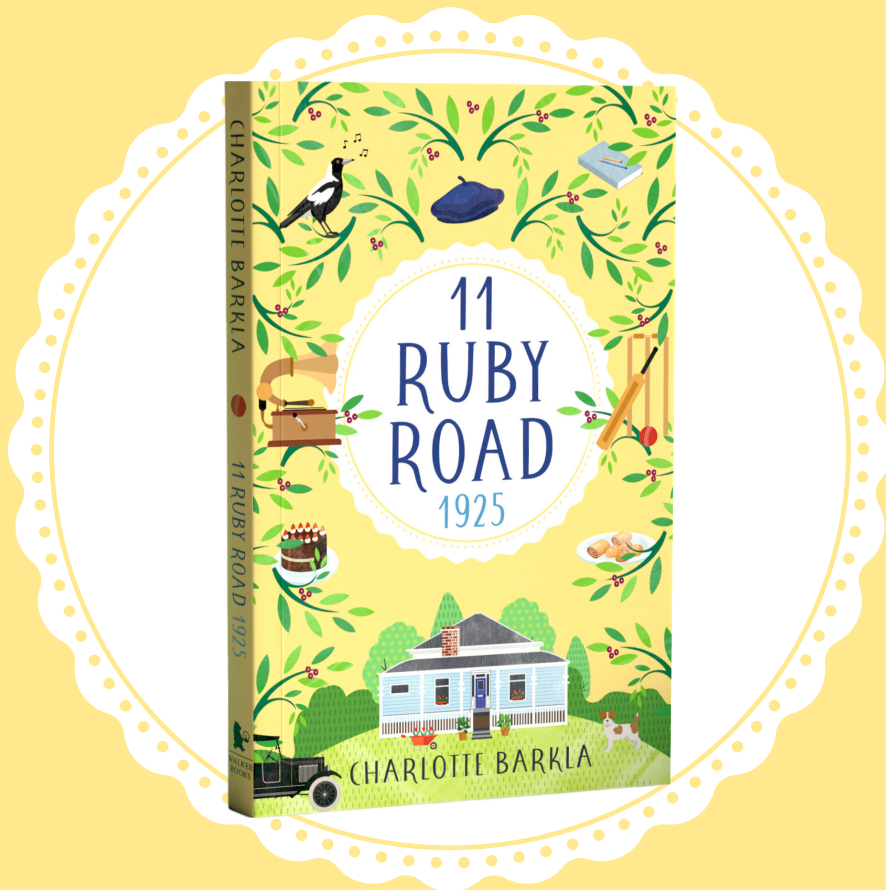


TEACHER NOTES

Teacher Notes by Belinda Bolliger

WALKER BOOKS



ABOUT THE BOOK

11 RUBY ROAD: 1925
CREATOR: CHARLOTTE BARKLA
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The second book in the *11 Ruby Road* series is set in the roaring 1920s – perfect period fiction for middle-grade readers and for fans of the *Our Australian Girl* series.

It is 1925 and Bert Mueller and his German-Australian family have moved from Ipswich to their new house at 11 Ruby Road. Bert's father has been deported to Germany after the Great War, and with Dad still absent, Bert is unsure about moving away. But the city means opportunity and jobs for his mother and older siblings. And for the grown-ups, it also means fun – dressing up, going out and all that jazz. Bert loves jazz too, but he's too young for the clubs. Instead, his time is spent at his new school where the kids play cricket, not music.

But with the help of a gramophone, Bert has a solution. He will start his own jazz club, and 11 Ruby Road has the perfect spot to host it. But as prejudice about Bert and his German family begins to affect their new life, Bert has to find a way to save his jazz club and his family.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charlotte Barkla is a Brisbane-based writer who worked as a civil engineer and physics teacher before rediscovering her love for children's literature. As well as writing for children, Charlotte writes feature articles for publications including the CSIRO's *Double Helix*, *Beanz* magazine and *Kookie* magazine. She regularly visits schools for creative writing workshops, sharing her passion for science, creativity and stories with children of all ages. Charlotte's books include *All Bodies are Good Bodies* (Hardie Grant Children's Publishing, 2020), the Edie's Experiments series (Penguin Random House, 2020) and *From My Head to My Toes, What I Say Goes* (Hardie Grant Children's Publishing, 2022).

Charlotte's books have been translated into multiple languages and shortlisted for awards, and she has been the recipient of grants and mentorships for her fiction writing.

