

Teachers' Notes  
for  
*A Penny in Time*

a novel by Anna Bartlett  
with illustrations by Susy Boyer

Teachers should feel free to adapt these notes in any way they see fit, to better tailor them to individual classes.

The 'Creative Response', 'Research' and 'Creative Writing' sections of these notes are designed to give teachers and/or students a choice of activities; it is not intended that students complete all activities.

Any comments, questions or feedback on these notes or the novel itself may be sent to Anna Bartlett at [anna@bartletts.id.au](mailto:anna@bartletts.id.au).

## Chapter 1: A Stealthy Expedition and Some Ancient Treasure

### Understanding the Text

1. Why is Yared upset? List as many reasons as you can.
2. Who is he staying with? Why does she send him to his room?
3. What does Yared miss about his own room?
4. Where was Yared born? Were his parents born there?
5. Why are his parents away?
6. What colours are the coins Yared finds in his nanna's bedroom?
7. What language is the writing on the back of the penny? What year was the penny made?

### Issues to Consider

1. How would you describe Yared's relationship with his nanna?
2. Why might Mrs Richmond have thought Yared wasn't Australian? Why would it have upset Yared to be told this?
3. Why do you think Yared would rather explain things to his mum than to his nanna?
4. Do you think Yared's nanna is right about whether he is Australian or not? Why or why not?
5. If you had to describe Yared, would you say he is Ethiopian or Australian? Why?
6. Do you call yourself Australian? What if you were born in another country, and moved to Australia when you were young? Would you consider yourself Australian? What if you were adopted from overseas?
7. What do you think makes someone Australian? Is there a simple rule or criterion? Discuss it with your class.

### Creative Response

1. Using the descriptions in the story and your imagination, draw a sketch of what you think Yared's room at home might look like. Now draw a matching sketch of the spare room at his nanna's, showing the differences.
2. The coins Yared finds are in a carved wooden box. What do you think the box might have looked like? Design your own carved wooden box or treasure chest that you could keep coins in.

### Research

1. In groups of three or four, research the types of coins that were used in Australia before Australian coins were used. What were their names? What did they look like? What were the first coins used in Australia? In your group, create a poster that includes both information and pictures.

## Chapter 2: The Longed-For Picnic; or, Rescuing Penguins

### Historical Notes

When the colonies of Australia began preparing for Federation, there was disagreement over which city would become the capital. The rivalry between Melbourne and Sydney meant that neither city would agree to the other becoming the National Capital, so to keep both sides happy the writers of the constitution decided that a new capital city would have to be built within the state of New South Wales, but at least 160 km away from Sydney.

Even after Federation occurred in 1901 though, it took years for the politicians to agree on exactly where to build the new city. In 1908 they finally decided on the Canberra-Yass region as the site for the new capital, and on 1 January 1911 the Australian Federal Territory (now called the Australian Capital Territory) officially came into existence. At that time around 1,700 people lived in the area that is now the ACT. Most of them lived on large sheep or cattle stations, or in one of the small villages in the region.

The year 1911 was also the first year that Australian pennies were produced. Before that, Australians had generally used British coins or private bank notes, but after Federation the government had the power to introduce Australian money. In 1910 the first silver coins were minted (sixpences, threepences, shillings and florins), and in 1911 the first copper coins were made (pennies and half-pennies). They were minted in London, because the Australian mints weren't equipped to produce bronze or silver coins yet.

In 1911 penny postage was introduced in Australia, which meant a letter could be sent anywhere in the country for only one penny. (It was the first fixed postage rate for the whole of Australia.) It was also around this time that men like Roald Amundsen, Robert Scott, Ernest Shackleton and Douglas Mawson were leading expeditions to explore Antarctica.

### Understanding the Text

1. What year is the story set? List some technology available now that wasn't around back then.
2. What is Elsie doing at the beginning of the story? Who is with her?
3. The Macalisters' property is no longer in New South Wales. Where is it?
4. Why has the government created the new territory? What are they going to do there?
5. Where does Elsie live? How often does she visit the family property?
6. What does Elsie do after the boys have climbed across the log and left her there?
7. Is Elsie's penny like the British ones she's used to? What is different about it?
8. What has happened to Andrew when Elsie runs back upstream to the boys?
9. How does Elsie rescue him? What does she do once he's on the bank?
10. Why does Elsie run for help instead of Henry?
11. What are some of the things you could buy for a penny in 1911?

### Issues to Consider

1. Why doesn't Elsie want Henry there? Why does she feel this way?
2. What do you think it would be like living away from your siblings or parents? If you know what it's like yourself, do you enjoy it?
3. Why do you think it took the politicians a long time to agree about where to build the new capital city? How long do you think it should have taken?
4. How would you have chosen the place to build Australia's new capital city? List five criteria you would have used to decide if it was a good place or not.
5. In 1911 women and girls weren't allowed to swim at the same time as boys (who swam naked). How do you think this affected outings?
6. From a girl's point of view, do you think you would have liked living back then? List three positives and three negatives of life as a girl back then.

### Creative Response

1. Imagine that you are entering a competition to design a new city. How do you think the judges would decide which design is best? What do you think would be important to include in a new city? Sketch out your design and put it up on the classroom wall. As a class, run a mock competition to choose the best design.
2. Draw a map of the Macalisters' property, using both information from the story and your imagination, and label all its features.
3. Create a cartoon strip showing Andrew's accident and rescue.

