

WOMEN OF A CERTAIN COURAGE

EDITED BY BRON BATEMAN

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YEAR LEVEL: Y10–12

ABOUT THE BOOK

Women of a Certain Courage is an anthology of stories written by ordinary women with extraordinary stories. Or perhaps, as these pages show us, there is no such thing as an ordinary woman. From First Nations women's dedication to supporting their sisters through racism and intergenerational trauma, to women dealing with chronic and acute illness, fertility issues, gender transition, activism and surviving natural disasters, *Women of a Certain Courage* articulates women's voices of resilience, courage and commitment.

The stories in *Women of a Certain Courage* challenge ideas of what it means to be courageous. Traditional masculine ideas of courage that evoke traits of toughness, dominance, self-reliance and war, are revised and re-examined in these women's stories of physical stoicism, community, creativity, resistance and activism, and the courage to look within to find individual truths, strengths and pathways forward. As Cynthia Dearborn writes in her story 'On Breaking Out of Our Shells', **'courageousness is often thought of as a personality trait that one either possesses or lacks. But I find it useful to think of courage as an energy, a fluid force, a boundless collective reservoir that surrounds us all and can be tapped at will'** (p. 177).

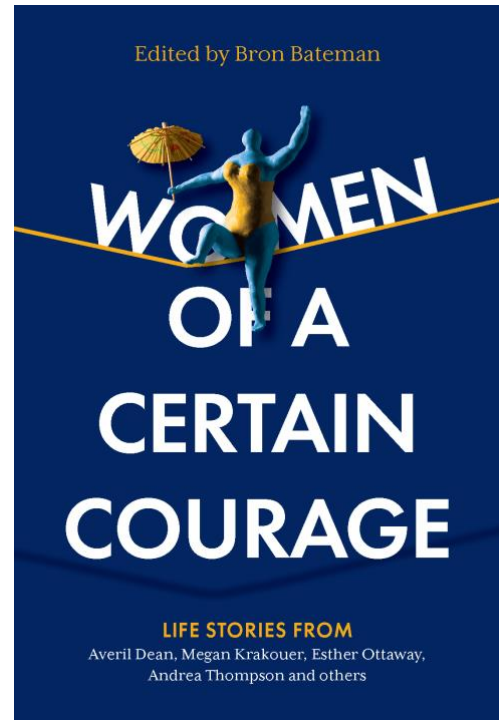
ABOUT THE EDITOR

Editor Bron Bateman is a poet, academic and mother of nine. She is a researcher in Crip and Disability Studies at the University of Newcastle and her research interests include Crip and Disability Studies, Queer and Gender Theory, cultural studies, creative writing, Feminisms, and the body. She is the author of three collections of poetry. In 2004, she was awarded the Bobbie Cullen Memorial Prize for Creative Writing. In 2017, she received Columbia University's Winter Poetry Prize, and in 2022, she was shortlisted for the Tom Collins Poetry Prize. She lives with her wife and youngest daughter in Perth, Western Australia.

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THEMES

- Domestic violence
- Stolen Generations
- Activism
- Bushfires
- Fertility
- Chronic illness
- Autism



- Gender
- Courage
- Writing
- Family
- Community

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y10–12 English

Y10–12 Literature

Y10–12 Philosophy and ethics

Y10–12 Health and physical education (Mental health and wellbeing)

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Bron Bateman: [linkedin.com/in/bron-bateman-aa04637b/?originalSubdomain=au](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bron-bateman-aa04637b/?originalSubdomain=au)
- Penny Jane Burke: newcastle.edu.au/profile/pennyjane-burke
- Natalie Damjanovich-Napoleon: nataliednapoleon.net/
- Averil Dean: heartlandjourneys.com.au/storytellers/averil-dean/
- Cynthia Dearborn: abc.net.au/news/2023-06-21/cynthia-dearborn-on-the-year-my-family-unravelling-memoir/102487814
- Jo Giles: australianpoetryslam.com/aps-2024-national-jo-giles
- Anna Jacobson: annajacobson.com.au/
- Megan Krakouer: naidoc.org.au/award-finalist/megan-krakouer
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CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Discuss the notion of courage. What do you understand by the idea of courage?
2. What kind of acts do you think show courage?
3. Do you think courage is different for different genders?
4. Can you think of an example (aside from those in the book) of a woman showing courage?
5. Is courage something you are born with or is it something you can develop over time?
6. Ask students to choose a particular chapter and discuss the type of courage that is described within that chapter.
7. Courage is often seen as something rare, or something that only superhuman people can achieve. Thinking about the women in the book, discuss ideas of everyday courage in everyday life.
8. Do you feel that you are a courageous person? Why?

Language and textual analysis – engaging and responding; reflecting

1. Read chapters together as a class, and allow students to read to one another in pairs or small groups.
2. Comprehension strategies to model and practise:
 - a. Inferring as a reading strategy, which requires students to use prior knowledge along with information in a text to draw conclusions
 - b. Summarising
 - c. Identifying key ideas/themes
 - d. Drawing conclusions
 - e. Ask students to keep a reading journal in which they record particular quotes, personal reactions and any questions or discussion topics they may wish to talk about in class. Structure the journal as a chapter-by-chapter response to the stories. Keeping a reader-response journal will enable students to map out their responses to essay questions.

Creative writing

1. Write a poem or short story about an act of courage by a woman or a girl. You can base it on a real-life story or imagine yourself in a particular situation that requires courage.
2. Courage vocabulary:
 - a. Brainstorm all the words you can think of to do with courage and try to use some of these in your creative piece.
 - b. Research quotes about courage demonstrated by women and use these as prompts for your creative writing.
 - c. Imagine you are interviewing a woman of courage in the book. Create some questions you would ask, and then imagine the responses.
 - d. Are there any people in your family who have shown courage? Try to imagine their experience and write about it.

The arts

1. Working in small groups of three or four, ask students to devise a scenario at school in which an act of courage is needed.
2. Students can choose how they depict this scenario:
 - a. Create a poster, comic, drawing or painting.
 - b. Create a performance to be performed to the rest of the class.
 - c. Create a song.
 - d. Create a short video.

Health and physical education (mental health and wellbeing)

1. Create a Courage Storytelling Circle in which students can discuss ideas and examples of bravery and courage.
2. Trust-building and courage-building activities:
 - a) Divide the students into pairs, with one student as the guide. Set up an obstacle course using whatever you have on hand, such as tables, chairs, toys, cones, etc. With one member of the pair giving instructions, the other student walks backwards through the course without stepping on or

bumping into anything or anyone. The walkers must trust that their partner will guide them safely through the course.

- b) Ask students to stand in a circle. Use blindfolds or instruct everyone to close their eyes. Ask students to stretch out their arms and reach into the middle of the circle. Each student must find another hand to hold. Once everyone is holding hands, ask them to open their eyes. Without letting go, the group needs to untangle themselves from this human knot to form a circle again.
- c) Divide students into two teams and set up an obstacle course with cones. Ask each group to choose a leader and then ask each team to line up behind their leaders, one hand on the shoulder of the teammate in front of them. Leaders give directions to move their teams from one side of the room to the other, navigating the cones. Then switch leaders and repeat. Try to make everyone a leader at least once.
- d) Regroup in the Courage Storytelling Circle. Ask students to sit quietly for five minutes and observe the breath in their body. Then encourage students to enquire within themselves as to how they are feeling and how they felt during the activities. Encourage students to talk about their experience in the physical activities. Did they feel nervous, anxious, courageous?