

LIGHTHOUSE GIRL

DIANNE WOLFER
ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN SIMMONDS
ISBN (PB): 9781760994396
YEAR LEVEL: Y4–8

ABOUT THE BOOK

Fay lives with her father on bleak, windswept Breaksea Island manning the lighthouse, but her isolated life takes a dramatic turn with the outbreak of World War I. Fay collects the messages of soldiers heading to the frontline and helps them get messages telegraphed back home. After their departure for the battlefields of Egypt and Gallipoli, she follows their fortunes and continues her long-distance conversations with letters and postcards. Then one day, a devastating telegram arrives, and the war is brought brutally home.

Based on the true story of Fay Howe, this gentle tale brings to life the hardships of those left at home during the war — waiting, wondering and hoping.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dianne Wolfer is an award-winning author. Her WWI Light series served as the inspiration for Theatre 180's CineStage production *The Lighthouse Girl Saga* and PIAF's *The Giants*. Dianne writes across genres, and her books have been translated into several languages. Her picture book, *Photographs in the Mud* (set along the Kokoda Track), has been used as an international peace reference.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

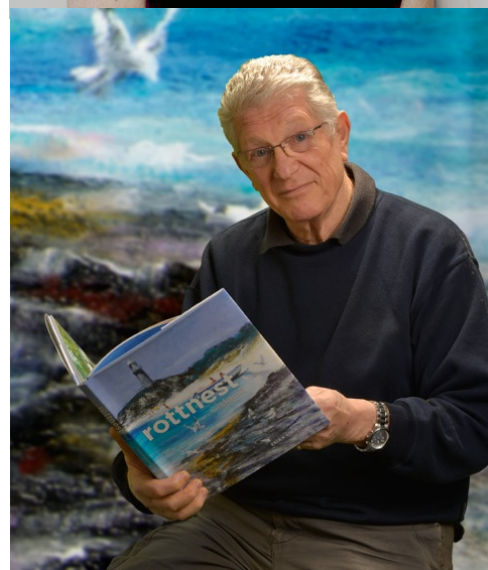
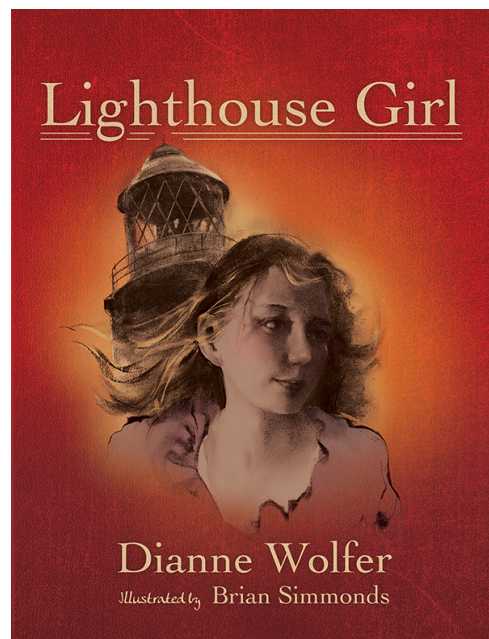
Brian Simmonds was born in Subiaco and worked for many years as a lithographer in the printing industry while studying art in the evenings. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art from Curtin University and worked for *The Sunday Times*, *New Idea* and an advertising agency before he became a professional artist in 1990. He has exhibited his work many times and won numerous prizes for drawing, oil painting and mixed media works.

THEMES

- World War I
- Family
- Growing up
- Futility of war
- Geographical isolation

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

- Y4–8 English
- Y4–6 HASS
- Y4–8 The Arts
- Y7–8 Geography
- Y7–8 History



USEFUL WEBSITES

- Illustrator's website: briansimmonds.com.au/index
- Australian War Memorial website: awm.gov.au
- Historical Albany website: <https://www.historicalalbany.com.au/the-gallipoli-campaign>

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion Questions: Before Reading

1. Discuss the history of World War I:
 - a. How and when did the war break out?
 - b. Which countries were involved? Locate the different nations on a world map.
 - c. How long did the conflict last?
 - d. What was Australia's role in this war?
 - e. Visit the Australian War Memorial website with your class to explore the information and view some photographs from the time period.
 - f. Alternatively, you may like to have older students research these questions and compile a written report using the above points as subheadings.
2. Create a whole-class prediction chart detailing what students think may happen in the story.
 - a. What first impressions do you get from the cover of *Lighthouse Girl*?
 - b. What do you expect the book to be about? Explain why.
 - c. Why do you think the publisher chose to package the book this way?