### Research

1. Find out as much as you can about early Canberra. Who were the first European settlers in the area? Who lived there before that? Why is it called Canberra? What year was the city founded, and when was Parliament House opened? Put together a short powerpoint presentation to share with your class.
2. Find out who won the competition to design Canberra. Where was the winner from? Why did the judges choose that entry?
3. Pick one of the Antarctic explorers mentioned in the 'Historical Notes' for this chapter, and do some research about them. Where were they from? How many expeditions did they go on? Were they successful? Create a poster about them.

### Creative Writing

1. Pretend you are Andrew, and write the letter Elsie asked you to write. What will you include in the letter? What stories or information will you tell her?
2. Write a newspaper article describing Andrew's accident. Remember to answer the questions 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where' and 'why'. Give the article an attention-grabbing title.

## Chapter 3: In Which Charlie Makes a Wish

### Historical Notes

In 1914 Australia was still part of the British Empire, so when Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August, Australia automatically went to war as well. Over the next four years, until fighting stopped on 11 November 1918 (the day we now commemorate as Remembrance Day), Australian soldiers fought in places like France, Belgium, Turkey and Palestine. They fought alongside men from other countries of the British Empire, as well as men from Russia, France, Italy and America. Altogether, more than 330,000 Australians fought overseas during the war; over 60,000 of them died and 137,000 more were wounded.

At the start of the war many Australian men were eager to fight for the British Empire. The official enlistment age was 18, but often younger boys wrote false ages on their enlistment papers so that they could join the army too. If men didn't enlist, neighbours sometimes sent them white feathers as a sign of cowardice, to try to pressure them into joining up. More than 2,000 Australian women also went overseas during the war, to nurse soldiers wounded during the fighting. They worked long and hard in difficult conditions, and were sometimes in great danger when their hospital tents were bombed or shelled.

When the war first broke out, the Australian Government introduced laws allowing it to imprison people it considered a threat to the country. In 1914 thousands of people living in Australia had been born in Germany, or had German parents or grandparents. Although many of them joined up to fight for Australia, there was still a lot of anti-German feeling. Around 4,500 people of German descent were interned during WWI, because the government was suspicious of their loyalties. (Later, during WWII, internment camps were used again for people of German, Japanese or Italian descent.)

The laws the government passed also allowed it to censor what was reported in the media, which meant that newspaper reports of battles were not always accurate. War correspondents were not allowed to talk about the gruesome effects of war or the number of soldiers killed, because the government wanted more men to join the army, and didn't want people becoming depressed or alarmed. Instead, newspaper reports described battles as 'thrilling' and 'splendid', and exaggerated how successful the Australian attacks were.

### Understanding the Text

1. What are Charlie and his friends waiting for in the alleyway?
2. What battle are the newspaper headlines talking about? Who was this battle between?
3. Why does Charlie want to join the army?
4. What does Charlie do with the money he earns from selling newspapers?
5. What happened to Charlie's old schoolteacher, Mr Schneider? Why?
6. What does Charlie ask the soldier for?

7. What is on the cigarette card the soldier gives him?
8. How does the soldier describe Gallipoli? Is this how the newspapers described it?
9. Where is Charlie's brother? Where is his father?

### Issues to Consider

1. Arthur mentions his neighbour Ralph being given a white feather – these were sometimes given to young men who hadn't joined up yet, as a sign of cowardice. How do you think this would have made them feel? Do you agree with people giving white feathers, or not? Explain your answer.
2. Charlie says that it is easier to sell newspapers when there are exciting headlines. Why do you think this is so?
3. Do you think it's still true? What are some ways that journalists make newspaper stories seem more exciting than they might really be?
4. Charlie reads Jim's letters for stories of battle, but Jim never writes about that. Why do you think Jim doesn't write about the battles?
5. Why do you think the newspapers describe the Anzac soldiers as gallant and glorious, even though Bill describes war as being terrible?
6. How does Charlie feel about war at the start of the story? How does he feel about it at the end? What has made him change his mind, or think about war more seriously?
7. At the end of the story Charlie makes a wish. What do you think he wishes for? What makes you think this?

### Creative Response

1. Draw the front of a postcard Jim might have sent his family from Egypt. What sorts of things would be pictured on it?
2. During the war the government produced many posters designed to convince men to join the army. Make a poster of your own to persuade people to join a group of your choice – a sports team, a drama group, your class, or any other group you like.
3. In the story Charlie collects cards with war heroes or war ships on them. Design a set of six collector cards that have a particular theme. What theme will you choose? (Sports players, famous places, endangered animals etc.) Include a few pieces of information on each card, as well as the picture.

### Research

1. List the main countries involved in WWI on either side. Why was there tension between these countries? What event caused the tension to increase, and led to the start of the war?
2. Find out where the main battles in WWI were fought and mark them in on a map.
3. Many Australian women went overseas as nurses during the war. Find out as much as you can about their work, what the conditions were like and where they went. Put together a short powerpoint presentation to share with your class.

4. Many people of German descent were interned during WWI. Find out as much as you can about these internment camps. Were there any in your region or state? If so, how many people were interned there? What was life like for them?

