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Notes by: Concetta Gotlieb / Jacqui Barton

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## When the War is Over

By Jackie French

Illustrated by Anne Spudvilas

*Now the war is over  
And they say the world is free,  
Though somewhere guns are snarling,  
You've come back to me.*

From two of Australia's most highly regarded children's book creators, Jackie French and Anne Spudvilas, comes a powerful and moving book: not about war, but about its endings: the fragility of peace and the enduring strength of love.

### Curriculum Summary

The Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) curriculum through ACHASSK137, ACHASSI127

HSIE Stages 3-4 ACHASSI157, ACHASSI100

### Activities

These notes have been created to support teachers and students in exploring how this book informs readers and effectively convey the experience of war. The learning is organised by a series of contributing questions and activities.

### General Capabilities

Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking

Notes Suitable For Years 3-10

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Year 3-6 Diverse communities and places and the contribution people make.

Year 7- 10 The modern world and Australia.

### BOOK SUMMARY

From one of Australia's most-loved and respected children's authors comes a book about homecomings, and those who have been waiting for their loved ones to return from war.

This is a book about the joy of reunion and the enduring power of love.

Jackie French and Anne Spudvilas have created a powerful and moving book – not about war, but about its endings and the fragility of peace.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jackie French AM is an award-winning writer, wombat negotiator, the 2014–2015 Australian Children's Laureate and the 2015 Senior Australian of the Year. In 2016 Jackie became a Member of the Order of Australia for her contribution to children's literature and her advocacy for youth literacy. She is regarded as one of Australia's most popular children's authors and writes across all genres — from picture books, history, fantasy, ecology and sci-fi to her much-loved historical fiction for a variety of age groups. 'Share a Story' was the primary philosophy behind Jackie's two-year term as Laureate. [jackiefrench.com](http://jackiefrench.com)

## AUTHOR INSPIRATION

I was born in the aftermath of World War Two where my father, uncle and grandfathers served, my mother and grandmothers had taken on major roles that had been done by men in the armed services and where my great-uncles died during or in the aftermath of prison camps. I grew up with people who were damaged by war, both mentally and physically, be they neighbours, fathers of friends, as well as those who had (finally) been allowed to come to Australia after many years in refugee camps.

The war was over and yet it was still so much a part of our lives. My grandfather explained to me, even as a young child, that the First World War he had served in had led, almost inevitably, to the Second World War. While at school we practised atomic bomb drill as part of the 'Cold War' that followed World War Two.

How could the war really be over?

Australian troops still regularly left our shores for war after war, even if that affected mostly only their families. But then the Vietnam War tore families apart with different views on conscription, our role in the war and foreign alliances. The Solomons, Timor-Leste, Iraq, Afghanistan and so many other conflicts included.

But

'Peace is tissue blossom,  
A whisper on the wind,  
It's leaves of gold and shadow,  
Catch just one, you win.'

War – and violence – are never a permanent solution. They too often lead to even more conflict. But armed force can act as a band-aid. Something that doesn't create a permanent solution, but that holds things together to give the countries time for negotiations, so that peace and social change can be achieved, or at least the situation made a little better. And for those who fought, and for those who waited, there can be love and reunion.

'Though somewhere guns are snarling

You've come back to me.'

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Anne Spudvilas is a multi-award-winning illustrator of children's books and an established portrait painter and printmaker. Her first picture book, *The Race* by Christobel Mattingley, was awarded the Crichton Award for Illustration and was a CBCA Honour Book. Her bestselling books include *The Peasant Prince* by Li Cunxin, which won the NSW and Queensland Premiers' Awards in 2008 and *Jenny Angel* by Margaret Wild which was CBCA Picture Book of the Year in 2000. Anne's move to the Murray River has inspired her latest book, an illustrated retelling of the classic ballet story *Swan Lake*. Anne lives in Wentworth, where the Murray and Darling rivers meet, surrounded by birds and river red gums.

## ILLUSTRATOR NOTES

My job is to look at the author's text, and that's maybe one, two A4 pages. Depending on the subject and feeling of the story, I will choose the medium that I think suits that book. So a book about a toddler's day (*Baby Days* by Ian Bone) might be done in bright, fresh oil paints. I did a very dark, disturbing book about a boy in a dangerous city (*Woolvs in the Sitee* by Margaret Wild) that I illustrated in black charcoal drawings. The medium makes a big difference to the finished book. The illustrations are telling a large part of the story and can show the reader all kinds of things that aren't in the written words.

