

A History of Dreams

Jane Rawson



PUBLICATION DETAILS: ISBN 9781922598608 (print) ISBN 9781922598615 (ebook)

RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 13-17 YRS

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS:

English; Humanities and Social Sciences (Civics and Citizenship; Economics and Business)

VALUES: Honesty, Tolerance, Self-Determination, Empathy

Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

CONTENTS

PLOT SUMMARY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WRITING STYLE

- Title and Blurb
- Structure
- Genre
- Point of View and Narrative Perspective
- Similes, Metaphors and Other Literary Devices
- Humour
- Conflict and Suspense
- Newspaper Feature Writing
- Characterisation

FURTHER READING

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

WORKSHEETS

PLOT SUMMARY

'Every day, I will use my magic to bring power to the powerless'
(p 215)

In 1930s Adelaide four women turn to witchcraft to undermine a new authoritarian government determined to enforce their marriage and virtual enslavement.

In the 1930s in Adelaide sisters Margaret and Esther Beasley and their friend Phyllis O'Donnell are learning to be witches. Their guide is Audrey Macquarie a glamorous Communist schoolmate who was taught the art of changing dreams by her suffragette great-aunt Delia Maddingley. This subtle magic known only to spinsters has been passed from aunt to niece for generations. Now this group of young women are using it to power their own small revolution undermining a system that wants them married uneducated and at home.

As Europe begins falling to fascism these women – the Semaphore Supper Club – stumble on a nest of Nazi sympathisers in the poetry salons of Adelaide. The poets' political connections help them rise in power until the Club finds they aren't just fighting chauvinist writers but have taken on Australia's new authoritarian government. As the government discovers it too can harness dreams Margaret, Esther, Phyl and Audrey face an overwhelming force they cannot defeat. Each of them must decide whether – and how – to continue the struggle in the face of almost certain failure.

The History of Dreams explores female friendship the power of finding a vocation and the importance of joy in a time of political darkness. It asks what our responsibilities are when faced with an unjust government particularly when we have the privilege to look the other way.

Told in three parts (*Part One An Overture for Girls; Part Two A Ruined Dream; Part Three The Bureau of Public Enlightenment, 1940*), the story starts in 1937 and concludes at the end of 1940. It is an imagined history in which when Joseph Lyons dies in office, a new very extreme right PM is installed, Mr Hubbard, and the country soon becomes a maelstrom of repressive legislation and draconian police powers. The four feisty heroines find themselves fighting not just for the social and political and economic rights of women but for their very right to survive.

'Fine, men can do what they want. But first we should take them down a notch. Let them make decisions about their lives while they're feeling frightened and inadequate and powerless.'(pp 280–1)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jane Rawson grew up in Canberra and travelled via San Francisco and Melbourne to Tasmania, where she works as a writer for a conservation organisation. Her first novel, *A Wrong turn at the Office of Unmade Lists*, won the Small Press Network's Most Underrated Book Award and her second novel, *From the Wreck*, won the Aurealis Award and was longlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award. She is also the author of a non-fiction guide to surviving and living with climate change called *The Handbook surviving & living with climate change* and a novella, *Formaldehyde*, which won the 2015 Seizure Viva La Novella Prize. You can read her essays in *Living with the Anthropocene; Fire, Flood, Plague; and Reading like an Australian Writer*.

Reviews of the novel can be found here:

Harz, Annabel 'Book review A History of Dreams, Jane Rawson' *Artshub* 26 April 2022

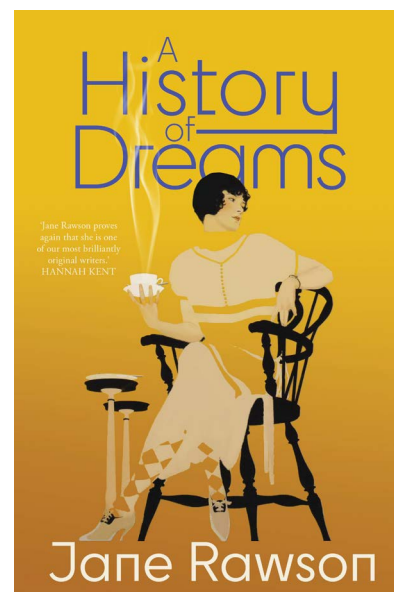
<https://www.artshub.com.au/news/reviews/book-review-a-history-of-dreams-jane-rawson-2546180/>

Wright, Fiona 'Sleepers Wake' *Sydney Review of Books* May 30, 2022

<https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/review/rawson-history-of-dreams/>

Whitmore, James 'Review: A History of Dreams by Jane Rawson' *The Library is Open* May 22, 2022

<https://jameswhitmorereviews.com/2022/05/22/review-a-history-of-dreams-by-jane-rawson/>



WRITING STYLE

Title and Blurb

The book's title and cover might lead your students to form some perceptions of what the novel is likely to be about.



