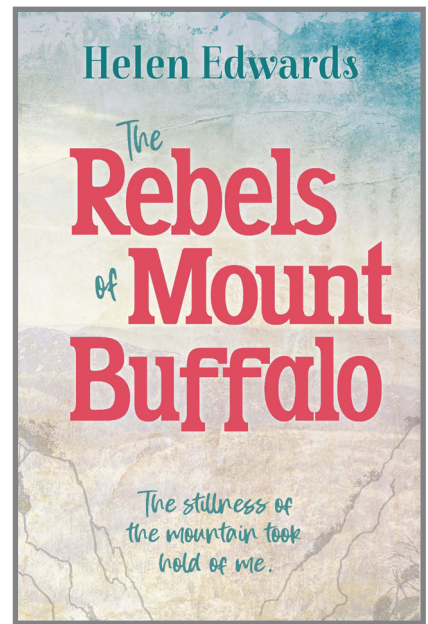


# The Rebels of Mount Buffalo



AUTHOR

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Upper Primary

## SYNOPSIS

It's 1989 and Clara and her parents are staying at the Mount Buffalo Chalet for the centenary celebrations. It couldn't be more different from their last visit—there were four of them then and they were a family. Now they're three separate people, orbiting around each other while trying to navigate their overwhelming grief.

With her twin Darius gone, Clara has no reference point anymore, no guide. It's like being lost in the bush without a compass. Without him, she doesn't really know who she is.

After a strange night, Clara wakes up in 1892. There she meets Alice, a girl who lives within the fern-filled valleys. To her surprise, Clara recognises Alice—knows more about her than Alice knows about herself. She is Guide Alice, the girl considered a rebel of her time, an adventurous non-conformist who spent much of her life boldly leading people along rugged trails between granite tors and misty mountain peaks.

With Australia in the grip of a Depression, Clara and Alice are inadvertently caught up in a heist. To save Alice's life—and the life of Alice's brother—Clara must rediscover the courage she has always had, and become the girl she was always meant to be: someone who doesn't hesitate to dive in.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen Edwards grew up surrounded by books. She 'published' her first book at age 6, for which she won the Children's Book Week prize at her school. Ever since, she has wanted to be an author. She worked for many years in mental health and has a PhD in Psychology. In 2018, she decided to take the leap into becoming a children's author. Helen writes stories that reduce stereotypes, increase understanding of diversity, and feature Australian history and nature. She has had type 1 diabetes since 1979 and also lives with anxiety and ADHD. She includes characters in her stories who are neurodivergent and/or who live with physical and mental health conditions, out in the world, having adventures.

Helen is passionate about inspiring action for our beautiful, fragile planet and nature features in all of her books. She finds history fascinating and uncovers stories that may have been forgotten, or hidden, and brings them into the light. She also believes that fantastical things can happen and sees magic in the everyday.

Helen lives in Adelaide with her lovely family, two cats and a very active rescue kelpie! When not reading, writing or watching good stories, you'll find her walking in nature, going on road trips to discover new story ideas, laughing a lot

and listening to music.

Find out more about Helen at [www.helenedwardswrites.com](http://www.helenedwardswrites.com) or at [@drhelenedwardswrites](https://twitter.com/drhelenedwardswrites).

## THEMES

- Timeslip (1990s and 1890s)
- Parental separation & family relationships
- Grief and loss
- Courage and self-belief
- Mental Health, including anxiety
- Neurodiversity
- Growth, change and identity
- Early feminism in Australia
- Australian history
- Alpine Victoria
- Environment & Conservation
- Friendship
- Bullying/not being a bystander
- Using the past as a vehicle to explore the present and future
- First Nations history (Mt Buffalo)
- Australian Depression of the 1890s
- Establishment of Mount Buffalo as a tourism area
- Groundbreaking women from history (Guide Alice Manfield)
- Photography

## STUDY NOTES

### BEFORE READING

- Before reading the novel, have a look at the cover and identify the following:
  - The title of the book
  - The author
  - The publisher
  - The blurb.
- Based on the cover and the blurb, what do you think this story is about? Compare your ideas with other people in the class.
  - What do you think the main themes are?
  - What do you think is going to happen?
- This story combines true history with fictional elements. Have you read any other books like that? If so, what did you enjoy about them? Was there anything you didn't like or found difficult? If so, what was it?

### WHILE READING

- Read the first three chapters of the book and write down some of the things you think might happen. Later, check back to see if you predicted anything and discuss what the key aspects of the story were that led you to these predictions. If you were surprised, how do you think the author managed to do that?
  - After finishing the book, go back and assess how well the predictions you made before you started reading the book matched to the story. Did anything surprise you?
- Creating a complication for a character in reaching their goal, or solving their problem, is an important aspect of creating tension in a story. How do you think the author does this in Clara's situation? What are some of the complications that she has to face? Would you add any other complications?
- Where do you think the highest point of tension is in the story? This is often called the climax and commonly falls

somewhere in the middle of the book. What are the things that make this the climax in *The Rebels of Mount Buffalo*? Can you identify other parts of the story where there is tension?

