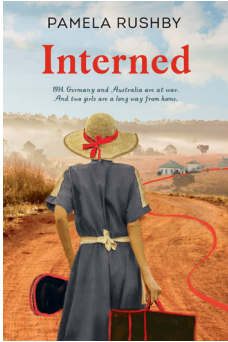




Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Interned

by Pamela Rushby
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

It's 1914. Gretta lives a privileged life in Singapore, the daughter of a businessman; Tilly lives a modest life in Brisbane, the daughter of a baker. When war breaks out and both countries turn on their families for being German, the two girls find themselves taken from their homes, interned at a camp in rural New South Wales. Far away from everything they have ever known, Gretta and Tilly are forced to face prejudice, overcome adversity and to make their own community.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Pamela Rushby is the author of over 200 books for children and young adults, as well as children's TV scripts, documentaries, short stories and freelance journalism. Pam has been an advertising copywriter, pre-school teacher, and producer of educational television, audio and multimedia. She has won several awards, including the NSW Premier's Ethel Turner Prize, five CBCA Notable Books – and a bag of gold coins at a film festival in Iran! Pam believes the strangest, most riveting, heart-breaking, laugh-out-loud stories aren't fiction. They're real. They come from history. And she loves tripping over unusual incidents from history – and then writing about them.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Primary years 4-6,
- Secondary years 7-8
- Ages 9-13

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Historical Fiction

Themes/Ideas:

- Family
- Resilience
- Friendship
- Community



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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Before Reading

Based on the cover and title, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answer when you've completed the book. Was your answer correct?

What does the word 'interned' mean to you? As a class, discuss what you may already know about Australian internment camps, and what you think the experience of being in one of the camps might have been like. Revisit this discussion after reading *Interned*, and consider how the realities may have been similar or different to your expectations.

Exploring the Text

What are some of the themes in this novel? As a class or in small groups identify and list the themes. Individually write a statement of belief about each theme.

Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? If you were asked to choose an alternative title for the book, what would it be? Remember, a good title should capture the audience's attention and give them some idea of what the book is about.

While *Interned* is set during an actual historical event, it is primarily a work of fiction. Identify the elements of the text which can be viewed as historically accurate and those where the author has used creative licence to invent or embellish. How reliable do you think this novel is in presenting a realistic portrait of life in an Australian internment camp?

While Bornabba is a fictional town, there were real internment camps in Australia. Read the author's note at the back of the book, and do your own research on Australian internment camps (a good place to start is <https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/immigration-and-citizenship/wartime-internment-camps-australia>). Did you learn anything about life in Australian interment, from the book or through your research, that surprised you?

"But no. We were not prisoners, not prisoners of war, we were told, because we were not soldiers. Instead, we were enemy aliens. We had not been imprisoned, we had been interned. Which was apparently a different thing," (page 35*). Using your knowledge of what it was like to live in an internment camp, do you think being 'interned' is the same thing as being 'imprisoned'? Why or why not?

How does the experience of being interned shape and define Gretta and Tilly's identities and sense of self? How do you think Tilly and Gretta's lives may have been different if they were never interned?

In small groups, choose either Tilly or Gretta and explain how she demonstrates the following character traits in the novel:

- Resourcefulness
- Courage
- Persistence
- Compassion
- Resilience

"It took two weeks – just two weeks – to turn us from an ordinary, respectable Australian family into something called "enemy aliens," (page 9). What does the term 'enemy alien' mean? What are some of the moments in the novel when people discriminate against the girls and their families due to their heritage?

Have a class discussion on traditional family roles, including the characteristics of each role and what relationship you would expect each role to have with the other. Consider questions such as:

- What are the responsibilities of a parent?
- How would you expect a parent to behave around their child when they're upset?
- What role does trust play in a family?

How does this apply to both Gretta and Tilly's families in *Interned*? You could consider how the families get by day-to-day without their paternal figures, or the responsibilities both girls have to face in their families as a result of their internment.

Interned is set in rural Australia. Find examples of language in the text (it could be particular phrases of dialogue, descriptions of landscape, etc.) that you think help the book feel distinctly Australian. Why do you think it does this? How would the book feel different if it were set in another country?