Activity: Discuss the perceptions they formed before, and then how they changed after reading the novel. Then design a new cover and write a blurb for the book.

Structure

The novel is structured chronologically. Within that structure the three parts and chapters are strengthened by the suggestive opening and closing sentences in each chapter.

Beginning: 'Margaret still refused to say 'magic'. 'Audrey's trick', she called it, or 'the skill'. 'It's alright for you, Esther,' she said.' (p 65)

Closing: 'Oh well, he thought, at least I won't have to go to war.' (p 162)



Discussion Point: What other aspects of structure did you particularly notice?

Genre



Discussion Point: This is a work of alternate political history which traverses a wide range of issues including feminism, extreme right movements, racism, the rise of Nazism and Fascism leading to WWII, and alternative sexuality. It is also somewhat magical realist in its inclusion of witchcraft and the manufacture of dreams. How does alternate history and magical realism heighten our responses to social issues?



Discussion Point: Encourage students to compare the alternate history with the real history of the time.



Discussion Point: There are also somewhat satirical excerpts from Phyllis's 'girls' own adventure' novel in progress inserted (pp 48–52 and p 276) in which the four girls play the role of global heroines solving crimes, and acts of 'derring-do' such as flying aircraft and solving crimes. Write another episode in Phyllis's novel in a similarly exaggerated style.

Point of View and Narrative Perspective

This novel is written in third person, past tense.



Discussion Point: How might this narrative have differed if it had been written from one or more of the girls' first person perspectives?

Similes, Metaphors and Other Literary Devices

The novelist makes use of poetic literary devices, for example, the opening paragraph of the novel: 'She clutched her flute case the way a digger would have clutched his bayonet on the Somme.' (p 11)



Activity: Analyse this quote and then read the novel carefully and take note of and analyse other examples of such usage of devices.

Humour

Discussion Point: Discuss the various humorous strategies available to a writer such as satire, irony, sarcasm, exaggeration, bathos, and black humour. For example,

‘(she’d particularly enjoyed humiliating her cousin Malcolm at a family holiday in Victor Harbor, though Margaret said she could have come up with something more subtle than making him terrified of trousers).’ (p 123)



‘Oh great,’ Phyl said. ‘Is he going to introduce compulsory poetry readings? Will we have to gather each morning on the gum strewn plains to intone the heroes’ names – oh, mighty warriors of old, sons of Australia!’ She raised her milkshake as though it were a battle flag. ‘My womb awaits your seed!’ (p 139)

What aspects of the novel did you find particularly humorous? Identify quotes and analyse the types of humour employed in various parts of the novel.

Conflict and Suspense



Discussion Point: What forms of conflict feature in this novel?



Discussion Point: What contributes to suspense in this novel?

Newspaper Feature Writing



Activity:

Write a story as if reporting on the naked men’s protest rally (pp 145–6) in support of women’s rights which the women witness.

Characterisation

Main Characters: Esther and Margaret Beasley, sisters; Audrey Macquarie; Phyllis O’Donnell.

Minor Characters: Matthew Sands; Alfred Manning; Thomas Frost; Doug Harris; Phyllis’s mother, father and Uncle Pip; Audrey’s father, Ernest Macquarie, and her mother; Captain and Mrs Beasley the girls’ parents; Mr Samson, supervisor at Foy’s; Daphne Sands; Angus Kendrick, trainee replacement for Mr Samson; Walt Traub; Benjamin; Mr Hubbard; men at Poets’ club; Mr Neal; Malcolm, cousin to the Beasley girls; Nelly; Mr Melton; Harold Paulsen and Patrick Fraser; Lionel Prosser; Bart Mounmouth.



Discussion Point: Which of the main characters was most vividly drawn in your opinion?