Note: It is often interesting to keep this chart to look over at the end – have the class count how many predictions were true/false.

Discussion Questions: During Reading

1. Younger readers may be unfamiliar with some of the words in the story (e.g. semaphore). As your class progresses through the text, create a list of unfamiliar terms. Have students work in pairs to use the dictionary to find definitions.
2. Fay describes the excitement surrounding the outbreak of war and the rush of men to sign up.
 - a. Why do you think people were so enthusiastic about the war?
 - b. Do you think people would react the same way today? Why? Use examples.
3. One of Fay's postcards is censored.
 - a. Who/what is the field censor?
 - b. Why would the censor block out part of the postcard?
4. Fay is reliant on newspaper reports to track the progress of the war.
 - a. How accurate do you think the information would have been?
 - b. What might newspapers choose not to report?
 - c. Did the censor have a role to play in war reporting?

Discussion Questions: After Reading

1. Read the 'About Fay' section at the back of the book. Create a table with the headings 'Fact' and 'Fiction' that lists the elements of the book that are historically accurate, and those that Dianne Wolfer changed/created for the story.
2. *Lighthouse Girl* alternates between third person narrative and first-person diary entries.
 - a. Why do you think the author chose to use two different writing styles?
 - b. How else could Fay's story have been told?

Creative Writing

1. The Australian War Memorial site contains a wealth of information – photographs, diary accounts, film etc. Search the archives for key words like '1914', 'Gallipoli', 'Albany', 'nurses', etc. Choose an image from WWI and write about it. Try to describe the scene using all of your senses and write from more than one point of view.
2. Fay claims, '**We're like castaways**' (p. 80). Write a story about a character that lives in a remote setting.

3. Pretend that you are Fay after learning of Charlie's death. Write a free verse poem on the theme of loss.
4. Illustrate and write a postcard from Albany (Fay to Charlie) or Egypt (Charlie to Fay).

The Arts

1. In picture books, illustrations are as important as the written words in communicating the story.
 - a. Compare and contrast *Lighthouse Girl* with a novel or biography about World War I. What do you notice? What makes a picture book different to a novel?
 - b. List some conventions of the picture book genre.
2. In groups, examine the illustrations in detail.
 - a. What style has the illustrator used to draw the characters – realistic, cartoon, artistic, fantasy?
 - b. What medium has he used – collage, black and white, watercolour, etc.? What effect does this create?
 - c. Why has the illustrator used only a black/grey/white palette for the pictures?
 - d. What impact do the historical photographs and documents have? Do they change the mood of the story/add a sense of authenticity?
3. Choose one of the *Albany Advertiser* articles from Fay's journal and draw an illustration for it.
4. Make paper chain decorations for your classroom (like Fay does for Christmas, p. 70).

History and Geography

1. Fay is based on Breaksea Island.
 - a. Locate Breaksea Island on a map.
 - b. Why does it have a lighthouse?
 - c. Is the lighthouse still in operation? Why/how have things changed?
2. Why is Fay so conscious of the weather? Why is she constantly concerned about food?
3. Fay uses semaphore to 'talk' to the soldiers.
 - a. Is semaphore still in use today? Why?
 - b. What other methods of communication are there between ships, and from ship to shore?
4. Fay telegraphs the soldiers' messages back to their families using Morse code.
 - a. How does a telegraph work?
 - b. Where would Fay's messages have been received and how would they get to the families?
 - c. Are telegraphs still in use today? Why?
5. Consider the ships of the Expeditionary Force.
 - a. Why did the ships travel in convoy?
 - b. How long did it take them to reach Egypt?
 - c. How did the Egyptians feel about having the troops in camp?
 - d. How did the troops treat the Egyptian people?
 - e. How are soldiers transported to war now?
6. Wounded soldiers were often treated very near to the combat zone.
 - a. What was a field ambulance?
 - b. What was a field hospital?
 - c. What role did donkeys play?
7. Fay pastes a black feather in her diary. Later in the war, white feathers have a special significance. What is it?

Science

1. Fay spends time observing and recording details about the whales around Breaksea.
 - a. How have attitudes towards whales changed in the last hundred years?
 - b. Whaling was big business in Albany during Fay's time. When did the whaling station close down? Why?
2. What is the Leeuwin Current?
3. Explore the theory of buoyancy – how does it work? Read the list of ships on p. 57 – what was their fate in WWI? How many sank?