ABOUT THE TEACHER NOTES AUTHOR

Belinda Bolliger worked as an editor and publisher of children's books for over twenty-five years. She was the Children's Publisher at Hodder Headline (now Hachette Australia) and Children's Commissioning Editor and Publisher for ABC Books/HarperCollins. She has worked with many award-winning authors and illustrators, including Libby Hathorn, Garry Disher, Frances Watts, Judith Rossell and Matt Ottley. Belinda was editorial manager for Australian Standing Orders (Scholastic) for over 11 years, reviewing and selecting the most suitable new releases from Australian publishers to send to schools around the country. Belinda now works as an associate agent at Key People Literary Management and as a freelance children's editor and project manager.

CURRICULUM LINKS

English (language, literature and literacy) • Humanities and Social Sciences (historical knowledge and understanding, civics and citizenship) • The Arts (media arts, drama, visual arts) • Technologies (design and technologies) • Health and Physical Education (personal, social and community health)

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

THEMES

Transition and Adapting to Change • World War I and its Aftermath
• Empowerment and Advocacy • Family, Friendship and Community
• Society and Culture • Prejudice



TEACHER NOTES

BACKGROUND READING AND RESEARCH

This second book about *11 Ruby Road* is set in 1925. Australians in the 1920s were keen to shake off the horror of World War 1 and move into a new era. It was a time of music halls, jazz, flappers, the first radio station, compulsory voting and ... Vegemite!

Using resources from the library and the internet, discover and discuss what was happening in Australia from 1925 to 1930. Here are some topics to consider:

Social and cultural changes

- Discuss how people were moving from rural areas to cities.
- Why was this happening? In your answer, consider job opportunities and modern conveniences.
- Explore the influence of jazz music, dance halls and cinema on Australian culture during this period.
- Find out about fashion trends in the 1920s, including flapper dresses, bobbed haircuts and men's suits.

The Economy

- Discuss how the economy was recovering after World War I. How did this affect jobs and industries?
- What was the Great Depression of 1929? What impact did it have on Australia?

Politics

- Who were the key political figures during this period?
- What were the government's policies? In your answer, include information on immigration and economic policies.

Indigenous rights

Discuss the status and rights of Indigenous Australians during this time.

Science and technology

- Explore advances in transportation, such as the expansion of railways and the growing popularity of automobiles.
- Discuss the role of radio and how it became a popular medium for news and entertainment.

Daily life

- What was the typical family like in Australia during this period?
- What were their daily routines?
- What was school like during this time?

Timeline

Create a timeline of significant events in Australia from 1925 to 1930. Include key political events, cultural milestones and technological advances.

PROLOGUE

- The story starts with a prologue set on Christmas day in 1860. What purpose do you think the prologue serves? What do you learn about *11 Ruby Road* from the prologue?
- What do you think might happen to Millie and her mother and 'Millie's Store'?

CHARACTERS

Bert's Family

- Who are the members of Bert's family?
- Who is your favourite character and why?

- Choose one of the characters from Bert's family and write a short paragraph that describes how they look, what their personality traits are and how they interact with Bert.
- The author uses the different family members to tell the reader a little more about the year 1925. What do you think each character tells us? For example, Carl was a soldier in World War 1. What do we learn from Carl about how war affects individuals and families? Hildegard is a young woman struggling to be independent. What do we learn about the role of women in the 1920s?
- How does Bert's family support each other through their challenges? What does this tell us about the importance of family?

Supporting characters

Mary:

- Why do you think Mary lies to Bert? Do you understand her motivation for lying?
- Activity: Write a short story about how you imagine Mary's life to be. Include information about her background, her day-to-day life and her feelings and thoughts when she meets Bert.

Alexander:

- Why do you think Alexander tells everybody that Bert is sick to stop them from going to Bert's jazz club? How would you describe Alexander's character? Is there a good reason for the way he behaves towards Bert? Bert doesn't tell his classmates that Alexander lied about Bert being sick (p. 87). What does this say about Bert's character?
- Activity: Write a diary entry from Alexander's point of view to explain how he is feeling and why he acts the way he does.

Others:

- Who are some of the other supporting characters in the story? What role do they play?

11 RUBY ROAD

Have you read the first book about *11 Ruby Road*, set in 1900? If so, can you find some of the characters from the first book in this latest title about Ruby Road? For example, who might Miss McIntyre be? What might have happened to Miss McIntyre in the years between 1900 and 1925?

Quote: "*Bert pointed to the small cottage next door. It had a steep roof and a narrow verandah across the front. A small store adjoined the cottage. A peeling wooden sign read 'Millie's Store'.*" (p. 11)

- Create an artwork that shows what you think the house at 11 Ruby Road looks like. Use the internet or your school or local library to find examples of houses built in Australia in the 1800s, when #11 was first built.
- How might the house have changed since 1900 when the first book is set? How might the house and store change over the next 25 years? What might it look like today?
- What is an undercroft? How did Bert use the undercroft? If you had your own secret room, what would you use it for?
- Write a short piece of imaginative writing from the house's point of view when Bert and his family arrive and Miss McIntyre leaves.
- Who might move into 11 Ruby Road after Bert and his family leave? In three short chapters, write a story about a new family and how they feel when they first see 11 Ruby Road and move in.