Discussion Point: Which of the minor characters most intrigued you?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Feminism



Key Quote: ‘It was wonderful that she’d done so well at school, but now it was time to grow up. University was simply a waste of time for girls. He knew what was best for his little Maggie. That was his preference and he was sure she would abide by it.’ (p 31)



Discussion Point: Despite her parents’ encouragement of her educational achievements, Margaret finds herself working as an accountant and Audrey and Phyllis become shop girls at Foy’s, while Esther is finishing school, with the gloomy realisation that her dreams of becoming a composer may be only dreams. So they pour their disappointments into their Semaphore Supper Club meetings and later into their protests. Research the rights of women at this time and the repressive measures which limited their opportunities.



Discussion Point: ‘You can marry,’ Audrey said, ‘but if you do you have to renounce your powers. If you hand over your future to a man – if you give up the right to control your own life – you give up the right to be a witch. It’s up to you though.’ (p 59) Here the idea of a witch is used metaphorically via magical realism to explore how women give up their rights and their power over their own destiny when they marry. Discuss the way this issue is tackled via this literary technique.



Discussion Point: Read Lesbia Harford’s poems (preliminary page, and p 57) included in this novel in relation to this theme.



Discussion Point: It’s hard to believe that a woman would have to disguise herself as a man as Phyllis does in order to get a job (p 188). In other areas of work, though, women were in demand due to the shortage of men. Factory workers, for example, were much needed. Research women and work during WWII.



Discussion Point: The novel refers to women aviatrix, artists, writers and composers. Research the lives of famous twentieth century Australian women such as aviatrix Loes Bonney; composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks, artist Margaret Preston, and writer Dame Mary Gilmore.

Radical Protest and Social Activism



Key Quote: ‘But Audrey wouldn’t have it. She would be a shop girl, she said; had said it since they were young girls sat beside one another in their first year of high school, sharing a mixing bowl in domestic science class. University was bourgeois, and the only life for her was one of class war and revolution. Audrey might be glamorous, Margaret thought, but she was also very strange.’ (p 12)



Discussion Point:

How difficult is it to protest current mores and beliefs when such protest can lead to ostracism, lack of acceptance by peers, loss of opportunities, and even imprisonment?

Activity:



‘Capitalism is in its death throes.’ She turned back to Margaret. ‘I think if we combine our efforts we can improve the status of women in South Australia, and maybe all over the world. We can stop men from pushing us around so much, from trying to frighten us into submission, from stopping us working or earning as much as they do.’ (p 57) We know capitalism survived, but what changes did early suffragettes bring to the way capitalism was structured?



Activity: What is social activism? Discuss with your students.



Discussion Point: ‘Margaret wondered if it was time she got married and moved out of home. This witch business had turned out to be a good deal less impressive than Audrey had suggested. It had hardly changed her life and learning how to do it hadn’t made her feel any smarter, more powerful or more capable. Maybe she should stop. Give up on the supper club. Stop seeing so much of her sister. Forget about her feud with her father. Yes, the government was doing some concerning things, but it didn’t have to affect her. If she could just grow up and keep her nose clean, none of it had to matter.’ (pp 129–130) Think about a current social issue. How would you decide if it was your responsibility to do something about it? What are the implications of your decision?

The Rise of Fascism and Nazism in WWII



Key Quote: ‘The way Ruth talked about her family, you’d think they were all in terrible danger. She’d said something about her mother and father, stuck back in Germany; some cousins who had moved to Tanunda, but had to leave there and go to Sydney. ‘Too many bad people now in Tanunda,’ she’d said. ‘My parents, their brothers and sisters, even my grandparents; I worry I will never see any of them again. You should kiss your family today.’ Ruth was always telling her to kiss her family. Ruth was always saying Australia must join the war in Europe, must join the fight against Hitler.’ (p 37)



Discussion Point: Ruth’s outburst is not really understood by Phyllis or Audrey despite their revolutionary views, for they did not fully apprehend the dire situation in Europe. How difficult must it have been for immigrants to find themselves surrounded by such incomprehension of their motivation for leaving their countries?



