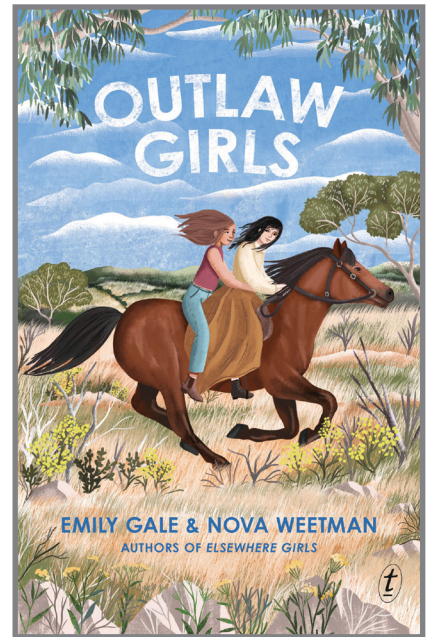


Outlaw Girls

AUTHORS

EMILY GALE AND NOVA WEETMAN



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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary/Lower Secondary

SYNOPSIS

Kate and Ruby live in the High Country in Victoria. They're both daring, quick-thinking and prepared to break the rules, and they're both brilliant horse riders—they'd probably be great friends. But they live in different times, more than 140 years apart.

While galloping through the mountains, Kate rides headlong into a thrilling experience that transports her from 1878 to the future, where she meets Ruby. Kate and Ruby return to 1878, where Kate is secretly taking supplies to her brother Ned and the rest of the Kelly Gang, who are in hiding from the police. Together the girls work to confuse the police and keep the gang from being found and arrested. But the looming disaster makes things less clear-cut for Ruby.

They're about to have the ride of their lives!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Emily Gale's books include *The Other Side of Summer* and its companion novel *I Am Out with Lanterns*, the Eliza Boom Diaries, *Steal My Sunshine* and *Girl, Aloud*, as well as her recent middle-grade collaboration with friend and fellow author Nova Weetman, *Elsewhere Girls*.

Nova Weetman has written thirteen books for young adults and children. Her middle grade books include the much-loved novels *The Edge of Thirteen*, *The Jammer* and *Sick Bay*.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Compare the title of this book to the title of the first book in the series, *Elsewhere Girls*. Discuss the differences and what they might mean for the plot of *Outlaw Girls*.
- *Outlaw Girls* is set in Victoria's high country. Google some pictures of this area and describe the landscape. What are some of the features that make it an interesting setting for a story?
- Both *Outlaw Girls* and *Elsewhere Girls* are timeslip novels which means that one part of the narrative is set in the present and one is set in the past. Read the blurb of the book. Which year does the past narrative take place in? Do some research and create a timeline of major events happening in the world and in Victoria during that time.

WHILE READING

- How do Ruby, Emmie and Mack get caught stealing the tractor?
- Why is getting caught by the police worse for Emmie?
- How does Ruby feel when she's riding?
- Where do Kate and her family hide food for 'the boys'? Why do they need to?
- What are some of the dangers that lurk in the Warby Ranges?
- Why doesn't Kate want Ruby to tell her uncle about her?
- Make a list of the things that Kate doesn't understand about Ruby's world.
- Why doesn't Kate take Queenie?
- What do you think Ruby was thinking when she followed Kate through the portal?
- Why does Ruby have so much trouble believing that she's in Kate's time? What ends up convincing her?
- What does Ruby know about Ned's future?
- Why is Ned wanted by the police?
- What does Kate give Ruby as she's about to go home? Why?
- What is frog bread? Why does Kate make it for baby Jack?
- Kate wonders if her meeting with Ruby was chance or fate. What do you think? Why?
- How does Ruby feel when Kate calls her 'as brave as a Kelly'? (p 158)
- What is special about Ned's letter?
- Why wasn't Mary able to return to her own time?
- How does Kate describe her sister Gracie?
- Kate tells Ruby that 'people like us can't trust anyone who's not from our world'. (p 185) Why do you think this is? What makes Kate trust Ruby?
- Discuss the book's title. What does 'outlaw' refer to for each girl?
- What does Kate hear her brother discussing that makes her feel betrayed?

AFTER READING**Character**

- What simile does Ruby use to describe Mack's brother, Jack? Why is this image more powerful than simply saying that he's mean?
- How would you describe Ruby's friendship with Mack? Why does Ruby feel that she has to impress her?
- 'Some people say that's not ladylike but being a perfect lady is the last thing on my mind when the police are after me.' (p 39) What pressures does Kate feel to behave in a way that's considered 'ladylike'? Does Ruby face any of the same pressures to conform?
- Kate says 'When you're a Kelly you know what it's like to lose something precious.' (p 120) What does she mean by this? What's the hardest thing she's lost?
- How does Ruby change from the beginning of the book to the end?

Style and Structure**Historical Fiction**

- *Outlaw Girls* explores a very particular moment in time, when the infamous Kelly Gang rode large across rural Victoria. Events came to a head when Ned, Dan, Joe and Steve were involved in a siege at the Glenrowan Inn. Research this time in history and present your findings to the class.
- As the authors write in the afterword, 'most, but not all of the details in *Outlaw Girls* are based on historical research. Lots of information as well as people have been left out and of course the parts about Ruby are made-up.' (p 309)
 - Which parts of *Outlaw Girls* do you think are true and which are made up? Find three examples of each. How can you tell?
 - How do the authors use the fictional parts of the story to help us understand history?

Themes**Rebellion**

- What are the characters in this story rebelling against? Discuss where laws come from and who makes them. Are

they always applied fairly to everyone? (Consider what Ruby reflects on about Emmie getting into trouble with the police.) Are all laws good laws?

- Kate describes Ruby's theft of the tractor as 'no better than our boys taking horses, only Ruby and her friends are not starving and desperate, as far as I can tell.' (p 59) What is a good reason to rebel against something? Do you agree with either/both/neither of these rebellions? Give reasons for your answer.

Friendship

- Make a list of the similarities and differences between Ruby and Kate. Would you say that Ruby has more in common with Kate than her friends from home? Why/why not?
- Ruby tells Kate that she's 'good at keeping secrets for friends'. (p 77) What other secrets has she kept? Is it always a good thing to keep secrets for friends?
- Would you say that Kate is a good friend to Ruby when she won't help her to leave? Do you agree with her actions?
- How does Kate feel when Ruby leaves? What else could Ruby have done?
- What do you think Ruby has learnt about friendship by the end of the book?

Freedom

- What do Ruby and Kate want to be free from?
- When they're in each other's time, what do Ruby and Kate each miss about their own? Is either girl more free than the other?
- How does the jangle of the guard's key represent a loss of freedom? (p 199) What images represent freedom?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- One of the first differences Kate notices about Ruby's time are the sounds. She describes 'far off whirrings and rumblings'. (p 45) What are these noises? Make a soundscape for Kate's time—you could do this using words or you can make it using sounds.
 - Make one for your own life—what sounds make up your day-to-day life?
- Imagine that someone has just arrived from 1878. Draw them a map of the local area, marking any significant landmarks, make a list of necessary vocabulary they might need to fit in, and suggest three foods to try.
- Read Ned's letter aloud. (p 163) Why does it contain the word 'something' in several of the sentences? Use what you know of history and what you've learnt in this book to come up with words that might take the place of 'something' in the text below.
- Choose your favourite scene from the book and draw a before/after picture.
- We leave Kate before she becomes involved in the events of the siege at Glenrowan, although the authors fill in some of what happens after in the afterword. Write a final chapter for the novel from Kate's perspective, describing what happens to her after she rides home to join her brothers.