### **Creative Writing**

1. Write a newspaper report about something that has happened to you, or at your school recently. Look at real newspaper reports for examples, and try to make your report seem as exciting as you can, by using dramatic words and giving it an attention-grabbing headline and photo.
2. The way a newspaper report is written can make you think a certain way about an event, and different reports can give you very different ideas about the same event. For example, describing a sports match as rough and violent gives a different picture of the game than if you described it as exciting and action-packed, even though both descriptions could be true. In pairs, pick the same event and each write a paragraph or two describing it. Make sure your descriptions are both accurate, but give a different view of the same event.
3. Pretend you are Bill and write a diary entry about the day you met Charlie. What might Bill have thought about Charlie? What would he remember from the day? Try to describe things the way you think he would.

## Chapter 4: A Little Game of Hide and Seek

### Historical Notes

Towards the end of WWI, the government introduced a system called the soldier settlement scheme, which gave blocks of land to returning soldiers who wanted to become farmers. Altogether, around 40,000 returned servicemen took up settlement farms across the country. These blocks were usually in rural areas, far from large towns, and were used to produce goods like wool, fruit or grain, or for dairy or cattle farming.

Many of the settlers found their new lives very difficult, though. They had to work hard without much money, equipment or experience, and faced problems like rabbits destroying their crops, diseases in their livestock, and extreme weather conditions like droughts or frosts. Because they lived so far from large towns, transport and communication were also poor. Although some soldier settlers managed to produce successful farms, within 15 years around half of them had abandoned their blocks.

Even though some Aboriginal men fought for Australia during WWI, they were not allowed to apply for soldier settler blocks. Around this time Aboriginal people were being forced to live in particular areas of land called reserves; in fact, some of the land taken for the soldier settlement scheme came from these Aboriginal reserves. If Aboriginal children had European ancestry as well, government officials often took them far away to special schools that tried to teach them to live like white people. No-one asked the children or their parents if they wanted this to happen, and many of the children ended up losing almost all of their culture, language and identity. This continued to happen for many years, up until the 1970s.

### Understanding the Text

1. What are Violet, Nancy and Ken helping their mother with at the start of the story?  
List the different steps involved.
2. Where was Violet's mother born? Where was Violet born? Why did they move to Australia?
3. Why can't Violet get her father to come and help them search for Shirley?
4. List three things that Violet is worried might have happened to Shirley.
5. How does the Aboriginal girl help Violet to find her sister?
6. What does she offer them to give them more energy?
7. Why do the four children hide from the men?
8. How does Violet stop the baby boy from crying?

### Issues to Consider

1. Violet and her family had to spend hours washing the clothes by hand each week, because electric washing machines weren't available back then. How do you think

this would have made a difference to their lives? List three other useful household devices that you don't think they would have had.

2. Violet's mother sometimes finds the Australian bush daunting. Why is this? Think of a time you've been somewhere new or different – maybe on holidays, visiting someone you haven't met before, or going to a new school. Did you enjoy it, or did you find it scary? Explain why.
3. Soldier settlers often didn't have much farming experience or much equipment, and the land they settled on wasn't always very good for farming. Do you think the government's scheme was a sensible one? How do you think they could have planned it better?
4. Even though they have trouble communicating with each other, Violet and the Aboriginal girl are able to help each other. List the ways that the Aboriginal girl helps Violet. Now describe how Violet helps the Aboriginal girl. Do you think people need to come from the same culture or background to be friends? Why or why not?
5. Even though Violet has lived on the family property for most of her life, the Aboriginal girl knows more about the bush than she does. Why do you think this is the case? Where do you think the girl learnt it from?
6. The men the children hide from are looking for the Aboriginal girl and her baby brother. What do you think they are going to do with them? Why do you think this?

### **Creative Response**

1. Create a poster advising people of at least five things they should be careful of in the bush. If you like, you can use your imagination and invent one or two of the dangers.
2. Draw a map showing Violet's family's property, and the surrounding area. Show where Violet went on her search for Shirley by marking her path with a dotted line. Label the map to show what happened where.
3. Design a poster advertising a washing machine or other household item that wasn't around in the 1920s. On the poster, explain what the item is for, how you use it and the benefits of buying one.

### **Research**

1. Pick six different Australian animals and sketch what you think their tracks would look like. Now do some research and find out what their tracks really look like. Draw a table with the names of the animals in one column, and the sketches of their tracks in the second column.
2. Research the different types of bush tucker that would be found in your local area, and create a poster showing what they are, where you would find them and how you would prepare them.
3. In groups of three or four, research a particular mission that Aboriginal children were taken to live in, and find out what the conditions were like there. Put together a powerpoint presentation to share with the class.

4. Find out if any areas in your state were used as part of the soldier settlement scheme. If so, how many people settled there? Was the land good for farming? What sorts of crops did they grow, or what animals did they keep? Did many of the farmers stay there, or did they leave?

### **Creative Writing**

1. Write a short story where something else goes wrong on the property, and Violet has to help save her family – maybe someone gets hurt, or there's a bushfire or flood. Plan out the story first, and remember to use your five senses when describing things.
2. Pretend you are Violet's father and write a letter to the government explaining why the soldier settlement scheme isn't working, and what you'd like them to do to make it work better.

## Chapter 5: A Trap, a Tap and a Trip to the Tip

### Historical Notes

The Great Depression began in 1929, when the American stock market failed, and lasted until WWII broke out in 1939. Before the Depression, Australia had made a lot of its money by selling wool and wheat to other countries, but during the Depression the prices of most products dropped dramatically, so Australian farmers could no longer make any money by selling their goods. Lots of other industries – like the mining, building and mechanical industries – also failed, because no-one could afford to run mines, buy houses or make machinery anymore. Bosses didn't have enough money to pay their employees, so thousands of workers lost their jobs or had to work for very low wages. While many soldier settlers and other farmers abandoned their blocks and moved to the cities to try to find work, unemployed men from the cities were going to the country for the same reason.