Discussion Point: ‘Oh! Hubbard. Yes. The police minister, I think. He hates unions. Hates communists. He believes the working men should rise up against their oppressors, which he reckons are the Jews who run the banks and the Reds in their pockets. And he thinks women are the natural enemy of men: nagging wives, always stealing their pay and keeping them from the pub. Why?’ ‘Some of those poets want him to be the next prime minister.’ ‘Do they. Let’s hope they don’t get their wish: the man’s a fascist.’ (p 104) This character analysis also gives the reader an insight into the nature of fascism. Research its policies and also those of Nazi Germany during this era.



Discussion Point: ‘But there isn’t any war in Europe,’ Phyl would tell her. She couldn’t believe Ruth had left cosmopolitan, artistic Hamburg for the backwater of Adelaide.’ (p 38)

Phyllis’s view epitomises Australians’ lack of understanding about the dangers in Europe. Were Australians totally unaware of the growing threat in Europe or were there people here (like Hubbard) who were complicit in the growth of such movements?



Discussion Point: The title of ‘The Bureau of Public Enlightenment and the Dreams Division’ (p 201) is a satire of bureaucracy and the grandiose titles government departments bestow on their divisions. Discuss the erosion of public freedom depicted in this novel in relation to political events today.



Discussion Point: Nazism has had a history in Australia to the present day. Research and discuss that history.

White Australia Policy and Racism



Key Quote: ‘Have no fear, the white man’s on your track, Your disease and poverty will pass.’ (p 97)



Discussion Point: Matthew Sands’ poem ‘The Spear’ (p 97) epitomizes the racist beliefs of people who thought that the ‘noble savage’ should be civilized by the white population. There are many examples of this in our literature. Research and discuss the messages that such poems conveyed.



Discussion Point: In counterpoint, post-war voices challenged this and Oodgeroo’s (Kath Walker’s) classic poem *We are Going* was a searing analysis of how invasion had decimated her peoples. Research and discuss the messages that such poems conveyed.



Discussion Point:

Chinese people’s immigration to Australia was restricted after the introduction of the White Australia Policy in 1901, despite the contributions the Chinese had made to Australian society in the nineteenth century. Research this topic and discuss any references to it in the novel.



Discussion Point: ‘Now it wasn’t just the boats of refugees from Europe that were being targeted, but migrants who had been in the country for years or even decades.’ (p 137) How does this quote relate to Australia’s attitude to immigrants today?

Sexual Equality



Key Quote: ‘Seeing as no one, including you, believes a girl can marry another girl – yes, I’ll always be a spinster.’ (p 46)



Discussion Point: Phyllis’s confession to Audrey (pp 45–6) and later Walt’s admission to Esther regarding his homosexuality (p158) form another theme as both realise that they could be ostracized or persecuted for their sexuality. Walt is beaten in the street and Phyllis is belittled by the poets and by Matthew who calls her a deviant (p 101) simply because she wears trousers rather than skirts and prefers women to men. How much has changed for homosexuals in the intervening decades?



Discussion Point: ‘Imagine if they were prepared to do anything – anything – if it would make them worthy of women’s attention. I dance with those girls down there and see how much they hate themselves, how they can’t think anything good of themselves until a boy tells it to them. That’s what I want. I want men to feel like that.’ (p 278) This quote refers to the issue we would now describe as ‘negative body image’. How much have women been repressed by men’s requirements that they present a ‘perfect’ image to the world?



Discussion Point: ‘Thank you. Now, where was I. You’ve found your mark. Ask yourself, what does he want? What is he prepared to do to get it? What is he afraid of? What makes him melt inside? The more you understand his secret being, the easier your job will be.’ ‘The next step,’ said Phyl, levering herself up off the grass, ‘is manipulating that. Use his mind against him to get whatever it is you want.’ ‘That’s the imagination part of the spell. It’s storytelling.’ (p 70) Could this magical realistic description equally apply to women entrancing men?

Witchcraft



Key Quote: More than ten years of practising the skills she'd learned from her great-aunt meant Audrey was now an accomplished witch. The nightmares she made upended emotions, addled minds, planted paralysing fears, stoked terrifying desires. Like her aunt, who had used witchcraft to enflame the suffragist impulses of Adelaide's young women forty years ago, Audrey deployed dreams in the service of revolution.' (pp 25–6)



Discussion Point: What does witchcraft represent in this novel?



Discussion Point: Research the history of social attitudes to witchcraft and how that has related to women's persecution in various eras.

