

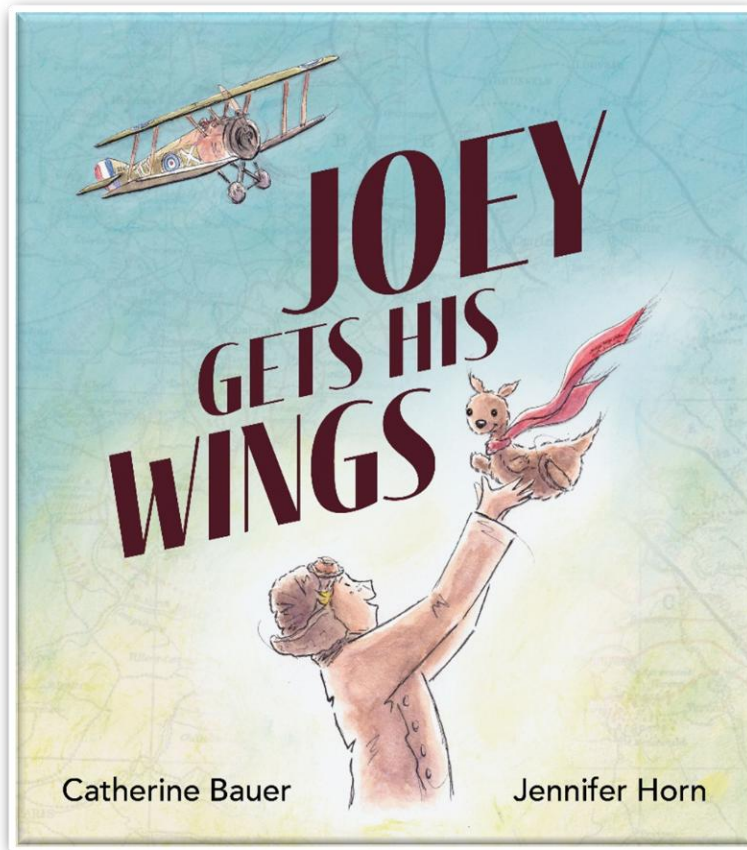


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Age Range: 4 – 8 years Foundation – 3

Subject: Picture book, Australian History, World War 1, Friendship

1. About the Book

Joey Gets His Wings is a picture book inspired by true stories of Australian soldiers who carried small mascots from home during the First World War. Art, a boy from the South Australian outback who dreams of flying, joins the Australian Flying Corps and takes his beloved toy kangaroo Joey with him. Strapped to the front of Art's Sopwith Camel biplane, Joey soars above the Western Front until the two friends are separated during battle.

Lost in a field, Joey waits through rain, snow and sunshine until, years later, he finds his way home. Beautifully illustrated, the story is told with warmth, gentleness and restraint, making it accessible to young readers while honouring the weight of history.

2. About the Author

Catherine Bauer is an award-winning South Australian children's and YA author whose work draws on history to tell deeply human stories for young readers. A journalist and



communications specialist, she hopes her stories will spark a variety of reactions in readers including: that's me; I wish that was me or I'm glad that's not me.

Joey Gets His Wings is inspired by the true history of Australian pilots who carried mascots during WWI and by the remarkable story of the Pflaum brothers of Birdwood, South Australia three brothers who served, two of whom died, and a family who waited nearly a century to know the truth.

One of her previous picture books, *Dreaming Soldiers*, has been recognised for bringing Australian wartime history and the sacrifice of First Nations servicemen to life for children. It received the 2019 Speech Pathology Australia Best Book

for Indigenous Children Award.

3. About the Illustrator

Jennifer Horn grew up on top of a mountain in a house that looked old and has loved old-looking things ever since. As a child she would pause VHS tapes to copy animations



onto paper and filled her school folders with fan illustrations from her favourite books. Every school year she and her sister would visit their aunt and uncle's farm outside Wauchope in NSW - a cosy farmhouse with a front verandah and tin roof much like the one Art grew up in.

In high school, Jen's father took her on a week-long journey through the outback

from Brisbane to the South Australia/Queensland border, where the horizon and red earth seemed never to end. For *Joey Gets His Wings*, she researched both the aesthetics of rural Australian life in the 1900s-1910s and clothing and buildings in WWI France - periods she prefers drawing to modern settings. The character of Art was inspired by her own grandfather, who grew up freckled, adventurous and hardly ever wearing shoes.

