

## These notes are for:

- Secondary
- Years 8-12
- 13+ years

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- History
- Geography

## Example of:

- Print text
- Young adult fiction
- Historical fiction
- Mystery and suspense

## Experience of:

- History
- WWII
- War
- Family
- Time and change
- People and places

## Values addressed:

- Freedom
- Respect
- Honesty & trust
- Understanding & tolerance

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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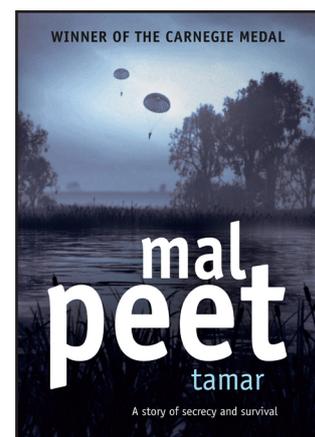
"*Tamar* is intensely depicted, a lived in past, and the best world World War II novel I have read in a very long time. Highly recommended."

– *The Sunday Age*

## Tamar

### Tamar (pbk)

By Mal Peet  
 ISBN: 9781406303940  
 ARRP: \$16.95  
 NZRRP: \$19.99  
 No. of Pages: 432  
 March 2006



## Outline:

*Tamar* is a beautifully written, powerful novel for older readers about love, jealousy, secrecy and tragedy. This gripping story alternates between resistance fighters in Nazi-occupied Holland during the Second World War and an unfolding family legacy in peacetime England fifty years later. There is much to be explored in the themes, issues and structure of this complex narrative, either as a whole class or through guided group reading. The twist at the end is particularly dramatic and unexpected, compelling the reader to rapidly rethink their understanding of the book. *Tamar* provides a vivid portrayal of wartime Holland and links well with history studies of World War II. Other cross-curricular links are possible in the study of rivers. Here the river Tamar in the west of England is traced from sea to source. Children might also make maps tracing the physical journeys made by the two Tamar characters, or 'map' the narrative strands.

## Author Information – Mal Peet:

**Mal Peet** is the author of the acclaimed young adult novels, *Tamar*, winner of the 2005 Carnegie Medal, *Keeper* which won the 2004 Branford Boase Award and the Bronze Nestlé Smarties Book Award and *The Penalty* and *Exposure*, its sequels. An author and illustrator, Peet has produced over 80 books for young children, most of them in collaboration with his wife, Elspeth Graham.

"Mal Peet takes you to new and unexpected places, where every scene counts and every word matters." *The Centre for Youth Literature*



## How to use these notes:

These notes provide a variety of discussion questions that can be used to engage students with the novel *Tamar*. Please select accordingly.

## Tamar – Lesson Plan

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### Teaching sequence 10 sessions

#### Learning aims:

- To read and discuss a book that is set in a different historical context
- To explore the experience of living in wartime
- To develop a deeper understanding of the lives of people in the resistance
- To respond to the issues and themes in the novel through talk, writing and drama
- To make links to and extend learning in History and Geography
- To explore and analyse the language and structure of the novel

#### Resources:

- Multiple copies of *Tamar* for guided reading
- Information on and images of occupied Holland (books, maps and web-based sources). Maps of rivers in south-west England
- Relevant artefacts: e.g. codes, photographs, newsreel footage, newspaper reports
- Paper, card and coloured pens for making journals

Before working on this book with the class, collect as much information as you can find about World War II and occupied Holland. Make a preliminary display that pupils will be able to browse and talk about together. You might, for example, include a variety of information books, posters and maps. This display can be added to as the work progresses.

### Session 1. Responding to illustration and thinking about connections

Cover illustration

pp. 9-39

Present the cover illustration on the IWB or use response sheets below.

In small groups of 2-4, students can be invited to respond to the image. They can talk about their impressions and associations, what they are reminded of and links to similar images. What are their predictions about the book, the setting and time it takes place? Any questions they have can be recorded on the group sheet. Ask them to share these with the whole group. Then, using the response sheet provided, students can write down their individual 'reading' of the cover illustration as a first page of their book journal for *Tamar*. Then read aloud the first four chapters and discuss in what ways the book relates to their first impression from looking at the cover. Share any responses, puzzles, questions.