Australian Cultural Cringe



Key Quote: 'I'm talented, and I practise,' said Esther, 'and I'm still not going to play in the concert halls of Europe because one, I'm Australian and nobody likes us, and two, I'm a girl and nobody likes us.' (p 68)



Discussion Point: Research the topic of cultural cringe and how Australia has overcome that since World War Two. But are there still vestiges of this attitude, even today?



Discussion Point: How have our attitudes to Australian art and literature changed in the last seventy years?

Values



Discussion Point: This story is about living an honorable and authentic life. 'I think I'd want to be loved for who I am – because of my own value,' Margaret said. 'I'd always feel like I'd tricked them. And, anyway, isn't the best thing about being loved that someone thinks you're a worthwhile person?' (p 91) Discuss the values which imbue this novel.



KEY QUOTES

Choose one of the following quotes and discuss in relation to the themes which have been outlined above. Then write an essay on how this quote relates to the overall themes in this novel.

1. 'The worst part had been when they got home, and she'd told father about terrible Malcolm. 'Try to be kinder to your cousins,' father had said. 'It's unbecoming for a nice girl to be so spiteful.' (p 5)
2. 'Her school uniform managed, somehow, to look like the robes a Sultan's wife would have worn as she prepared herself for war against the infidel.' (p 9)
3. 'Some of the girls are held back by their fathers, I'm sorry to say,' Miss Foster said. 'They don't want them studying geography or mathematics. A waste of time, when they'll be marrying and having children as soon as they finish school. But your family doesn't feel that way?' (pp 23–4)
4. 'The officer was, of course, planning to fabricate evidence. It happened all the time and it had happened to Ernest at least twice since he became a union leader.' (p 25)
5. 'I hadn't thought much, before,' he said, sitting up straight and withdrawing his legs, 'about literature in Australia. About the importance of a truly Australian literature. You know how it was at school. Always England. Keats and Donne and all that. Shakespeare, of course.' 'Of course,' Margaret said, wishing the moment was over and that it might go on forever, giving her time to discover something intriguing, impressive within herself, something she could share and be proud of. 'But we're our own country.' He was still talking. 'In some ways, we're a better country. A new country, with new ideas. Fresh blood in our veins. All that ocean; all that bush. We're not stuck with the same old ways of doing things. It's been really something. I'm writing my own poetry. Are you writing, Margaret?' (p 87)
6. 'What kind of witch lives in Largs with her parents and goes to work in Foy's every day? Why aren't you a millionaire? Why aren't you running the country? I know you'd like to. You never shut up about how you'd do things differently if you were in charge. So I have to assume, ipso facto, that whatever kind of witch you are, it's not much chop.' She tipped the bottle into her mouth, but it was still empty so she set it back down. 'You do look like a witch though,' she said. 'You have very witchy hair. I like it.' She winked, but Audrey ignored her. 'Why am I not running the country?' Audrey said. 'Phyl! I should be running the country!' 'Yes, you should.' 'Phyl!' She grasped her friend's sleeve. 'Let's start a revolution!' (pp 39–40)
7. 'What free literary spirits!' Phyl laughed. Margaret couldn't help but smile. These men did seem a little ridiculous, most of them dressed in shabby suits and looking as though they'd come from jobs as insurance agents or Manchester salesmen. Where were the berets? The silk cravats? The claret and TS Eliot and Robert Graves? Oh well, it was only Adelaide: what did she expect.' (pp 93–4)
8. 'But Phyl, I don't think they are. Did you hear them? Did you hear what they were saying about aliens? About blood and soil?' 'Just everyday, average Australian men.' Phyl thought about the way Matt had looked at her. She felt a shiver of fear and brushed it off. 'Nothing I haven't heard a thousand times at the pub.' 'I don't know,' she said. 'I have a feeling about them. About him. About all of it. It feels dangerous.' (p 102)
9. 'I'll say. He's going to get me a job in the ministry, the new one. Order and Borders. They need more men, now that we're clamping down on undesirables and socialist agitators. Not a day too soon, if you ask me. The country's filling up with shifty refugees and those union thugs are channelling them in and squirrelling them away.' (p 127)
10. Lyons dies in office, and Hubbard is appointed as new PM (pp 136–7). 'As the Minister first for Police and then for Order and Borders, Hubbard had always been clear about his ambitions for himself and for the strong, white men of Australia. It had taken him only a matter of weeks to set those ambitions in motion, whatever he said about his leadership being temporary.' (p 138)
11. 'She forgot Phyllis entirely, tucked Phyl away for safe keeping, and from then on she strode into the world as Phillip O'Donnell, a man with mates but no friends, a man who didn't know grief, a man without fear.' (p 188)
12. 'Can't we have both? Joy and vengeance?' Margaret said, and stroked the cat's head. She sighed. 'Oh, I don't know how to be a good person in this world.' (p 280)