Jobs were very hard to find, so once people lost their jobs they struggled to find the money to buy food or pay the rent. When families could no longer afford to pay the rent they were often evicted from their houses, and went to live with other unemployed people in dole camps on the outskirts of towns or cities. In dole camps, people lived in rough shacks or tents, without electricity, running water or bathrooms. They lived off rabbits, fish (if there was a river nearby), and the dole – also known as sustenance (or susso) rations. These rations provided families with basic foods like bread, tea, sugar, flour, potatoes, onions, oatmeal, milk and golden syrup.

Dole camps were generally very dirty places and because children living there often didn't have enough to eat, many of them became sick. They were also teased or looked down on by other children whose families were better off. The government didn't have much money to help poor people, partly because it had spent so much during the war and on projects like the soldier settlement scheme. Schools in poor areas gave children free bread and soup at lunchtime, however, and charities tried to help the unemployed by giving them extra clothes and food.

### Understanding the Text

1. How many rabbits did the boys catch? Why?
2. Why does their mother go to town?
3. What does Pat use to carry the water?
4. What makes Alan think that Donald needs more food?
5. What is Alan's favourite pastime?
6. What are some of the things the boys from school say about Alan, Pat and Janet?
7. Where is Alan's father? What job did he previously have? What jobs does he do now?
8. What are some of the things that Alan thinks his mother could buy with the penny?
9. What is Bridget doing when Alan and Janet arrive home?

**Issues to Consider**

1. What do you think it would be like to live in a shed instead of a house? What are some things you like doing at home that you wouldn't be able to do if you lived in a shed?
2. Do you think Alan's mother is telling the truth when she says she isn't hungry? Why or why not? Why do you think she says this?
3. Rabbits are a pest, and cause lots of harm to the environment, but during the Depression they were a useful source of food for poor families. Do you think it was a good thing they were introduced to Australia? Discuss it with your class.
4. Why do the boys from school tease the Connolly children? Do you think it makes sense to look down on people or be mean to them just because they don't have as much as you do?
5. How do you think Muriel's death would have affected Alan? Do you think it would have made him more determined to find enough food for Donald, or less determined?
6. Alan's family receives food supplies from the government, because they have no money. Do you think this is a good thing for the government to spend its money on? What do you think might have happened to Alan's family if they didn't receive food from the government?
7. Alan and his siblings go to the tip to look for objects they can reuse. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not? What other things not mentioned in the story do you think they could reuse if they found them at the tip?

**Creative Response**

1. Design a rabbit trap that would help Pat and Alan to catch more rabbits, and draw a picture of it, labelling its features. How does it work? What does each part do? You can be as creative as you like.
2. Draw a sketch of the shed Alan and his family live in, then put in some improvements to make it more comfortable. Think of as many useful additions as you can.
3. Create a cartoon strip showing what happened when Alan and Janet met the boys from school on their way back from the tip.

**Research**

1. In groups of two or three, find out as much as you can about dole camps, and what the conditions were like there. Put together a powerpoint presentation about them for your class.
2. The Sydney Harbour Bridge was built during the Great Depression. Find out who designed it, how long it took to build and how many people helped to build it.

**Creative Writing**

1. Pretend you are Alan or Pat and write a thank-you letter to Mr and Mrs Matheson (the couple who gave them a jar of jam).
2. In groups of six to eight, write a script about Alan and his brothers and sisters, where they manage to find some money. (Maybe they look for treasure, or win a prize in a competition.) Make sure the script contains lots of excitement. Create parts for everyone in the group, and make a few props or costumes before you perform the play for your class.

## Chapter 6: The Flower Girls; or, Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better

### Historical Notes

On 1 September 1939, Nazi Germany (led by Adolf Hitler) invaded Poland, and two days later Britain and France declared war on Germany. That same day, 3 September 1939, Australia also went to war with Germany. By the time the war ended in 1945, nearly a million Australians had joined the armed forces; for some of them it was the first steady job they had had, after growing up during the Great Depression. At first Australian troops fought in North Africa and parts of Europe, but when Japan entered the war at the end of 1941, Australian soldiers also fought against the Japanese in places like Singapore, Indonesia and New Guinea.

Because Japan is much closer to Australia than Germany is, the threat to Australia became much greater once the Japanese entered the war, and people began to take more precautions. Everyone had to black out their windows so that enemy planes wouldn't be able to see their lights, and some schools evacuated children to towns further inland. Other schools dug trenches and held air-raid drills, so that children would know what to do if they were bombed. Although most towns in Australia were never attacked during the war, Darwin was bombed more than 60 times, and there were also air-raids on other places in northern Australia like Townsville, Broome, Wyndham and Horn Island.

Once America joined the war (at the same time as Japan), a large number of their soldiers began to be stationed at military bases in Australia. Australians were happy to have the Americans on their side, and because so many young men were away fighting overseas, some Australian girls began dating American soldiers. This, along with the fact that American soldiers were better paid, sometimes led to rivalry between Australian and American soldiers when Australian soldiers came home on leave.