Jen enjoys the textural quality of drawing with pencil and paper. For this book she coloured her illustrations with watercolour, then scanned them into Photoshop for digital refinement

4. Historical Background

The Real-Life Inspiration

Artlab Australia, based in South Australia, conserved a real leather kangaroo mascot that had belonged to South Australian pilot Elliott "Tab" Pflaum. Captain Pflaum flew a Sopwith Camel on the Western Front and fitted the small kangaroo on top of his plane's petrol cap, behind the rear seat, where it flew with him on every mission.

Tab Pflaum was one of three brothers from Birdwood in the Adelaide Hills who served in WWI. His brothers Ray and Theo enlisted in 1915, both underage, with their parents' blessing. Ray was wounded at the Battle of Fromelles on 19 July 1916 and never returned to Australian lines. His family spent years not knowing what had happened to him. In 2010, a century later, Ray's remains were identified through DNA testing among soldiers discovered in a mass grave near Fromelles. He was reinterred with full honours at the Fromelles Military Cemetery. Theo was killed at the Battle of Menin Road in 1917. Tab was the only brother to come home.

This story of loss, uncertainty and eventual resolution, powerfully echoed in the book by Joey's own journey home, gives the fictional narrative its emotional roots.

The Address on the Scarf

In the book, Art's mother sews the family's address onto Joey's scarf before he leaves for war. This detail is historically grounded: the real kangaroo mascot conserved by Artlab Australia retained traces of its origins. The idea of an address sewn into a toy recalls the care with which families sent their loved ones away, always hoping for return.

The Australian Flying Corps

The Australian Flying Corps (AFC) was formed in 1914 and served on the Western Front from 1917. Pilots flew aircraft such as the Sopwith Camel on reconnaissance and combat missions. Many pilots personalised their aircraft with small decorations or mascots as a way of maintaining morale and a sense of identity amid the dangers of aerial warfare.

Mascots and Mementos

The practice of carrying mascots was widespread among Australian soldiers. Some carried small toys or trinkets from home; others adopted animals. These objects served as tangible reminders of the people and places they were fighting for - small acts of connection in the during enormous upheaval.

5. Themes for Discussion

Home and Belonging

Joey's red scarf carries the address of Art's family home in South Australia. When Art feels homesick, touching the scarf conjures sunburnt hills, gum trees and his mother's voice. Explore with students what "home" means - is it a place, a person, an object or a feeling?

Courage and Comfort

Joey helps Art feel brave in difficult circumstances. Discuss how small, familiar things can give us courage. Have students share a comfort object that has helped them through something hard.

Loss and Waiting

Joey's long wait alone in a field, through seasons, through the end of the war, mirrors the experience of families who waited for news of missing soldiers. The Pflaum family waited nearly a century to know the truth about Ray. With older students, discuss how not knowing can be one of the hardest kinds of grief.

Friendship Across Distance

The bond between Art and Joey transcends physical separation. Discuss how we maintain connections with people and things we love when we are far apart.

Memory and Remembrance

The book ends with Joey holding “a hero's place of honour” in Art's grandson's house - passed down through generations. Why do we keep and treasure objects that belonged to people we love? What does remembrance look like in students' own families?

Colour as Storytelling

Students and teachers may notice how the palette shifts between the warm ochres of the Australian outback and the cooler, more muted tones of wartime France. Jennifer Horn made deliberate colour choices to convey feeling as well as setting. This is a rich starting point for discussion about how illustrators and artists communicate emotion through colour.

6. Discussion Questions

Before Reading

- Look at the cover. What do you think this book will be about? Who do you think Joey is?
- Have you ever had a special toy or object you took with you when you were away from home? How did it make you feel?
- What do you know about the First World War? Where have you seen or heard about it?

During Reading

- Why do you think Art's mother sews their address onto Joey's scarf?
- How do you think Art feels when Joey is strapped to the front of his plane? How does Joey feel?
- When Joey falls and is lost, what do you imagine he is thinking and feeling? (See p. 19.)
- Notice how the colours change between the Australian pages and the French pages. What feeling does each palette give you?
- What do you think the note meant - “Found in a field near Amiens. He looked like he wanted to go home”?