PREJUDICE AND ACCEPTANCE

Quote: *“What about Papa? Bert’s father had been sent to an internment camp eight years earlier, in 1917, when Bert was only two years old.*

He was sent there with lots of other German-Australian men – and some women and children. When the war ended, the internees were sent on a big ship back to Germany.” (p. 10)

- Discuss how the outbreak of World War I led to widespread fear and suspicion of people of German descent in Australia. Highlight the role of propaganda and wartime hysteria in fuelling these suspicions.
- Find out what you can about the War Precautions Act of 1914. What did this mean for German-Australians?
- Discuss the daily routines and activities of internees, including how they spent their time, the challenges they faced, the conditions in internment camps and any efforts internees made to maintain a sense of community and normalcy within the camps. You might like to research specific camps, such as those at Holsworthy, Torrens Island and Trial Bay.
- Explore the emotional and social impact of internment on families, particularly the separation of family members and the strain on relationships.
- How does his father’s absence affect Bert? How do you think it affects the rest of the family? Find quotes from the book to back up your answers.

Quote: *“Did Alexander realise how hard it was moving to a new school? How awful it was to worry about whether your father would ever be allowed back to Australia? To hear customers making nasty comments about Germans and to hear your mama crying at night because Papa was so far away from them all?”* (p. 113)

In Chapters 17 and 18, we read about the propaganda posters that Alexander finds and puts up in the classroom. These are real posters from World War I. Find images of these posters. What was the purpose of posters such as these? Discuss how propaganda was used and how it affected people like Bert and his family.

Quote: *“Miss Armstrong had made Alexander apologise to the whole class, but the damage was done. Everyone knew Bert was German.”* (p. 116)

Activity: Imagine you are Bert and write a diary entry about how you feel when people are prejudiced against you for something you had no control over.

Quote: *“The war is over and it’s not going to happen again! I’m tired of hiding and I’m tired of people around here with their prejudiced attitudes. My father always did the right thing, yet he was still locked up like a criminal during the war and sent back to Germany, where he had no job and no family. It’s been eight years since we’ve seen our father, Mrs Purcell. Eight years. Do you know what that’s like?”* (p. 125)

- Discuss the challenges Bert’s family faces due to their German heritage and how they deal with prejudice. Use quotes from the novel as a starting point to discuss specific incidents where Bert and his family encounter prejudice.
- Hold a class debate on the topic ‘Was the internment of German-Australians during World War 1 a justified measure of national security or an unjust act of prejudice and propaganda?’

SCHOOL DAYS

Quote: *“Most of the school day revolved around learning the ‘three R’s’ – reading, writing and arithmetic. The children learned by rote and were expected to memorise many facts. There were five classes: First to Fifth Class.*

Progression of children through the classes was based on assessment and therefore classes often contained mixed ages. In addition to the 'three R's', subjects included grammar, geography, object lessons, history, singing, drawing, scripture and Euclid. In Fifth Class, algebra, natural science, Latin (for boys) and French (for girls), were also taught. Infants children wrote with a thin slate pencil on slates which they rested on their knees. The older children also undertook a large amount of their work on slates, often practising their work before writing it into their workbook." Extract from School House Museum: schoolhousemuseum.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Early-School-Days-1870s-1920s-2012.pdf

Compare and contrast school in 1925 with your school routine today. Use the following topics to research how life in the classroom today is different from life in Bert's time:

- Travelling to and from school
- Classroom environment
- Discipline and rules
- Curriculum and subjects
- Teaching methods
- Technology in education
- School uniforms and dress code
- Extra-curricular activities
- Access to education

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

- Research specific policies that affected First Nations people during this time.
- The 1920s saw the start of Aboriginal activism and campaigning for rights for First Nations people. Research Fred Maynard and the AAPA and the role they played in advocating for rights and recognition for First Nations people.
- Have things changed for First Nations people since the 1920s? How? How have they stayed the same?

MUSIC, DANCE AND FASHION

Quote: “‘It goes like this.’ He pivoted his feet in and out while shifting his weight from side to side and kicking out his free leg. He shuffled three steps back, then three steps forward. ‘And that’s how you do the Charleston shuffle.’” (p. 4)

- The Charleston was the most popular dance in the 1920s. View a clip of the Charleston being performed (you can find one at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkPUC3gWvbE). What do you think about the dance? Discuss how its frenetic energy was in direct contrast to the dances that preceded it, such as the polka and the waltz. In what ways was this a reflection of the times?
- You can learn to dance the Charleston here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wg8rZHJEEY.
- What other dances popular in the 1920s?
- Break into small groups and allocate each group one of the dances of the 1920s. Use the internet to find instructions on how to perform the dance. Each group teaches the rest of the class some (or all!) of the steps of the dance.

