

**Title:** My Grandfather's War

**Author:** Glyn Harper

**Illustrator:** Jenny Cooper

**Publisher:** EK Books

**Price:** $24.99

**ISBN:** 9781775592990

**Publication date:** 1 June 2018

**Audience age:** Children aged 5-10

**Key Curriculum Areas:** English, Health, Art, Resilience, History, Vocabulary, Investigation, Family relationships

**SYNOPSIS:**

*My Grandfather’s War* explores the relationship between a young girl and her grandfather. Sarah, who narrates the story, likes nothing better than being with her grandfather and they do lots of fun things together.

But Sarah senses a deep sadness in her grandfather and is curious about it. Her father tells her to leave him alone when he’s sad as he is thinking about a war in a place called Vietnam.

When she has the courage to ask him about his sadness, Sarah’s grandfather tells her about his time in Vietnam and the war he fought there. Though Sarah is aware that she has probably upset her grandfather she develops a deeper understanding of his past and the two remain as close as ever.

**THEMES:**

* Family relations
* The impact of war on people
* Why people go to war
* The cost of war
* Growing through sharing the past

**SELLING POINTS:**

* Written and illustrated by an award-winning team
* The positive family relationship of a young girl and her grandfather
* The book explains why people feel compelled to go to war and the cost of conflict
* The message of hope, resilience and understanding

**WRITING STYLE:**

Glyn has an easy and accessible writing style that is particularly suited for younger readers. The book also features a brief description of the Vietnam War at the end of the book. This section is suitable for more advanced readers who may want to know more about the story’s background.

**ILLUSTRATION STYLE:**

Jenny is one of New Zealand’s most popular book illustrators. The judges of the 2015 LIANZA Children’s Book Awards praised Jenny for ‘her command of emotional drawing … the depth of feeling in the faces of her characters bring tears to the readers’ eyes’. These qualities are especially evident in *My Grandfather’s War*.

**AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:**

Glyn Harper and Jenny Cooper are the award-winning creators of bestselling picture books about the First World War. In 2015 Glyn and Jenny won the Best Picture Book Award at the New Zealand Picture Book Awards for Children and Young Adults for the book *Jim’s Letters.*

**Glyn Harper** is Professor of War Studies at Massey University in Palmerston North New Zealand. He is the author or more than 20 books including 11 books for children. Glyn lives in Foxton Beach.

**Jenny Cooper** is an award-winning illustrator of more than 70 children’s books. In October 2015 Jenny was honoured as one of New Zealand’s foremost illustrators with the presentation of the Arts Foundation Mallinson Rendel Illustrators Award. Jenny lives in Amberley, near Christchurch.

**INTERVIEW:**

**AUTHOR**

**What is the inspiration for this story?**

I had finished a story set in the First World War and my publisher said to me:

‘You know we have never done anything on the Vietnam War or anything for the veterans of that war. Why don’t you think about it?’

So I did. I also asked two friends who were Vietnam veterans how they would feel about a story based around their war and what approach I should take.

*My Grandfather’s War* is the result based on my publisher’s challenge and the advice from two special friends.

**What was the most rewarding part of this project?**

Seeing the book in print was amazing. As with all my books, hearing people tell you how much they liked reading the book and what they got from it is immensely rewarding for an author.

**What was the most challenging part of this project?**

I wanted to end the story on a positive note and with some hope for the future. This was quite difficult when you are dealing with a war like Vietnam.

**ILLUSTRATOR**

**What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.**

The artwork for the book is done with 4B pencil and watercolour paint, on watercolour paper.

The process begins with thoroughly reading the text and any references Glyn sends me, to try to familiarise myself with the subject. Unlike Glyn, I had never done any research on the Vietnam War, so was coming to the subject cold. Most importantly, I have to find (and hire) photographic models for the book. This book seemed to suit quite a realistic style of illustration, because of all the details about the war included. A ‘cartoon’ style would not have the same emotional weight. So I needed some models to base my drawings on. In this case I used my own partner Chris, who is too young to be a Vietnam War veteran, but I aged him (a bit). I also used our neighbour Amelia, who gets on really well with Chris. It was most important that the photos capture a close relationship. I took maybe 20 photos for each page, getting Chris and Amelia to ‘act’ out the action. I then used parts of the best photos to ‘construct’ my design for each page. I then created pencil sketches based on the photos, plus did heaps of Vietnam War research for all the Vietnam images.

**What was the most rewarding part of this project?**

It was fun photographing Chris and Amelia, Amelia is a little dynamo, and very easy to ‘stage direct’. Also she made a really lovely model. I never get tired of painting faces, especially when I feel the paintings come out well, as many of these did. I kept the palette fairly soft and light, and was pleased with the result. I also like to include little things which are not in the text (the ANZAC poppies, photographs from my own family, in the background, to keep myself interested!).