After Reading

- Why do you think the author chose a toy kangaroo to help tell this story?
- What are the key themes in this book? (e.g. bravery, home, memory, waiting, friendship)

- How is Joey's journey like the journey of real families waiting for news of soldiers?
- Why is Joey kept in "a hero's place of honour" at the end? Is Joey a hero? Why or why not?
- What objects would you want your great-grandchildren to keep and remember you by?

7. Curriculum Links

These teacher notes support the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

English

- Responding to and interpreting literature - identifying themes, characters and author/illustrator choices
- Creating texts- imaginative and informative writing across multiple activities
- Language and visual literacy - analysing how illustrations, colour and design create meaning

Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)

The Arts

- Visual Arts - responding to and creating artworks inspired by colour, place and emotion
- Media Arts - exploring how design choices communicate meaning (illustration, colour, composition)

General Capabilities

- Intercultural Understanding - exploring different perspectives on war, loss and home
- Ethical Understanding - discussing themes of courage, loyalty, grief and remembrance
- Critical and Creative Thinking across all activities and discussion questions

8. Classroom Activities

Activity 1: Character Diary Entry (English — Years 1–3)

Students write a diary entry from Joey's perspective at a key moment in the story. For example, the moment he falls from the plane, or the moment he arrives home.

- What can Joey see, hear and feel?
- How does he feel about Art?
- What is he hoping for?

Extension: Students illustrate their diary entry in the style of Jennifer Horn's watercolour illustrations.

Activity 2: Write the Note (English — Years 2–3)

In the story, Joey is returned with a note reading “Found in a field near Amiens. He looked like he wanted to go home.” Ask students to write the full letter that the person who found Joey might have sent.

- Who were they? (A farmer, a child, a soldier, a nurse?)
- How did they find Joey?
- What made them decide to send him back?

Activity 3: Map Joey's Journey (HASS — Geography, Years F–3)

Using a world map, trace the journey Art and Joey make from South Australia to Egypt, to France and back home.

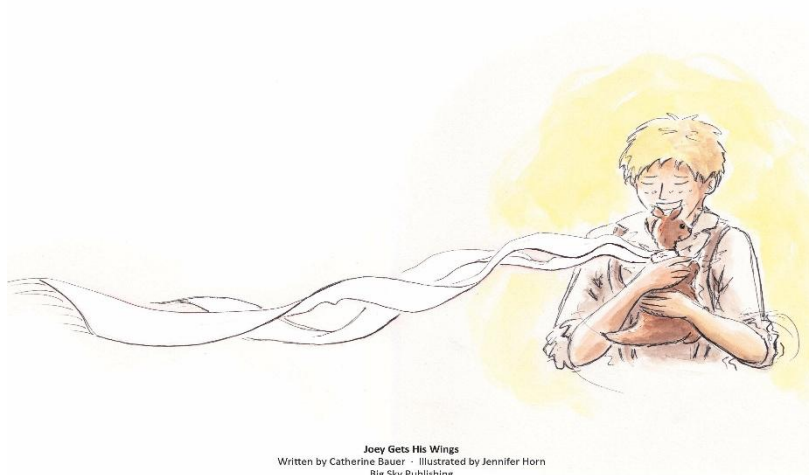
- Locate Birdwood in the Adelaide Hills, South Australia
- Find the Western Front and the Somme region of France
- Find Fromelles and Amiens
- Calculate roughly how far Joey travelled in total

Activity 4: Design Joey's Scarf (The Arts / HASS)

Students design a new version of Joey's red scarf decorated with symbols that represent "home" to them. The scarf should include at least three symbols, each with a written explanation of what it represents.

- What place, person or memory does each symbol stand for?
- What colours would you choose and why?

Variation: The illustrator can supply a colourless scarf template from pages 30–31 for students to complete.



Activity 5: Create a WWI Postcard (English / HASS)

Before emails and texts, people communicated by letter and postcard. Students write and design a postcard from Art to his family, describing his training or flying overseas.

- What would Art be allowed to say and what might be censored?
- What picture would he draw on the front?
- How would he end the postcard so as not to worry his family?

Discussion prompt: Why do you think so many soldiers kept their letters and postcards simple and cheerful?

Activity 6: Paint the View from Above (The Arts / English)

After reading the passages describing the land from above, students paint or draw what Art and Joey might have seen from the cockpit of the Sopwith Camel—an Australian landscape below, or the patchwork fields of France.

Think about colour: what palette would you use for Australia? For France?