The story is told from both Gretta and Tilly's first-person perspectives. How does this affect you as a reader? Did you prefer reading one girl's voice and story over the other? Why or why not? How would the novel be different if it were told through third person narration?

"Of all the horrible things that had happened – forced to leave our home, being locked up in that terrible camp in Singapore, being sent on that even more terrible ship to come to this desolate, devastated, end-of-the world place – this was the worst, absolutely the worst. My violin was gone. And no one seemed to recognise how terrible this was. No one seemed to care," (page 83). Why do you think the violin was so important to Gretta? What might it have symbolised to her?



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Leaving their homes is deeply upsetting for Gretta, Tilly, and their families. In what ways do the girls grieve the loss of their former lives? How do the girls experience the loss differently to each-other? Is there a right or wrong way to process this kind of grief?

How important is family in helping Tilly and Gretta get by in Bornabba? To what degree is each girl motivated by her desire to protect her family? What are the other things that give Tilly and Gretta strength? Some ideas to consider include music, their friendship with each-other, and their connections to the community.

In what ways do the Bornabba internees come together in the years they're living there? Discuss the different ways they create and cultivate a community, and how this theme is crucial to the events of *Interned*.

Some say while war and adversity sometimes brings out exceptional heroism and strength, it also reveals the ugly and ignoble side of human nature. Do you agree? As a class, discuss how both positive and negative sides of human nature are demonstrated through the characters and how they're treated in *Interned*, and write a short essay about which side you think we can see clearest in the novel, using examples to support your theory.

"I knew she hadn't understood all my words, but the tone of my voice and the way I'd spat the words at her were clear enough," (page 135). When Gretta and Tilly first meet, they don't get along and they don't share a language. How do they eventually get past their language barrier? What are some ways to communicate without words?

"We hadn't got off to a good start, that girl next door and me, and now every time I saw her coming and going, she threw me a glare that could have killed butterflies and turned her back. And, I had to admit, I did the same to her. Loud, bossy, horrible German girl! Pa thought she might be a friend for me, but that was one thing that was never going to happen," (pages 142-143). How do their views of each-other change through the novel? How does their friendship and connection end up changing both Gretta and Tilly's lives for the better?

At several points in the novel, the characters are desperate for news of the war and feel they don't know what's going on elsewhere in the world. How is this different to how we receive news on a global scale today? Do you think we receive accurate information about what's happening in other countries? Why or why not?

Keep a "Vocab Journal" while reading the novel. Make a note of any words you come across that are unfamiliar (including any German words you're unsure of) and look up their meaning. Also keep track of any words or phrases that you particularly like and write a note next to each explaining why you like that word/phrase.

"Franz and I trailed back into the town. We knew what we would find. An empty jail and a half-deserted town. We had told the men we would be all right, but to tell the truth we were very doubtful about that," (page 222). How are the Gretta and Tilly's truthful or untruthful within the novel, particularly with their families? Find a moment in the novel where either girl feels they have to, for whatever reason, distort the truth. Why do they do this? Do you agree or disagree with their decision?

What do you think about the ending of the novel? What do you believe the future looks like for Tilly and Franz? Write a short dramatic monologue from the perspective of either Tilly or Franz, set 5 years after the events of *Interned*. What do you think their lives look like now? Ask any students who would like to, to perform their monologue for the class.

Read the note from the author at the back of the novel, as well as her inspiration for writing it. Does this change your reading of the novel at all? Why or why not?

Further Activities:

Write a book report on *Interned*. Write about what you thought of the book, using evidence from the text to support your evaluation. Make a recommendation about who would be interested in this book and draw connections to similar or related books.

Create a timeline that covers all the key events in the Bornabba community that occur while the girls are interned, including things like birthdays, the regatta and the fire as well as larger news about the war.

Write a story from the perspective of a character other than Tilly or Gretta (possible options could include Pa, Franz, or Mutti). How might they see things differently to Ben or Tilly?

Imagine that a movie was being made of *Interned*. In small groups, create a soundtrack to accompany some of the key scenes, thinking particularly about the mood you want to convey. You could either make a compilation of existing songs or compose your own musical pieces. Present your soundtrack to the class, explaining why you have chosen the pieces you have. Also choose your ideal cast for the movie and create a movie poster.

*please check page references against a final copy of the book.