Another effect of having so many men overseas was that there weren't as many left to work on farms or in factories or shops, and as the war continued there began to be shortages of some products. Things like tea, sugar, butter, meat, petrol, clothes and material were rationed to make sure there would be enough for everyone. Each year people were given a certain number of coupons they could use to buy these rationed items.

### Understanding the Text

1. Why is Betty in the trench? What are they practising for?
2. Why hasn't Betty's father joined the army?
3. List three things Betty and the other children have done to help with the war effort.
4. What sorts of things do the girls knit? Where do the items get sent?
5. Where is the money from the stalls going to be sent?
6. How much money do the children need to raise to support one Prisoner of War?

7. How many coins does the plump woman drop?
8. What does Jocelyn think is strange about the American soldiers?
9. Why doesn't Betty want the young woman to see her?

### Issues to Consider

1. What do you think it would be like to have air raid drills at school? Would it be fun? Boring? Scary? What if there was a real bombing raid?
2. Betty's father isn't supposed to join up because he's in a reserved occupation, which means that the government thought it would be more useful if people in his job stayed at home, instead of going overseas to fight. Why do you think there were some jobs the government didn't want people leaving? What sorts of jobs would you choose as reserved occupations if there was a war, and you wanted the country to keep running? Make a list of five of them.
3. During the war lots of things were rationed, like the material for Jocelyn's dress. If you were in charge of rationing, how would you decide how much each person should get? Would you give everyone the same amount, or would you let some people have more than others? Think carefully about your answer. (For example, which group of people might need more milk than others? Are there any people whose clothes might wear out more quickly than others'?)
4. How do you think Betty felt when the young woman asked her father why he hadn't joined up? How do you think her father felt? Do you think the woman should have asked that? Why or why not?

### Creative Response

1. Pretend you are in Betty's class and create a poster advertising your class's stall, and telling people why they should come. You may wish to illustrate the poster with pictures of flowers and vegetables.
2. Betty and her classmates have to take first aid kits with them to school, in case there is a bombing raid. Design a first aid kit, labelling everything in it and what each item could be used for. You can be as creative as you like.
3. Draw a sketch of a WWII fighter plane, making it as realistic as you can. (You may need to do some research first.)

### Research

1. Mark on a map the places where the main battles in WWII were fought. During WWII Germany took over several other countries; find out which countries, and shade them in on the map as well.
2. In the story, Jack Hunter says the Prisoners of War are trying to escape from their camps. Find out about some of the most famous WWII escapes, then pick one and do a short presentation about it for your class

3. Some Prisoners of War were sent to Australia during WWII. Find out what countries they were from, and whereabouts in Australia they were sent. What did they do there? What jobs did they help with? Write down your answers and discuss them with a friend.

### **Creative Writing**

1. Pretend you are a Prisoner of War trying to escape from a camp, and that it is the night of your planned escape. Write a diary entry the day afterwards, describing what happened on that night. Was the escape successful? How did you get out of the camp? Were there any scary or dangerous moments?
2. Pretend you are a journalist and write a newspaper article about the children's stalls, informing people of the way Betty's class is raising money for the war effort. You might like to include quotes from Betty's teacher, or some of the students.
3. Imagine you are Betty and write a letter to your cousin Les, to send to him in his Prisoner of War camp. What sorts of things would you tell him? What do you think he'd like to hear about?

## Chapter 7: Big Brother Always Knows Best

### Historical Notes

Because WWII badly affected many European countries, when the war finished millions of people from Europe wanted to move overseas. Australia still had a shortage of workers, and the government felt that having a larger population would help protect the country in future if anyone tried to invade, so it began accepting many of these migrants. In the fifteen years after WWII ended, over one and a half million migrants came to Australia, with another million coming each decade after that. Although many of the migrants were from the UK and Ireland, a large number also came from countries like Italy, Germany, Greece, Yugoslavia and the Netherlands. Before this, most Australians had been of British descent, but with the arrival of these migrants (who came to be known as 'New Australians'), Australia began to be more multicultural.

When Queen Elizabeth II toured Australia in 1954, an estimated 75 per cent of the population turned out to see her, and newspapers were full of photos and reports about her. Because it wasn't too many years after WWII, when so many Australians had fought on behalf of Britain, people felt pleased and honoured to have the Queen visiting. Although by this time there were new technologies like microphones, there was still no television in Australia, and so another reason people lined the streets to see the Queen was that they had no other way of seeing her. For most people it was a very exciting time, though after the Queen's visit (partly because of Australia's new ties with America), Australians began to feel more independent of Britain, and less interested in Britain and its affairs.

Although it was designed in 1901, it wasn't until 14 April 1954 that the Australian flag formally replaced the Union Jack as the national flag of Australia. A red-backgrounded version of the flag (known as a red ensign) became the flag that merchant ships had to fly.

In the 1950s sport played a large role in Australians' lives, with Melbourne hosting the Olympic Games in 1956, and more sports grounds and swimming pools being built. The different football codes were very popular with spectators, and Australians performed well internationally at sports like cricket and swimming, and particularly at tennis, with Ken Rosewall and Lew Hoad (known as the 'tennis twins') winning many matches together.

### Understanding the Text

1. What is Aleksandar waiting for?
2. Why does Aleksandar go to evening classes? What does he learn there?
3. What are some of the objects people are using to make sure they get a good view of the street?
4. What are most of the people around Aleksandar holding?
5. How much money does Aleksandar find in his pocket?