What shapes do fields, rivers and roads make from the air?

Discussion: How does the illustrator use colour to distinguish Australia from France? Why do you think she made that choice?

Activity 7: Colour and Emotion (The Arts / English — all years)

Notice the colouring of the Australian-set pages compared to the France-set ones— warm ochres and golds versus cooler, greyer tones. Ask students to think of a place that makes them feel something, then choose colours to represent it.

- What colours does that place invoke and why?
- If you were sad, what colour palette would you paint in?
- How do illustrators and artists use colour to tell emotional stories without words?

Extension: Research colour in art—look at how artists use colour to capture the Australian landscape.

Activity 8: Researching WWI Roles and Uniforms (HASS / English — Years 2–3)

Turn to pages 20–21, which show a variety of uniformed staff. Each student or group chooses a WWI military role—mechanic, nurse, Wing Commander, infantry soldier— and researches their uniform.

- What made up this person's uniform?
- Was there an Australian-specific version? (e.g. Australian WWI nurses, the slouch hat)
- Present findings to the class in a short verbal report with a drawn or printed image.

Activity 9: Create Your Own Mascot (English / The Arts)

Ask students to design a mascot they would take on a long journey away from home. They should draw it, name it and write a short paragraph explaining why it would help them feel brave and connected to home.

- What does it look like?
- What is its name and why?
- What makes it feel like "home" to you?

Extension: Research other mascots that soldiers took with them in WWI or WWII.

Activity 10: Remembrance Day Reflection (HASS / The Arts)

On or near 11 November, students bring in a small object that is important to them and share its story with the class. Connect this to soldiers carrying mementos, and to the wider practice of remembrance.

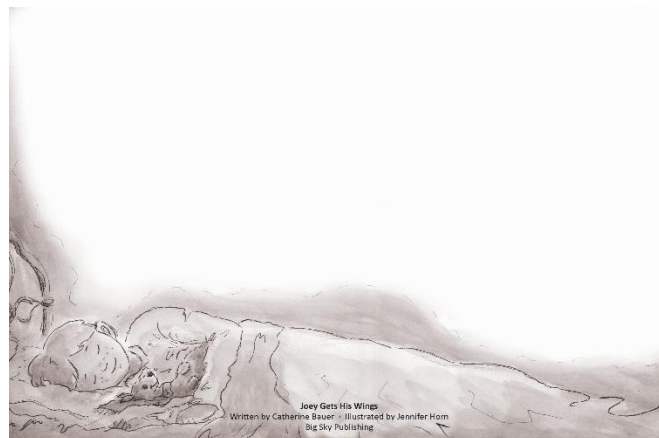
- Why is this object important to you?
- How would you feel if it were lost?
- What would you want someone to know about you from looking at this object?

Discussion: Why do we observe Remembrance Day? What are we asked to remember?

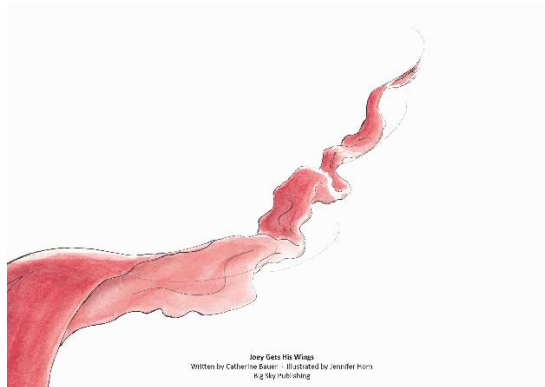
Activity 11: Illustration Activities (The Arts — all years)

Jennifer Horn worked in pencil and watercolour before digitally refining her illustrations. The following activities invite students to engage directly with her artwork.

- **Colouring pages:** Colour Jennifer's line-art illustrations in your own palette then compare with the published book. Why did you choose those colours?
- **Dream drawing:** Using the page where Art is dreaming, draw what you would dream of if you could be anything when you grew up.



- **Scarf activity:** On a template of pages 14–15, draw on either side of the red scarf — one side showing a place or situation you find difficult, the other a place that feels like a sanctuary to you. This can also be a written activity.



- **Old newspapers:** Art's bedroom walls are covered in old newspapers, which was a common practice in early 20th-century homes. Research why people did this and what you might learn from reading those newspapers today.
- **Researching toys:** Art has other toys on his bedroom shelf. What do you think they were made from? Research toys that children in the 1900s–1910s would have played with.

