

**Teachers' Notes**  
by Fran Knight

**Vinnie's War**

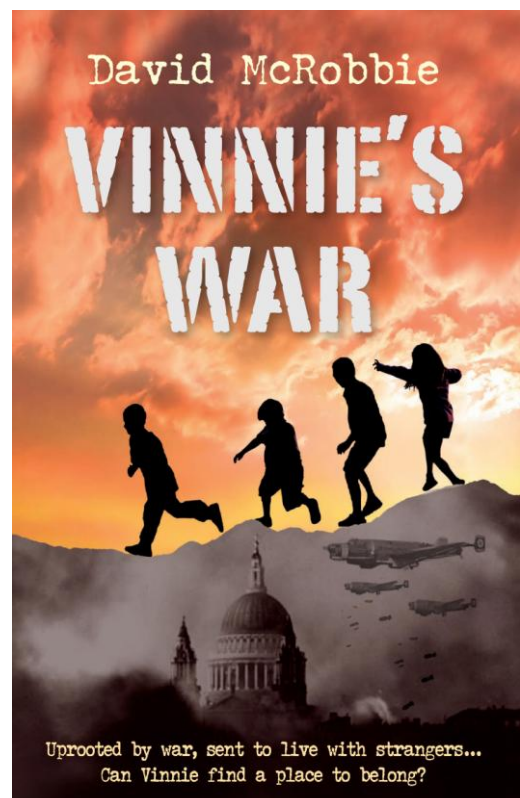
by  
**David McRobbie**

ISBN 978 1 74237 576 2

Recommended for ages 9 – 13

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## INTRODUCTION

**Vinnie's War** is an outstanding introduction for younger readers to the impact of war upon children. Set in Britain during World War II, the Blitz forced the government to come up with measures to protect the children from being killed by the indiscriminate bombing of cities. It is hard for our students to imagine how substantially different this style of war was for Britain. Usually wars happened elsewhere and civilians were not involved, but for the first time, bombing raids were carried out over London and other major cities – Liverpool, Glasgow, Birmingham, to name a few. This meant more civilians appeared on the casualty lists, housing was destroyed and many people were made homeless.

Government regulations put in place wholesale changes. Everyone was issued a gas mask and was expected to carry it with them at all times; home owners were encouraged to build Anderson shelters; public shelters were designated in towns and cities for large groups of people; sirens were installed to warn people of an impending air raid; blackout was imposed; wardens were enlisted to check that people were adhering to the rules; and children (more than a million) were evacuated to safer areas and billeted with local families.

## SYNOPSIS

Vinnie is sent to live with Aunt Vera after his mother dies. Finding her rules hard to take he starts work in a local pub, eventually being 'adopted' by the family, along with one of their relatives, Isaac, recently arrived from Germany. He and Vinnie get along well, Isaac teaching Vinnie to play the piano, at which he excels. But a bomb shatters their existence, and Vinnie is collected by the local authorities and put on a train to an evacuation village. It is here he comes into his own.

A loner, brought up in poor conditions in London, Vinnie excels at his billet, a place where he is looked after by the housekeeper, but nominally the responsibility of the elderly woman who owns the substantial home. Music brings the older woman and Vinnie together. He also makes friends among the other evacuees who, when they first arrive at the village, are subject to the mindless prejudice shown by a few of the other children and villagers. Kathleen and her younger brother Joey are billeted with Mrs Watney and her son, Dennis. Unlike Vinnie, they are treated poorly, with their letters from home opened and rations stolen, their letters to home read before being sent, and some very strict rules imposed. Going to school offers some of the local children a chance to heap scorn upon the *vaccies*, as they are called. But events bring the groups together. Joey notices things going on at the rail yards, and Kathleen notices that her parcel has been opened; Vinnie finds packets of custard powder outside one of the houses, and Dennis mysteriously disappears most evenings.

This is a wonderfully engrossing story, the background full of tidbits of information about lives led during the war. The children overcome the prejudice shown towards them, and find their way into the hearts and minds of the villagers. It is far more than a story about children in war – it will make its readers think about prejudice and what it engenders, about refugees and the reasons people become refugees, about being welcoming and accepting of those who must flee. In its quiet and unassuming way, this book will create much discussion in the classroom.

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

These notes are divided into activities for class and individual work reflecting the three strands of the new Australian English Curriculum: Language, Literature and Literacy. The curriculum also exhorts teachers to include poetry, so activities have been included using the songs and rhymes found in the story (see below - Themes: Music). A Literature Circle allows for classes to explore similar novels and other novels by David McRobbie.

To find out more about the English Curriculum, please go to <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home> . You will need to register an email address and password.

## BEFORE READING

**Vinnie's War** is set in Britain during World War II, when thousands of children were evacuated from London to avoid the Blitz, the carpet bombing of the city during the early years of the war by the German Air Force.

Have in the classroom:

- A large wall map of Europe,
- A map of England and northern Europe,
- Photos of London during the Blitz,
- Photos of the planes used during the Blitz,
- Photos of children being evacuated from London.

Have on one display board:

- The dates of World War 2, with a list of the Allied and Axis powers,
- Dates of the Blitz, with figures of how many were killed, what damage was caused,
- Dates of the evacuation, with the numbers of children evacuated and where they went,
- A copy of a Ration Book, recipes for cheap meals, cheap cuts of meat etc,
- A picture of a pig or cow or chicken with the cuts shown and the cheaper cuts or offal shown more clearly.