6. When did Aleksandar's family first come to Australia?
7. Who does Aleksandar meet when he walks along the street away from Vasilis?
8. What colour flag does Aleksandar buy? What is it made of?
9. What song does the band play when the Queen arrives at the Town Hall?
10. What makes the wooden barrier fall into the street?
11. What is Aleksandar doing when he sees the Queen?

### Issues to Consider

1. Why do you think so many people lined up to see the Queen? List three reasons. (Think about how easy or difficult it would have been back then to see photos or video footage of an event. Also think about the number of years it was since WWII, and what difference that might have made.)
2. Would you be interested in going to see a member of the royal family if they visited Australia now? Explain why or why not.
3. Why do you think Aleksandar's parents think it's so important for him to know about Greek culture?
4. How much do you know about your own cultural background, or the culture of your parents or grandparents? Do you think it's important to learn this sort of thing? Why or why not?
5. Aleksandar says that he's tired of being different from the other kids. Have you ever felt different, or left out? How did it feel?
6. Do you think everyone should be the same? Why or why not?
7. How much should people who move country adapt to fit in with a new culture, and how much should they keep their own culture? Debate it with your class.
8. In the story, why do you think all the soldiers, policemen and wooden barriers along the footpaths are needed?
9. Do you think things could become dangerous at an event like this, even if people weren't deliberately causing trouble? What could happen if no-one was there to break up the crowd, or to stop them rushing around the Queen?

### Creative Response

1. Design your own 'celebration' flag that you could wave at a special event. Explain why your design suits the type of event you've chosen.
2. Design a contraption that would help you see better in a crowd, and write a few sentences explaining how it works.
3. Sketch a picture of one part of the story that you found interesting – the mounted guards, people on stepladders, people camped overnight in the streets, the soldiers with their rifles, the Queen in her car etc.

**Research**

1. Pick a country that one of your ancestors came to Australia from, and find out about that country. What language do they speak? What kinds of food do they eat? What is their government like? Put together a short powerpoint presentation for your class.
2. Find out what Australia's system of government is called. Why do we have a queen as well as a prime minister? What power does the Queen have in Australia? Write down your answers in dot points and compare them with a friend's.
3. As a class, do some research and try to find some old photos or newspaper articles about the Queen's visit in 1954. Websites like the National Library's <http://newspapers.nla.gov.au/> might be useful.

**Creative Writing**

1. During the Queen's visit, children were often chosen to present flowers to her or to give a speech of welcome. Pretend that you are a school child at the time and that you have been chosen to give a speech to the queen. Write the speech you would give.
2. Pretend you and your family have just moved to a new country (the country can be made up). Write a letter home to a relative or friend describing what the new country is like, what things you like about it and what things you find strange.
3. Imagine you are Vasilis, trying to find Aleksandar during the riot, to make sure he is safe. Write three or four paragraphs describing the crowd, the things happening around you, and how you manage to find Aleksandar. Remember to use your five senses to help you describe things.

## Chapter 8: In Which Pennies Go Down the Drain

### Historical Notes

After WWII the two most powerful countries in the world were Russia and America. Russia had a system of government called communism, which many Western countries (including Australia) disliked, because communist leaders could easily become dictators. Although Russia and America never actually fought each other, there was a lot of tension between them, and many people were worried that the Russians and Americans would start launching missiles or dropping bombs on each other. Western countries were also scared that communism would spread across the world, and to try to stop this happening, countries like America and Australia sent soldiers to fight against communists in Korea and Vietnam.

The Vietnam war, which lasted from 1959 to 1975, was the first war Australia was involved in after the introduction of television, which made it the first war with television coverage. Every evening on the news people would hear about the war, and see images that were sometimes upsetting. Over time, many people began to object to the fact that Australian soldiers were fighting in Vietnam. They also objected to the government's new conscription laws, which meant certain young men could be chosen to join the army even if they didn't necessarily want to. These young men could even be sent overseas to fight, which many Australians thought was unfair.

On 14 February 1966 Australia introduced decimal currency to replace the system of pounds, shillings and pence that had been inherited from Britain. Under the old system, 12 pennies equalled one shilling and 20 shillings equalled one pound, but the new system was much easier to add up. When decimal coins were first released there were 50 cent, 20 cent, 10 cent, 5 cent, 2 cent and 1 cent pieces. There were no one or two dollar coins until 1984 and 1988 – there were one and two dollar notes instead – and the 50 cent piece was round.

In the 1960s large deposits of minerals like coal, nickel, and iron ore were being discovered in Western Australia and Queensland. This led to a huge increase in mining activity in Australia, known as a mining boom. Most mineral deposits were found in remote areas, so small mining towns were built specially for miners and their families to be able to live nearby.

### Understanding the Text

1. What are Robyn and Linda doing at the start of the story?
2. What are they going to do with the coins they find?
3. Where is Robyn's family moving? Why?
4. What are two reasons people complained about the new decimal currency?
5. What is Greg doing when he discovers that the metal grating is loose?
6. Where does Greg hide when the thin woman comes towards them?

7. What do the children use to prop the grate open?
8. How does Robyn get Greg out of the drain?
9. What does Greg give Robyn at the end of the story?