Activity 12: Craft Activities (The Arts — all years)

Hands-on making activities to complement the story.

- Origami Sopwith Camel: instructions available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) — search “origami biplane”.
- Upcycled cardboard biplane: owlsweblog.wordpress.com/2014/03/26/upcyclingfor-kids-cardboard-plastic-biplane-model/
- Toilet paper roll kangaroo: artscraftsymom.com/toilet-paper-roll-kangaroo-craft/

9. Further Reading and Resources

The following resources provide additional historical context for teachers and, where appropriate, older students.

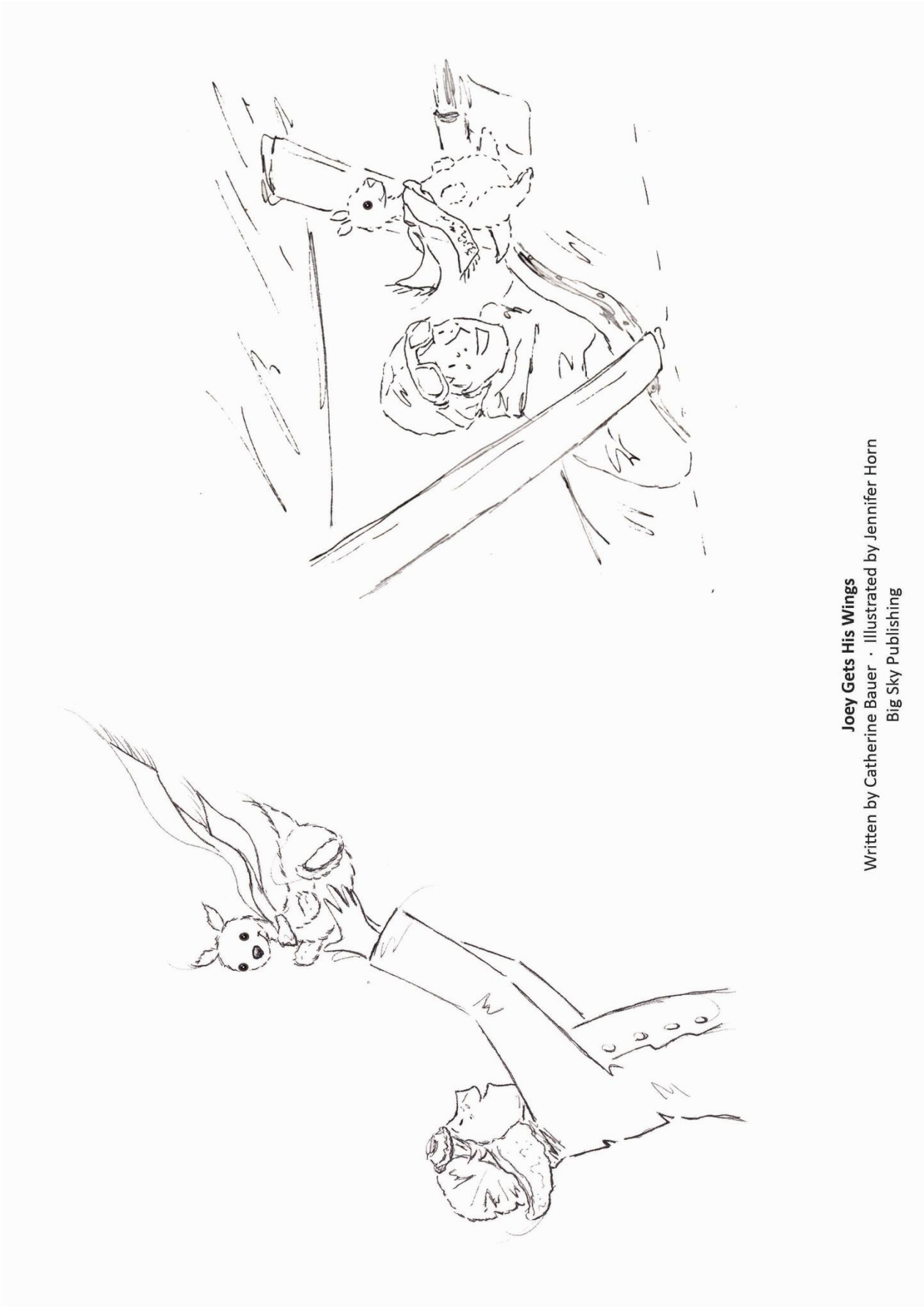
- **The Fromelles Association of Australia including soldier stories and the Pflaum brothers:** <https://www.fromelles.info>
- **Australian War Memorial including Theo Pflaum's wartime diary (two volumes available online):** <https://www.awm.gov.au>
- **Artlab Australia — conservation of WWI mementos including the Pflaum kangaroo mascot:** <https://www.artlabaustralia.com.au>
- **Catherine Bauer's previous picture book Dreaming Soldiers (Big Sky Publishing) exploring the friendship between an Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian soldier in WWI. Teaching notes available from** bigskypublishing.com.au.

