Aunt Bee, an intertidal archaeologist, who lives on a converted barge on the Thames. She's also a keen mud larker, combing the river mud for fascinating, long-forgotten articles from past lives. Nina arrives with an Attitude. Her parents have never left her behind before. It takes time for her to settle in, helped by the MudPuddlers, a local group of enthusiastic amateur mud larks, and especially by Molly, an elderly MudPuddler living on a nearby barge. Molly draws Nina into the magic and mystery of the ancient river and its treasures. When she finds herself stranded in time, in the Blitz in 1940, Nina and a very unwilling fellow traveller, Tom, become runaways, fumbling their way across wartime England, desperate to return to London. Will they ever see their families again?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pamela Rushby is the author of over 200 books for children and young adults, as well as children's TV scripts, documentaries, short stories and freelance journalism. Pam has been an advertising copywriter, preschool teacher, and producer of educational television, audio and multimedia. She has won several awards, including the NSW Premier's Ethel Turner Prize, five CBCA Notable Books—and a bag of gold coins at a film festival in Iran! Pam believes the strangest, most riveting, heart-breaking, laugh-out-loud stories aren't fiction. They're real. They come from history. And she loves tripping over unusual incidents from history—and then writing about them. Her website is [www.pamelarushby.com](http://www.pamelarushby.com).

## STUDY NOTES

### BEFORE READING

- Before reading the novel, view the cover and title of the book and identify the following:
  - The title of the book
  - The author
  - The publisher
  - The blurb.
- Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answer after reading the story to see if your predictions were correct.
- Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? If you were asked to choose an alternative title for the book, what would it be? Remember, a good title should capture the audience's attention and give them some idea of what the book is about.
- The orientation sets the scene, mood and introduces the characters. Which character/s are we introduced to in the

opening scene of the novel? What mood is the author setting?

- Write what you think could happen in the story based on how the writer has set the story up.
- It is the author's job to make it difficult for the characters to achieve their goals. What trouble (complications) does the author create to make it difficult for the main character to achieve their goal/s?
- Can you identify the climax of the story, the moment of highest tension?
- Characterisation is how the characters in a novel are described physically, their point of view, their personalities, their private thoughts and their actions. Create a mindmap of a character in the story with all the words you can think of to describe their character. Then, write a paragraph describing how you imagine the character would be. Compare your ideas of that character with other people in your class. Did you imagine the same person?
- Consider the world the author has created in this novel. Can you describe it? How is it different to the world you live in? Which elements of the world seem realistic, and which seems fantastical?
- How does the story conclude (resolution)?
- Compare the ending of the story with how you imagined it ending at the end of the first chapter. Were you surprised by where the story went?
- Design your own cover for the book with new imagery and a new tagline that will persuade and interest people in reading the book.
- Choose a scene in the novel and rewrite it from the perspective of another character. Focus particularly on the character's attitudes and feelings, rather than simply recounting events. How might another character see and experience events differently to the character in the novel?
- Choose your favourite character from the novel. Draw a picture of how you think they look or find one in a magazine/online. Write a letter from this character to another character in the book. Make sure you use some of the language or expressions that they use in the novel.