Quote: “‘I love listening to jazz. It’s the most wonderful music in the entire world.’ Her eyes lit up. ‘I think so too! Who’s your favourite musician? ‘Louis Armstrong, of course,’ said Bert.” (p. 39-40)

- As a class, brainstorm what you know about jazz music. Like the Charleston, it was a sign of its times. Why was jazz music important in the 1920s? How was it different to the music that preceded it?
- Find some examples of 1920s jazz music to listen to. As a class, share your thoughts and feelings about the music.

- Bert's favourite musician is Louis Armstrong. Listen to some of Louis Armstrong's music. Discover other popular musicians from this period.
- Activity: Choose one piece of music from the 1920s and as a class, learn the piece and perform it for other classes or at school assembly. Dress up in 1920s style for your performance.

Quote: “*Speaking of drawing attention, have you seen the woman in the black dress?*’ She nodded to a woman making her way through the carriage. *Her hair was cut short and she was wearing a sequined dress. The hem was short enough to see her ankles! ‘Her dress is fantastic!’*” (p. 7)

- How did fashion change in the 1920s? Why do you think it changed? Find images of fashion for men and women in the late 1800s and also images of the way men and women began to dress in the 1920s. How are they different?
- Activity: Create a collage of images and items that represent fashion in the 1920s.
- Activity: Have a 1920s-themed fashion show where you create and model outfits inspired by the fashion of the time.

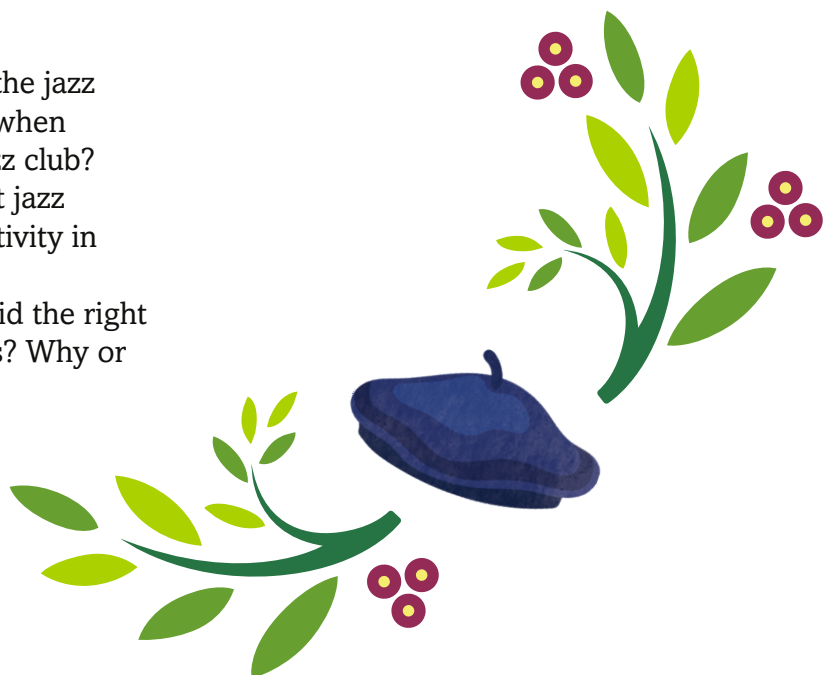
THE JAZZ CLUB

- Why does Bert decide to start the jazz club? How do you think he felt when nobody turned up to his first jazz club?
- Why is Bert so passionate about jazz music? How does he show creativity in starting his own club?
- Do you think Miss Armstrong did the right thing when she banned all clubs? Why or why not?

- Create your own poster for Bert's jazz club.
- If you were to form a club for your classmates, what would it be? A music club? A sports club? A cooking club? Create a poster for your choice of club, inviting classmates to join. Make sure you include all the exciting things that will happen at your club. Don't forget to make up a catchy name for your club.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

- Role-play and drama: Break into small groups and choose a scene from the book to perform for the rest of the class.
- Dress-up day: Dress up in 1920s style and have a themed day with activities related to the era.
- Creative writing: Write a newspaper article about the jazz club at 11 Ruby Road, including quotes from ‘interviews’ with Bert, his family and his friends.
- Choose a famous figure from the 1920s (a politician, musician, film star, athlete, etc.) and create a poster presentation about this person to present to the rest of the class.





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