10. Colouring Pages

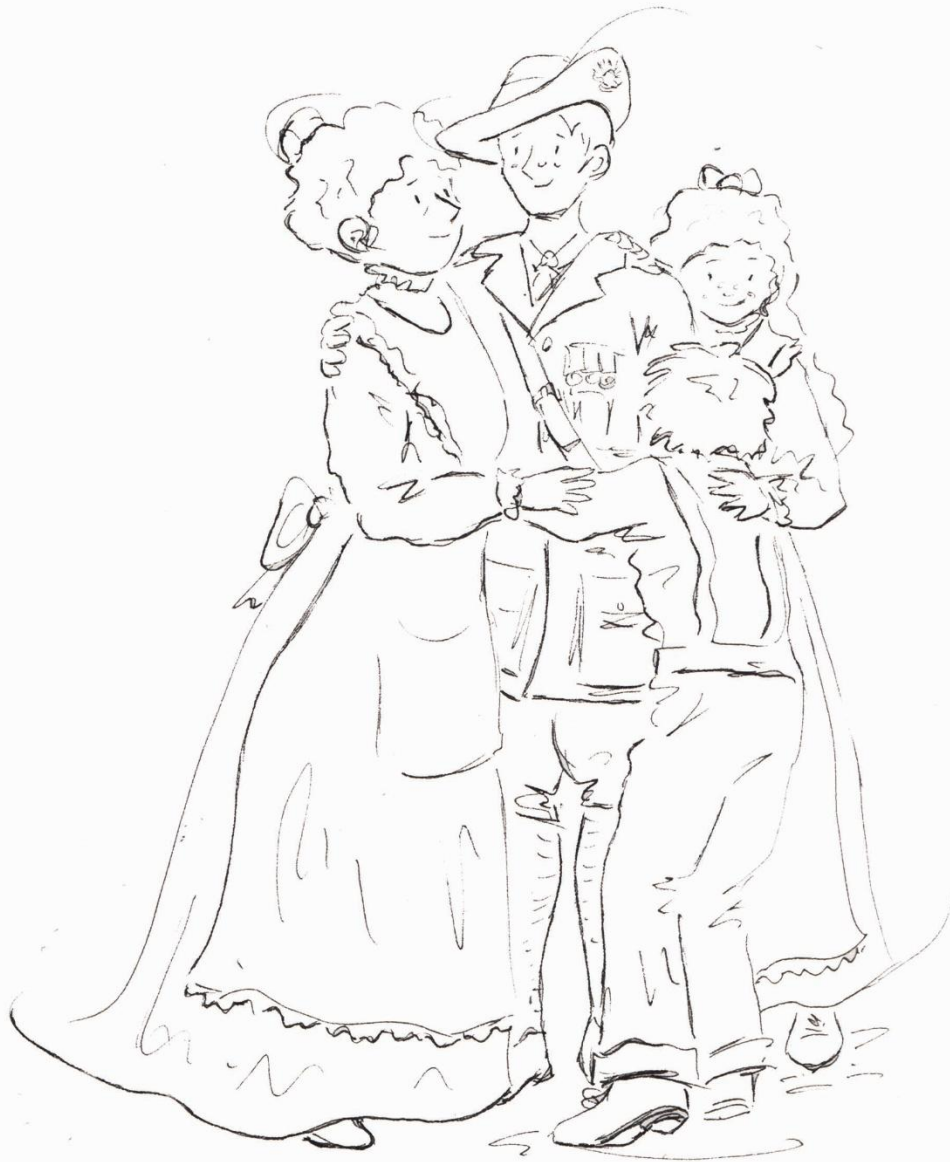


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