FURTHER READING

FICTION

Related Texts:

- Booker, Camille *What If You Fly?* Hawkeye Publishing, 2021.
Knox, Elizabeth *Dreamhunter* HarperCollins, 2011.
Lappan, R. D. *Along Came the Sky*. University of Queensland Press, 1997.

Alternate History:

- Westerfeld, Scott *Leviathan* (1) Simon & Schuster, 2009.
Westerfeld, Scott *Behemoth* (Leviathan 2) Simon Pulse, 2010.
Westerfeld, Scott *Goliath* (Leviathan 3) Simon & Schuster, 2011.

See also:

- 'Alternate History Books' *Goodreads*
<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/alternate-history>
'Booklist: YA Alternate History' *The Hub*
<https://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/2016/06/28/booklist-ya-alternate-history/>

NON-FICTION

- Alexander, Kristen. *Taking Flight: Lores Bonney's Extraordinary Flying Career*. Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2016
Bird, David S. *Nazi Dreamtime: Australian Enthusiasts for Hitler's Germany* Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012.
Gwynn-Jones, Terry. *Pioneer Aviator: The Remarkable Life of Lores Bonney*. University of Queensland Press, 1988.
Rawson, Anne *We Were Going to be Different: the story of the Kosmopolitan Klub and the Girls* Under the Counter Publishing, 1998.
Wainwright, Robert *Enid: Scandalous Life of a Glamorous Australian Who Dazzled the World* Allen & Unwin, 2020.

See also:

- 'Telling her Story: 40 Books About Women Heroes of WWII' *A Mighty Girl*
<https://www.amightygirl.com/blog?p=24501>

INTERNET RESOURCES FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

- Alexander, Kristin and Sargent, Josephine 'Lores Bonney: the forgotten aviatrix' *Australian Geographic* March 6, 2017
<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2017/03/lores-bonney-the-forgotten-aviatrix/>
'Amelia Earhart' *Britannica*
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Amelia-Earhart>
'Australia: Social Movements' *Britannica*
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Australia/Social-movements>
'Australian Women and the Second World War: Great Debates' *ANZAC Portal DVA*
<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/australian-women-and-second-world-war-great-debates>

'Australia's Response to the plight of European Jewry' *The Holocaust*
<https://www.holocaust.com.au/the-facts/australias-response-to-the-plight-of-european-jewry/>

'Feminism' *SA History Hub* <https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/subjects/feminism>

Robinson, Suzanne 'Glanville-Hicks, Peggy Winsome (1912–1990)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 17, 2007 <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/glanvillehicks-peggy-winsome-12545>

Kurmelovs, Royce 'Happy Birthday, Hitler: how Australia's Nazis got away with the 'whole rotten show'' *ABC News* 5 February 2022
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/feb/05/happy-birthday-hitler-how-australias-nazis-got-away-with-the-whole-rotten-show>

Lappan, R.D. 'Bonney, Maude Rose (Lores) (1897–1994)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 19, 2021
<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bonney-maude-rose-lores-27042>

'List of Australian Women Composers' *Wikipedia*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Australian_women_composers

'Peace Movements 1900 to 1960' written by Hilary Summy, The University of Queensland *The Encyclopedia of Women & Leadership in Twentieth Century Australia*
<https://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0634b.htm>

Phillips, A.A. 'The Cultural Cringe' published in *Meanjin* Volume IX, Number 4, 1950 *The University of Melbourne Archives and Special Collections*
<https://library.unimelb.edu.au/asc/whats-on/exhibitions/meanjin-80th/australian-nationalism-and-the-cultural-tinge>

Rose, Ann 'Bill Moyer's Movement Action Plan' *The Commons: Social Change Library*
https://commonslibrary.org/resource-bill-moyers-movement-action-plan/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhdyRz7_S_AIVkAsrCh0UVQRXEAMYAiAAEgKwvD_BwE