### Session 2. Drawing and annotating

pp. 40- 45

Explain to the class that they will be asked to draw or map the setting of the next chapter, so will need to pay particular attention to the descriptions given of the Maarten's place, Sanctuary Farm. Read aloud from chapter 5 (pp. 40- 41) up to "rolled in to a halt" near the bottom of p. 41. Give out drawing paper, coloured pens and pencils and copies of the text (one between two) for individuals to use to draw or map the scene. They can annotate their pictures with short quotes from the text, add labels and a title. This can be finished for homework and added to their reading journals. Read aloud the rest of the chapter and on to p. 51.

## Tamar – Lesson Plan

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### Session 3. Role play and letter writing

Summarise pp. 45-94

Read aloud p. 94 "The evening died gently..." to p. 97 "...That's right".

This episode describes an incident where the innocent are snared by horrors of war. If Oma could speak, what would she say about her husband's death to his killer? What would the killer reply? Divide students into pairs where they each take the role of Oma or a young Nazi soldier meeting years later, after the war has ended. What would they say to each other? As a class, share some of the conversations and points made and discuss how they felt about the process. What was difficult? Were there any surprises? What did they learn? Writing in role, individuals can compose letters to the other, reflecting on the event described in the book and its aftermath. Read on to p. 99.

### Session 4. Character portrait

Read p. 103-128

As you read aloud, the class can note down words, phrases and impressions that build a picture of Tamar's grandfather, 'William Hyde'. What picture do they have of him from the book; reading the lines and between the lines? What else would they like to know? Do they have any ideas of why he may have committed suicide? After small group and whole class discussions using their notes, students can write a character portrait to include in their journal. Working with writing partners, they can share and constructively respond to each other's work. Each pair can then join to make a group of four to share and read their work aloud.

### Session 5. Diary entry

Summarise pp. 131-159

Read aloud pp. 160-175 to "...watching her with expressionless faces."

This section describes the effects of the 'Hunger Winter', the result of a deliberate Nazi policy to depopulate and cripple the Netherlands through starvation. Students can reflect on some of the vivid and tragic details related in the book and add examples from other sources. They can then write a diary entry recording what it was like to live during that period of extreme hardship. These can be read aloud and shared.

### Sessions 6 & 7. Poetry writing

Summarise pp. 160-232

Photocopy pp. 233-239 (one between two)

In the next scene Dart comes up sharply against both his own fear and undiluted Nazi prejudice. Organise the class into pairs to read from p. 233 to the end of the chapter themselves, taking turns. Pair less experienced students with those who can support them or do most of the reading. When they have completed the reading students can regroup in fours to discuss their responses to this chapter, recording them as a group. In a feedback session, ask groups how they felt reading the description. What did they learn about Nazi attitudes and practices from this episode? What other examples can they share of the prejudice, fear and injustice it engenders? Working in pairs, students can compose poems based on the incident, from the point of view of any character either witnessing or involved in it. They can then regroup in fours to read their drafts and share constructive responses. After redrafting their poems they can be invited to perform them to the class.

### Session 8. Mapping conflict

Summarise pp. 240-293

Photocopy pp. 293-311

In pairs ask the class to read pp. 293-298 to "Oh my God".

Why is this section significant? What do they notice about the two men and their relationship? Using a sheet of paper, pairs can draw a star chart (see example at the end of these notes) for each character to map their individual situations, emotions, roles and causes of conflict. Then ask the pairs to read pp.298-311. Discuss responses.

Homework: Read pp. 399-430

## Tamar – Lesson Plan

### Session 9. Letter

Dart/Ernst/William Hyde left a box of artefacts as clues for Tamar to piece together his life. What might he have written in a letter to his 'granddaughter' and what could she have written in reply to him? Working in pairs, as either Tamar or William Hyde, the class can role-play a conversation between the two characters. How would William explain or justify his actions? How would Tamar respond and what questions would she need to ask? Following the role-play, each student can write a letter in role to the other character, expressing and explaining their feelings and responses. Invite the class to read aloud these letters and discuss their responses as a whole group.

### Session 10. Book jacket blurb

Finish the unit of work by asking the class to share their 'memorable' moments and impressions of the book. Were there any puzzles or questions left unanswered? Invite them to design a book jacket for *Tamar* and write a blurb to encourage others to read it. Alternatively individuals could write a review of *Tamar*. Discuss the difference between a review and a cover blurb by sharing and discussing examples. These can be added to the reading journals which can be displayed and shared.

### Example for mapping conflict (Session 8)