### Issues to Consider

1. Robyn doesn't want to think about moving, or about leaving behind all the things and people she knows. Have you ever had to leave friends or family behind? How did you feel?
2. Write about a time when you didn't want to do something, but then when you did do it, it wasn't as bad as you'd thought it would be.
3. Robyn, Greg and Linda find TV exciting because it's something new. What is one form of technology that is new and exciting for you?
4. Some of the news bulletins on TV scare Robyn. Has anything on TV ever worried or scared you? Why is it important to ask an adult about these things?
5. Why do you think people disagreed on what name to give the new money? What name would you have suggested?
6. Greg says his father will be angry if he finds out Greg has been climbing in a drain. Why do you think his father would be angry?
7. Why was it silly of Greg to jump into the drain without stopping to think? What sorts of things could happen to someone if they got stuck in a drain?

### Creative Response

1. If you had to design a new set of coins, what would they look like? Sketch your designs for each different coin.
2. Can you think of any other ways Robyn could have helped Greg out of the drain? Draw a diagram showing how you would have rescued him – make an invention to help you, if you need to.
3. Imagine you are advertising a TV at the time this story is set, and make a poster telling people why they should buy one.
4. Draw a cartoon strip showing the events of the story, and how Greg was rescued from the drain.

### Research

1. One of the names suggested for the new money was the 'royal'. Find out what other suggestions were made at the time. Who chose the name 'dollar'?
2. Do some research on Russia between the years 1917 and 1989. How did they get their system of government? What was their government like? Why were people in Western countries afraid that Russia would take over the world? Write down your answers in dot points.

**Creative Writing**

1. Pretend you are Greg and write a short story where you are stuck in the drain on your own, and have to follow the pipe to find a way out. What could be down the pipe? How do you get out? Use your imagination and remember to use your five senses when describing things.
2. In pairs, write an interview between a reporter and someone who has discovered a mineral in the ground near your local area. Make up the person who discovered the mineral, and the story of how they found it. Next, choose which of you will play each part then perform the interview for your class.
3. Imagine you are the thin woman and write a letter to the newspaper complaining about children and all the dangerous or silly things they do.

## Chapter 9: Tracy, the Loud and Unwelcome Visitor

### Historical Notes

In the early hours of Christmas Day 1974, Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin. Although they had been warned, most residents of Darwin were unprepared for the cyclone. Many of them hadn't expected it to hit, because Cyclone Selma, which had been predicted to hit Darwin three weeks before, had changed course and died out before it reached them. Tracy killed 71 people and destroyed or seriously damaged between 80 and 90 per cent of homes, causing millions of dollars of damage. About 25 boats in the harbour were wrecked and 20 more were damaged, though some vessels out at sea managed to survive the storm relatively unhurt.

After the cyclone passed, the Darwin hospital began to treat the wounded, and doctors and military personnel from other states were flown to Darwin to help treat patients, provide supplies and clear up the mess. Nearly everyone was now homeless, so around 35,000 people were evacuated to other cities, mostly by plane. Charity organisations helped by meeting these refugees at the airports and providing them with clothes, and many community groups fundraised to help the survivors of the cyclone. Over the next four years Darwin was gradually rebuilt, this time with more attention being paid to cyclone protection.

### Understanding the Text

1. Where is Cathy's mum?
2. Why did she have to go there?
3. Where is Cathy's dad?
4. What is Shane doing when Cathy first finds him?
5. What are two things Cathy saw on TV that afternoon?
6. What happens to make the children decide to move to the bathroom?
7. List three things that are lying in the hallway when the children come out during the eye of the cyclone.
8. What makes Cathy think of bringing something into the bathroom with them?
9. What is lying on Cathy's desk when she goes into her room to look for the penny?
10. What does Shane want for Christmas?
11. What do the children hide under during the last part of the cyclone?

### Issues to Consider

1. Cathy's teacher says she has an overactive imagination. Look at the way Cathy uses her imagination throughout the story, and the different things she imagines. How does her imagination help her? How does it make things worse?
2. By the end of the story, the focus of Cathy's imagination has changed. What sorts of things does she imagine at the beginning of the cyclone? What sorts of things does she imagine at the end? What might she have learnt about her imagination?

3. The children are supposed to go to the Clarkes' if they need help while their mum is out. Why do they decide not to go? Do you think they made the right decision, or do you think they should have gone to the Clarkes'? Why?
4. Why is it good to follow our parents' rules or advice? When might we need to make our own decisions instead?
5. Cathy has heard her grandma talking about a previous cyclone, which is why she thinks of taking something into the bathroom with them. How does knowing safety information make a difference in an emergency? Why do you think it is important to learn about safety precautions, and what to do during natural disasters that might occur in your region?
6. What did Cathy ask her parents to get her for Christmas? What does she now want Santa to bring? Which do you think is more important? Why?

### **Creative Response**

1. Paint a picture of what it might have been like during the cyclone.
2. Look back through the chapter for some of the things that were scattered around during or after the cyclone. Think of some more interesting objects that you might have found strewn around, and sketch a collection of three or four of them
3. Design a house that you think would offer good protection in a cyclone, and label its features. Now do some research and find out if your design is similar to real cyclone-proof houses.

### **Research**

1. Pick a natural disaster and find out what causes it, what its warning signs are, what precautions can be taken to avoid it, and what people should do if it occurs. Create a poster informing people about the natural disaster you've chosen and giving them safety tips.
2. Draw up a table with two columns, and in the first column write down six to eight animals or vehicles that you think would be very fast. Find out the maximum speeds of the animals or vehicles you've chosen, and write these speeds in the second column. Now add 'Cyclone Tracy' to the bottom of your table. Find out what the fastest wind speeds during Cyclone Tracy were and write this information in the second column.