Seivl, Isobel 'Preston, Margaret Rose (1875–1963)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 11, 1998
<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/preston-margaret-rose-8106>

'Social Movements in South Australia' *Government of South Australia*
https://coduploads.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/HTSA_learn@_social_movements_in_south_australia_final.pdf

'The Holocaust and survivors' stories: Australian Jewish Community and Culture' *State Library of New South Wales*
<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/australian-jewish-community-and-culture/holocaust-and-survivors-stories>

Harris-Hogan, Shandon 'Violent Extremism in Australia: An Overview' *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* No 491. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, 7 March 2017. <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi491>

Virtual War Memorial Australia: Schools Program: https://vwma.org.au/explore/schools?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhdyRz7_S_AIVkAsrCh0UVQRXEAMYASAAEgIfA_D_BwE

Watson, Joey 'A Brief history of Nazism in Australia' *ABC News* 17 January 2019
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-01-17/a-history-of-nazis-and-the-far-right-in-australia/10713514>

'What is Activism?' *Activist Handbook*
https://www.activisthandbook.org/en/theory/what-is-activism?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhdyRz7_S_AIVkAsrCh0UVQRXEAAAYASAAEgIRFPD_BwE

'White Australia Policy' *National Museum Australia*
<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/white-australia-policy>

Wilde, W.H. 'Gilmore, Dame Mary Jean (1865–1962)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 9, 1983
<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gilmore-dame-mary-jean-6391>

'Women's suffrage' *National Museum Australia*

<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/womens-suffrage>

'WWII & Australia: Hitler's Rise to Power Year 10 History' *Norwood Secondary College*

<https://library.norwood.vic.edu.au/c.php?g=943798&p=6893115His>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. She is President of IBBY Australia and Deputy-Chair of the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

WORKSHEETS

WORKSHEET – COMPREHENSION

Ask students to answer the following ten questions:

1. *Margaret wants to be a geographer. What other skill does she have?*
2. *Esther appears in Phyllis's story as not only a composer but also as an...?*
3. *What destroys Phyllis's childhood friendship with Doug Harris?*
4. *What does the chapter heading 'The Consolation of English Fern' refer to?*
5. *Who taught Audrey her witching skills?*
6. *Who is The Flying Ocelot?*
7. *When he is called up, where is Walt sent to?*
8. *Where is the novel set?*
9. *How do the girls and Walt celebrate after Matthew Sands resigns from his role as Prime Ministerial Adviser and Audrey is released?*
10. *What is Esther's baby's name and who is it in honour of?*

Answers: 1. Painting. 2. Aviatrix. 3. His mother has asked him not to spend so much time with Phyllis, an instruction he repeats to Phyllis, prompting an angry response. 4. Audrey is serving a man who asks for a bottle of the French perfume Shalimar to be gift-wrapped. He also selects a bottle of English Fern to be wrapped. Phyllis surmises that the first is for his mistress and the second for his wife. (p 36) 5. Her great-aunt Delia. 6. Esther's name in the story that Phyllis is writing. 7. China. 8. Adelaide, SA. 9. They have a Summer Solstice Party. 10. Amelia in honour of world famous aviatrix Amelia Earhart.

WORKSHEET – FURTHER ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS

Read some of Jane Rawson's other works. Investigate information about, and reviews of her work online.

What other alternate history books have you read? [Use the Further Reading list above as a start in compiling a reading list.]

How would you describe Audrey's character?

Research the history of Nazism in Australia.

Encourage creative responses to the topics raised in this novel, eg. write a poem as if by Phyllis describing her feelings of isolation; create a poster protesting against the repression of women; create a comic panel version of one of the incidents in the novel, eg Walt's beating at the hands of anti-homosexual thugs; create a book trailer promoting this novel.

What was the most shocking or surprising detail in this narrative?

'It might seem a paradox he has told us that a war undertaken in the name of liberty and right should require the surrender for the time being of so many of the dearly valued liberties and rights.' (p 161) Consider this statement and write a reasoned essay about it.

How fair would it be to have the power to create dreams and change people's attitudes? What ethical issues might arise had you such a power?

What might Esther's future hold as a single mother, albeit one with a number of supportive friends?

What is the major theme in this narrative? Write an analysis of the theme in this work, using quotes to support your arguments.