

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

ROCKING HORSE WAR by Lari Don



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Themes/issues addressed in this book

Family, Perthshire, Scotland, First World War, war, land, trust, duty, honour, female roles, 1920s, deceit, not feeling special, overcoming obstacles

Book Summary

When Pearl's triplet brother and sisters disappear one morning with their wooden rocking horses, Pearl sets out to find them and falls into a perilous adventure in which two powerful magicians war against one another for control of the land. When Pearl meets Thomas, who is also looking for the triplets, she's not quite sure she can trust him. She follows him deep into the Perthshire mountains where she learns about the Horsburghs and the Swanns, about bloodlore and landlore, and about the precious keystone that will decide the fate of the land. With Thomas' help, Pearl finds the triplets, and discovers that they are to play a central part in deciding the outcome of the land war. Eventually the triplets are saved and Pearl learns much about family, duty, and friendship.

BEFORE READING

Group Activities

- Discussion: what does the word 'war' mean to you?
- Discussion: what does 'duty' mean? Give some examples of duty?
- Discussion: do you have any brothers or sisters? How many? Do you like having siblings? Do they sometimes annoy you? (If an only child: would you like siblings or are you happy just as you are?)

AFTER READING (note, contains spoilers!)

Individual Work

- Write a paragraph on the thoughts and feelings you had when:
 - a) Pearl overhears her parents talking about her (chapter 2)
 - b) Jasper sides with Thomas (chapter 6)
 - c) Thomas almost lets Pearl fall into the grinding rocks (chapter 13)
 - d) You learn how the triplets were created (chapter 24)
- Using the Internet and your library, try to find out what kind of clothes a boy or girl your age might have worn in the 1920s when the book is set. Try to find some pictures. Would you like to wear these clothes? Why? Why not? Write three paragraphs on this.
- Talk to your parents, grandparents, etc. Find out if they know a mountain story from Scotland, or anywhere in the world. Don't write the story down; try to memorise it instead. Share the story with your class mates in the 'oral tradition' – spoken aloud, from memory.

Group Activities

- Class project: land. Study the 'land' in Scotland. Find out who owns it and how they came to own it. Find out about farmers and crofters and what rights they have over the land they work. Think about how people use the land for different purposes. If you have access to some land at school or home, grow some vegetables. Share them with you classmates when they have been harvested.
- Class discussion: war. Pearl's older brother is killed in the First World War. How do you think this might make her feel about war? Why? How do you feel about war? Do you know of any countries that are at war at the moment? Do you know why they went to war? Do you know anybody in the armed forces?

(continued overleaf)

Kelpies Series Summary

The award-winning Kelpies series is Scotland's favourite collection of children's fiction. Floris Books took over the list in 2001, republishing classic works by authors such as Kathleen Fidler, Mollie Hunter, George Mackay Brown and Allan Campbell McLean. Since then, we have continued to add to the series with a range of highly successful new Scottish novels for children including books by Gill Arbutnott, Alex Nye, Lari Don, Anne Forbes, Annemarie Allan, Mike Nicholson and Margaret Forrester.

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS COVERED

5-14 Curriculum (Scotland)

Years: P4-P7

Listening:

Listening in Groups
Listening for Information, including instructions and directions

Reading:

Reading for Information
Reading to Reflect
Awareness of Genre

Talking:

Talking in Groups
Talking about Texts
Talking about Experiences, including feelings and opinions

Writing:

Functional
Imaginative

National Curriculum (England, Wales, Northern Ireland)

Key Stage 2

English: Reading

Reading Strategies
Response to Texts, including analysing and evaluating
Reading for Information

National Literacy Strategy:

Text-Level Reading
Text-Level Writing
Vocabulary

- Class activity: go riding or visit some stables. If you live close to a riding school, go riding for a morning or afternoon, or arrange for a class visit to stables. Perhaps you could visit a Mounted Police Unit to see how some horses work for a living.

Vocabulary

- Check you know what the following words mean (page numbers of example words in brackets):

alert (80)	conspire (236)	fanciful (16)	mutilate (213)	scowled (56)
alluring (128)	contempt (18)	flaw (42)	nonchalantly (201)	scree (105)
ambush (49)	contradictory (172)	fracture (99)	optimism (145)	snide (177)
ambitious (169)	dais (220)	geology (8)	palomino (16)	supple (79)
amputating (88)	debris (189)	hind (80)	paralysed (87)	syllables (20)
anticipating (62)	destiny (46)	haunches (26)	plateau (85)	thrumming (21)
bedrock (59)	discordant (229)	insignificant (18)	pliable (195)	treacherous (184)
brittle (59)	distinctive (74)	intervene (224)	potential (129)	triumphant (168)
cascade (234)	dressage (181)	intricate (112)	precise (234)	vicious (48)
charismatic (72)	eavesdropping (56)	melodramatic (132)	ransacked (7)	
chateaux (95)	eccentric (48)	molten (84)	retreated (52)	
chivalry (7)	erosion (171)	moraine (81)	ricocheted (39)	
consonants (61)	faltered (92)	mucus (112)	scorn (74)	