**What was the most challenging part of this project?**

Getting the war details correct … there will always be people who know more about the war than I do. I worry some sharp-eyed child will figure out if I have used the wrong helicopter or uniform or something. Also it is really distressing doing the research for war books, especially this war. There are so many images of the Vietnam War, and many of them are incredibly sad, and not easily forgotten once seen. Also it is difficult to know how much detail to include in war books. I want children to understand the reason for Grandad’s sadness, but not give them so much information that they are distressed themselves. Do I show dead bodies? I never know.

**TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:**

**Before Reading**

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think the book might be about.
2. When and where might the book be set?
3. What does the title suggest to you?

**During Reading**

**Close reading questions**

1. How can you tell that Sarah is close to her grandfather?
2. What activities do they do together?
3. Why was Sarah’s grandfather often sad?
4. How did Sarah try to find out about the Vietnam War?
5. Why did Grandfather Robert go to the Vietnam War?
6. What was the war like for him?
7. Why did some of the soldiers get sick after the war?
8. Why does Sarah’s grandfather have medals? How many does he have?
9. Why do you think Sarah felt proud of her grandfather?
10. Do you think it was good that Sarah asked her grandfather about the Vietnam War?

**Illustrations**

1. Examine the book’s illustrations. Do you like the style? Why or why not? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? What shapes are used? Design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text.
2. Study the illustrations throughout the book. What elements in the illustrations let the reader know where and when the book is set?
3. In pairs, each choose your favourite illustration from the book. Write a description of the illustration. Then read your written description to your partner and each draw a picture based on your partner’s descriptions; for example, Sarah trying to find information on the Vietnam War. How do your drawings compare to the drawings in the book? Consider points such as, is the composition similar and is it as detailed?
4. Choose your favourite moment from the book and create your own illustration or artistic interpretation of it. For example, a diorama, painting, model, poem, cartoon strip, movie storyboard, video, etc. Write a brief artist’s statement to accompany your interpretation.

**Research and Creative Responses:**

Complete one of the following tasks inspired by the book:

1. Find and research more about another aspect of the Vietnam War, such as the use of animals and their jobs. Present your findings in the style of an entry in a children’s illustrated encyclopaedia.
2. After reading the book, choose and discuss your favourite page/pages or moment in the book. List five reasons for your choice. Your choice could relate to elements such as plot development, characters, illustrations, the emotions that have been evoked, etc.
3. Look at the book’s dedication. Use this as inspiration for a class discussion about people who have fought in conflicts. A key discussion could be: Do you know any veterans of past wars? Are any of these family members?
4. Dedications are a gentle way for an author and illustrator to thank the people who have had a positive impact on their work and/or life. Think of someone important to you and how they’ve affected your life, and write your own dedication to them.
5. In pairs, list what you feel are the main points of the book. Compare with your classmates. Do you agree or disagree with their choices? Why or why not? Next, write a short plot summary based on your choices. You may choose to present this as an illustrated timeline.
6. Look at a map of the world and find the places that are mentioned in the book.
7. Music was very important during the Vietnam War. Find a song from the era of the Vietnam War to listen to and/or learn to play on an instrument.
8. In pairs, summarise the information about the Vietnam War at the back of the book. Use the main points taken for your summary to help answer the questions from the ‘Before Reading’ class brainstorm session.
9. Imagine you were a soldier, doctor or nurse during the Vietnam War. Write a diary for a week describing what you did.

**Extension Work**

Use the form provided to write a review of *My Grandfather’s War*.

**Book Review**



Title:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Characters: | Setting: |
| What happens in the story? |
| Did you like the story? Give it a score out of five stars.C:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpgC:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpgC:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpgC:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpgC:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpg |

**Further Reading:**

Glyn Harper and Jenny Cooper are the award-wining creators of bestselling picture books about the First World War. Their books are: *Le Quesnoy*; *Jim’s Letters*; *Roly, the Anzac Donkey*; *Gladys Goes to War* and *Bobby. the littlest war hero*. Find one of these books to read and write a review about it. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What did you like about the book? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a score out of 5 stars. Consider the following questions when writing your review:

1. How did the story make you feel as it unfolded?
2. Did you like the story?
3. Why is the book important for today’s readers?
4. How did the book compare to *My Grandfather’s War*? Are there many similarities or differences?

When answering this question consider the themes, characters, plot, illustrations and setting of both stories.

Using the form over the page, write a review of this book.

**Book Review**

Paste or draw the cover here

Title:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Characters: | Setting: |
| What happens in the story? |
| Did you like the story? Give it a score.C:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpgC:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpgC:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpgC:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpgC:\Users\Glyn Harper\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\XNRBXBPI\10001362-smiling-star-showing-thumbs-up[1].jpg |