Jackie French's text for *When the War is Over* was the briefest I've ever worked on and that's great for me as an illustrator as it gives me huge scope to come up with all kinds of ideas.

Jackie has put a lot of emotion and strong messages into brief poems about a huge subject - people's separation and coming back together during wartime. It covers a long period of time from WW1 to the present, so I've used a range of mediums to represent the different periods.

For the earlier period of WW1, a printmaking method called monoprint was used because its soft almost black and white result suggests the colour of old photographs, particularly in the first main image. I have added watercolour after the image has been created.

An important element of the illustrations is the use of handwritten letters and old photographs in the design. I borrowed real letters written in WWII from a friend and

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photographed them to use with hand-painted illustrations. The photograph of soldiers reading their mail on the title page and inside the book is mine, the soldier on the left is my father Donald Searle who served in that war. The communication between service men and women and their families is always such an important thing for those at home and away. In the picture with hands holding, the photos on the table also include two of my mother in WWII.

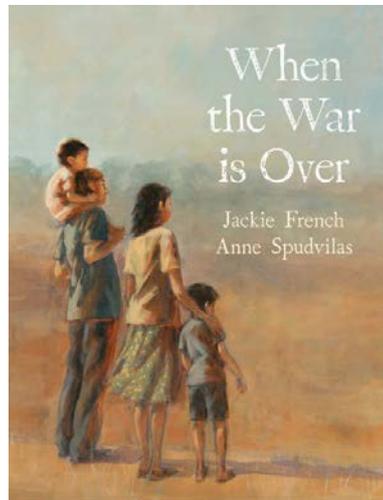
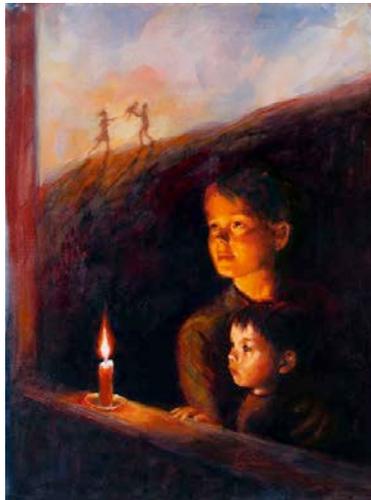
In this book I've used a mix of printmaking, oil paints on canvas and watercolour. And on the 'peace' page the background is eco-dyed. The paper has had eucalyptus leaves placed on it, then it was wrapped around poly pipe, bound up and boiled in river water from the Murray River where I live. This dyes the paper with the image of the leaves in beautifully subtle colours.

Artwork for *When the War is Over* also involved a lot of digital layering, so during a residency at Varuna Writers House in the Blue Mountains I spent two weeks using Photoshop to combine my paintings with the photographed letters and map, and sometimes two pieces of artwork layered together – e.g. the soft charcoal dove over the eco-dyed leaf background.

#### THE COVER

Originally, I had done a different illustration specifically for the cover. It depicted a young wife and mother with her child looking out the window into the distance, waiting for their husband/father to return from war with an uplifting image in the background of the family reuniting. I like this image, but the publisher decided to use part of the illustration of a family from the last spread of the book. When I saw the finished design, I agree that it has a lighter more positive feel and I really like it.

The family in the image is my son Rene (who also modelled for *The Race* in 1996 and *Woolvs in the Sitee* in 2006) and his family. Rene has a Japanese wife Sayaka, and his children Cal and Mara are Australian/Japanese, which means they represent Australia today with its strong multicultural population. They were photographed on pink sand dunes near where I live in Wentworth on the Murray/Darling junction during a holiday here last year. The large sweep of flat open country and far horizon suggest the possibilities and hope for a bright future. The finished painting is oil paint on canvas.