### **Creative Writing**

1. Write a poem describing the cyclone from the perspective of Cathy and her brothers.
2. Pretend that it is the day after Cyclone Tracy and write a newspaper article informing people about what has happened.
3. Write the story from Darren's perspective, describing what you think it might have been like at the hospital during the cyclone. Remember to use the five senses.

## Chapter 10: The Return of Mrs Richmond; or, Yared Shows Them All

### Understanding the Text

1. What does Yared remember is going to happen at school that day?
2. What does Yared do when they first pull up in the car park?
3. What does he say he enjoyed about staying at his nanna's?
4. What does his nanna take out of her handbag?
5. What are Nick and Toby fighting over?
6. What does Yared do when Mrs Richmond calls his name on the roll?
7. What does Yared want to be able to tell his class?

### Issues to Consider

1. How would you describe Yared's relationship with his nanna at the end of the book?  
Now look back to your answer to question 1 of the 'Issues to Consider' section for the first chapter. How has Yared's relationship with his nanna changed?
2. Look back through the book at the sections before and after each historical story.  
What are some ways that you can see Yared's relationship with his nanna changing throughout the book?
3. How do you think Yared feels when his nanna gives him the penny? Has anyone ever given you something rare or special? How did you feel?
4. At the start of the book Yared is upset because Mrs Richmond tells him he isn't Australian. How do you think it makes him feel, at the end of the book, being able to tell the rest of his class about parts of Australian history?
5. What sorts of things do you think Yared might have learnt from the stories his nanna has told him?

## Whole Book Questions

### Issues to Consider

1. The historical stories in this book are set between 1911 and 1974. Do you think they give a good picture of life in Australia in different parts of the 1900s? Do you think they give a *complete* picture of what life was like in Australia in the 1900s? Why or why not?
2. What makes it difficult to give a complete picture of life in a country over a range of about 60 years? Do you think it would even be possible? Explain your answer.
3. When people write historical fiction (like this book), how important do you think it is that they are historically accurate – that the historical details they include are true? Why do you think this?
4. What might happen if the author includes details that aren't correct, but the reader doesn't realise this? What if you were the author and you'd tried to find the correct detail, but couldn't? What would you do then?

### Research

1. You've thought about the fact that it's impossible to cover all aspects of life in a country over such a long period of time. What are some things mentioned in the stories that you'd like to know more about, or things not mentioned that you know also took place in Australia during the 1900s? Research more about your topic and give your class a short presentation showing what you discovered.

### Thinking About the Illustrations

1. Look through the book at the chapter head illustrations. Did you like them? Why or why not?
2. Do you think their style suits the book? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think the illustrator chose to draw those particular objects?
4. Pick one of the chapters and think of a different chapter head illustration for it. Sketch the object or scene you've chosen, trying to copy the illustrator's style.

### Thinking About the Writing

#### Structure

1. How is the structure of the book different from many other books? How many stories does this book actually have?
2. Why do you think the author might have chosen to do this? Do you think it was a good idea? Why or why not?

**Vocabulary**

3. From each chapter, pick two words that you don't know the meaning of. (It may be because they're old-fashioned or historical words, or it may just be that you haven't learnt them yet.) Look up their meanings, and write a sentence using each of them.

**Characters**

4. Because each historical story is set in a different time period, with different people, the book has a large number of characters overall. Imagine you are writing a story and have to create this many characters. Do you think you would enjoy it? Why or why not? Do you think it would be easy or hard?
5. How would you make sure your characters are individuals, and have different personalities?
6. Now pick a character from the book – you may like to pick one of the main characters from the historical stories – and create a small poster profiling them. Draw a picture of what you think the character might look like, and write in all the information you know about them from the story: their name, what they like and don't like, if they have brothers and sisters, where they live, how old you think they are. Put the posters up in your classroom and make sure you have a look at your friends' posters, to see the profiles of some of the different characters.

**Creative Writing**

1. In this book, what object inspires Yared's nanna to tell the stories, and links the stories together? Think of an idea for a book with many separate stories like this one, but with an object other than a penny linking the stories. Write down your idea. (Maybe the stories are all about the beach, and a shell links the stories, or maybe they're all about sport, and a pair of football boots links them.)
2. As a class, choose one of these ideas and brainstorm possibilities for different stories that would fit this idea. Now form groups of three to five, and in your group write a story based on the idea your class has chosen. Once each group has written a story, collect the stories together to form your class book!
3. On your own, write a short story about the penny, as though it is another chapter to add to *A Penny in Time*. If you'd like, make yourself the main character. The story could be set now, or some time in the past. What will the complication in the story be? How will it get resolved? Remember to use your five senses when you're describing things in the story.

**Extra Challenge Questions**

1. In the old system of money, called the imperial system, 12 pennies made up one shilling, and 20 shillings made up one pound. How many pennies did you have to have to make up a pound?
2. How many shillings were in three pounds?
3. Now add 1 pound, 7 shillings and 9 pence to 2 pounds, 15 shillings and 6 pence.

4. Did you find that hard? Don't worry if you did! Which money system do you think you prefer?
5. Now try some different sums: when decimal money was introduced, people could exchange 6 pence for 5 cents, and a shilling for 10 cents. How much would a pound have been worth in dollars and cents? (Remember that there were 20 shillings in a pound.)
6. How much would one pound, 8 shillings and 6 pence have been worth?