- There are two main characters in *The Rebels of Mount Buffalo*—Clara and Alice. Note down all of the words you can think of to describe one or both of these characters. You can draw them if you would like. Consider how they look, their voice, their personalities, how they think, act and feel. Then discuss this as a class and see if there were some common words or ideas. Compare differences or similarities in their personalities and ideas about the world—do you think any of these differences are due to the different times they lived in?
  - There are a number of important secondary characters in the book. Complete the same character exercise for as many secondary characters in *The Rebels of Mount Buffalo*.
- Darius never appears in the book, and yet, he is woven throughout the story. Write down the ways in which Darius is brought into the story. How does the author present his character, and can you describe him as a person? Would he have blamed Clara for what happened? How do you think he would have perceived her time-slip adventure?
- World-building is very important in any book. This story is set in a real place, with some real events, some real people and some fictional characters. It is also a magical story because Clara slips back in time. Why do you think the author decided to use time-slip as the tool for Clara to find her way towards understanding her grief and discovering her bravery?
- Did you think the time-slip worked in this story? Explain the reasons for your answer.
- At the end of every story there is a resolution. In Clara's case, there were some important scenes in the closing chapters. Write down and then discuss which themes and issues she was able to resolve and what enabled her to do so.
- In the 1890s there was a Depression in Australia and Melbourne was at the epicentre. Do some further research to find out more about how the Depression began and the impact on the different states.
  - Write a short story about a character who lived through that Depression and how it impacted them.
- The book mentions Vida Goldstein and the petition to the Victorian Parliament for women to gain the right to vote. Do some research to find out more about this petition and discuss in class, what the outcomes were and how this might have impacted women's rights in current times.
- Guide Alice was considered a 'rebel of her time'. What do you think this means? What made her a rebel?
- Being a rebel can be seen as a negative aspect of a person's character, but also, a positive one. Write down some of the ways rebellion can be positive and some of the ways it can be negative.
- Find one person from history who you consider to be a rebel and who did something positive for the world. What was it that they did and how did being a rebel support them to act?
- In the book, John Monash attends a dinner at the Manfield Hotel, where he was a regular guest. At that time, he hadn't yet become the famous character we know him as today. How would you have spoken with him? Write a paragraph of the dialogue between you and John Monash, as if you were a fellow dinner guest, but already knew his future the way Clara did.
- Design a different cover for the book that incorporates something from the story that you really enjoyed. If you would like to, also create a new title and see if you can write a tagline for the book that will encourage people to want to read it.
- Choose your favourite character from the book and draw a picture of how you think they look. Then, write a letter from this character to another character in the book. Include some of the language and expressions they use, to stay true to their character.
- What do you think it would have been like to climb Mount Buffalo in 1893? In what way might it have been different than it is today?
- In what way could the environment of Mount Buffalo be described as another character in the book?
- Amongst other things, the author describes the sounds, smells, colours, plants and animals that live at Mount Buffalo. Choose three sections from the book where the author uses the five senses. Describe what the author wrote and how it helped you to connect to the story.
- Why do you think the five senses are important in stories and how do they connect you to memories of your own life? Do you have a favourite smell, song or object that connects you to a memory?

- Guide Alice took many photographs of Mount Buffalo across her life, using mostly glass slide cameras. Some of these are available via the State Library of Victoria. Have a look at these photos online and choose one. Write a story based on the photo.
  - Research how these cameras worked and compare this to how photos are part of our lives now. Do you think photos might have been more important back then? If so, why?
- This book is narrated in first person, past tense. Why do you think the author used first person narrative from Clara's perspective? How do you think the story might have changed if the author had incorporated alternating chapters from Alice's perspective?
- Break into small groups and choose a theme from the book. Choose some examples from the text that show how this theme is explored and present as a Powerpoint or Prezi.
- Rewrite the scene where Clara and Alice first meet at the hotel from Alice's perspective. How does this change the story and the narrative flow? Does it add to the story, or take something away from it?
- Write a scene where Alice slips forward to Clara's time in 1998 and they meet at the Chalet on the night of the centenary. Would it have changed Clara's journey if she was to stay in her time and Alice came to her? How did Clara slipping back to the 1890s enable her to find her courage and self-belief?
- What do you think it might be like to slip either backward or forward in time? Write a story where you timeslip to an era you'd like to experience. What would it be like to find yourself suddenly in a completely different time? How would you handle it? What might you learn about yourself?
- Clara talks about her emotions of anger and guilt burning holes inside of her that are filled with lava. She also talks about 'growing wings of courage, that at first are as soft as duckling down, but eventually grow as strong and as soft as a falcon feather, attached to skin and bone.' Why do you think the author uses these metaphors to describe anger, grief, guilt and courage? Brainstorm metaphors for one or more of these emotions. As a class, discuss why we use metaphorical language to talk about our feelings.
- Clara finds great solace in nature. It has been shown that time in nature, especially around trees and forests, is good for our mental health. Discuss some of the places you enjoy spending time in nature and why they make you feel better.
- Clara and Alice talk about the First Nations Peoples who lived at Mount Buffalo and gathered there to feast on the Bogong Moths. Some of the Traditional Custodians of the surrounding regions are the Dhudhuroa, Taungurung, Waywurru, Gunaikurnai and Jaithmathang Peoples. These are the Traditional Custodians of the Alpine Shire, which encompasses the land, water and sky of Bright and Surrounds. Many other groups would travel to Mount Buffalo and meet to trade and share stories. Research the history and culture of one of these groups of people. Choose one aspect, such as food, language, cultural activities or place, to present to the class.
- Like Clara, people often find it difficult to discuss their true feelings when someone dies. Describe a time where you have felt grief about someone or something you have lost. Write a short story about how you felt and use metaphors to illustrate these feelings. If you are comfortable, share these stories with a small group of other people in the class.
- As a class, brainstorm interview questions for author Helen Edwards. If your class would like to submit their questions to the author, Helen, email them to [editor@rivetedpress.com.au](mailto:editor@rivetedpress.com.au).