## TEACHING NOTES

This book can be integrated into the Australia Curriculum in at various levels:

- Year 3-6 Diverse communities and places and the contribution people make.
- Year 7- 10 The modern world and Australia.
- *Pre-reading activity:* Ask students to individually write down three words that describe what they think the book is about. Use the student reflections to springboard into further discussion about expected characters, events and setting of the book. What clues does the front cover image give us to the stories within?
- *Through the eyes of the illustrator:* Go through the book looking at the illustrations. Who has the illustrator depicted? What do we know about them from the artwork? Who is absent or out of focus in the pictures? Before reading the text ask students to choose an image and write a caption for the page.
- *Perspectives through poetry:* Read the poems in the book. Who is the protagonist? What do the protagonists of each poem have in common? Ask students to identify similar words and ideas that are conveyed in each poem e.g. many of the characters 'cry' or discuss their loved one 'coming back'. What is the impact of having many similar stories told through compact powerful poems?

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- *Throughout time:* Create a timeline using a digital timeline or PPT template, record the date and the historical event. Research how Australia was involved in each of the wars described. What is the role of service people in helping in peace time and war.
- *Out of the frame:* Consider who is left out of the picture by the illustrator. Why do you think that decision was made? Did the illustrator perhaps feel the soldiers were less important than the people left behind? Compare the way that war is represented in these pictures compared with those where the soldier is in the frame. You can see example of artwork depicting soldiers at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) website  
<https://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/exhibitions/upfront/edu.pdf>
- *Faces framed by war:* In each of the illustrations the illustrator uses various techniques to tell us the story of the families and loved ones left behind in wartime. Ask students to choose a favourite illustration from the book and describe the techniques used by the artist. For example, the use of light to focus attention on faces intense with emotion, or the light brushstrokes of bounding joyful dogs. Ask students to consider experiences where someone they loved was away for a long time and practice the techniques used by the artist to recreate their feelings at the time.
- *Gone but not forgotten:* Ask students to write a poem to those out of the frame but providing a service to society. What types of services do they contribute? Has the role of the serviceman changed over time? How does society view their contribution?
- *Telling stories:* Ask students to research how their family has been affected by war. Remind students that variety of roles that service people play in our community – uncles or aunts who help keep the peace in Afghanistan, great-grandfathers who were part of the Japanese Occupation, parents who help defend our country in modern wars. Discuss why it is important to remember these stories. More resources can be found on the AWM website  
<https://www.awm.gov.au/index.php/learn/schools/resources/a-very-special-day/why-we-tell-stories>
- *When the war is over- ANZAC Day:* Discuss how we remember all those who sadly didn't return from war or who suffered life-changing injuries. Visit the AWM website to learn more about how ANZAC Day recognises the contribution of all servicemen and women who lost their lives in all the military and peacekeeping operations in which Australia has been involved.

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- *Healing after war:* In pairs ask students to identify the poems that refer to the challenges that families faced after the servicemen and women returned home. How did war affect those who fought? What events do we have now to help those with psychological and physical injuries recover? Visit the Invictus Games website and review some of the athlete stories and discuss how sport and community can help with healing. <https://www.invictusgames2018.org/>
- *Who lived here first and how do we know? • How has our community changed? What features have been lost and what features have been retained? • What is the nature of the contribution made by different groups and individuals in the community? • How and why do people choose to remember significant events of the past?*

### HSIE Activities

#### Defining imagery

Ask students whether they think that 'images', such as the illustrations or drawings in this book created by Anne Spudvilas, have worked as 'imagery'.

Explain how these illustrations project a broader picture beyond the use of simple photographs?

Students may find this hard to answer, however ask them to write a short explanation in their books. Accompanied by their definition of written imagery.

ACELY1708 ACHASSI095 ACHASSI123

#### Exploring written and visual imagery

Select a double page spread from *When the War is Over* and use the table below to help you identify, analyse and explain the literary devices and visual formats used to build written and visual imagery in the text. After you have used the tables to help you analyse the devices and formats used, answer the questions below to help you explain how they work together to develop imagery in the text.

**Written Imagery**

Visual Formats	Example from the Book	How and why does this form of image help the viewer to create an image
Alliteration		
Metaphor		
Personification		
Simile		
Language that appeals to the senses (Which senses are being appealed to? For example, sight, sound, touch, smell, taste?)		
Painted illustrations		
Painted Backgrounds		
other		

Which mental images are generated by the written text?

How do the illustrations explain what is happening?

How do the illustrations encourage the viewer to respond to the page?

What is the overall message that the text and illustration on this page communicate to you?

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