Length of time	Explicit Teaching	Research	Questions to discuss
One lesson	Use the map of northern Europe to show: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent of the war,</li> <li>• dates of the war,</li> <li>• who was involved,</li> <li>• major battles,</li> <li>• air battles.</li> </ul>	Class questions could lead to research work in the library using reference books (942 is the Dewey number for WW2) or websites (see below)	What was it like for children in the war?
One lesson	Use the BBC Primary History site to discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rationing,</li> <li>• Anderson Shelter,</li> <li>• gas masks,</li> <li>• 'making do',</li> <li>• the Blitz,</li> <li>• women at work, etc.</li> </ul>	Discuss the quote: ' <i>Children are the unheralded victims of war.</i> ' Collect statistics of the numbers of children killed and injured during WW2 and the numbers evacuated.	Share John Heffernan's picture book, <i>My Dog</i> , to create some feeling of the loss caused by war.
One lesson	Discuss the word 'evacuation'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a dictionary to put the meaning on the whiteboard.</li> <li>• Brainstorm what it may mean for children in war.</li> </ul>	Use the electronic whiteboard to share the BBC website with the class ( <i>see below, an excellent visual introduction to children being evacuated</i> )	Brainstorm the different experiences of the children being evacuated.
One lesson	Begin to read <i>Vinnie's War</i> in class.	Predict with the class where the story may be going and which characters may be the main characters.	List the questions the students have about the book.

## WEBSITES

The best websites I found were the **BBC History** and **BBC Primary History** sites

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/forkids/> (the main site)

From this site, click on World War II. This site is about children in war, evacuation etc. One good introduction to evacuation can be found on this page in *More to explore*. Click onto Home Front WW2, then *The Blitz and Evacuation*. This gives your class a short documentary in the children's own words about their experiences.

- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/world\\_war2/air\\_raids/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/world_war2/air_raids/)

Students could stroll around this site which takes them to IWM (Imperial War Museum) which has clips of war time in England, information about various aspects of children in war, including evacuation.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/>

This site has a search box. I typed in evacuation and came to a page of stories from children in wartime England.

BBC also has archives called the **People's War**, which includes recollections, photographs, diaries and letters from people who lived during the war. This is an invaluable resource to show your class what people actually felt living through the times.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/>

Type in "evacuation" in the search box, and a page of further stories will be there for your class to click on and read.

## LITERACY

### PLOT

The novel can be divided into smaller pieces for the students to read and absorb, then discuss in class.

<b>Chapters 1 – 3: Introduction to Vinnie</b>	<b>Vinnie's life in London, including his life with his mother, then Aunt Vera, then with the Rosen's at the pub where he meets Isaac.</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do we learn of Vinnie's background in these chapters?</li><li>• What is happening in London at the time?</li><li>• How is Vinnie's life directly affected by what is going on?</li></ul>
<b>Chapters 4 – 5: Arriving at their new home</b>	<b>The children are evacuated by train to an unknown place. They start getting to know one other.</b>
<b>Discussion:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How much do the characters know about what is going on?</li><li>• Many of the people they deal with are volunteers. What jobs mentioned in the novel are taken by volunteers and women?</li><li>• One boy they meet on the train is Dobbs. What is his story and how does this compare with that of Vinnie?</li></ul>

<b>Chapters 6 – 8: Village life</b>	<b>The children settle into village life with their billets.</b>
<b>Discussion:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kathleen and Joey's billet is quite different from that of Vinnie and Dobbs. List the rules that Kathleen and Joey must obey.</li> <li>• Why are all the characters worried about going to school in the village?</li> <li>• Reread the information about the school. What similarities and differences do you see with your own school?</li> </ul>
<b>Chapters 9 – 13: The Watneys</b>	<b>Kathleen realises that Mrs Watney is interfering with her mail, while Joey wanders down towards the rail yards.</b>
<b>Discussion:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What rights did these evacuated children have?</li> <li>• How could they have let the authorities know what was going on?</li> <li>• Why does Joey have to go to court?</li> <li>• How do the characters exact their revenge?</li> </ul>
<b>Chapters 14 – 16: Resolution</b>	<b>Mrs. Watney and her son are caught out. Kathleen and Joey are moved to another billet.</b>
<b>Discussion:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are those in the village who are not doing the right thing caught?</li> <li>• Describe the differences between Kathleen and Joey's two billets.</li> <li>• How have the differences between the evacuees and the local village children been resolved?</li> </ul>

## LANGUAGE

### CHARACTERISATION

Class work: Ask the children to brainstorm all the main characters in the novel.

- Write them on butcher's paper and display them in the classroom, or write them up on the electronic whiteboard.
- Ask the children to take one character each and jot down what they know of that person.
- Ask them how they know about the character of one of the people in the novel.
- On the electronic whiteboard add all the characteristics they know about each of the people in the novel.
- Can the students write up a character description, using the brainstormed information and the description given in the novel?
- Ask the students to describe that person as if giving a police description.
- Ask the students to find where their character is first introduced into the novel.
- Notice how David McRobbie outlines their character in a few sentences (for example: on p.6 we first hear of Aunty Vera. What do we surmise of her in the short conversation between Vinnie and Mrs Rosen? What clues does the author give us about her character?)
- Ask the students to write up their character's description with a drawing or picture from a magazine to add to the wall display

## Writing home

Students are to take on the persona of one of the evacuees:

1) Imagine you have just spent your first week as an evacuee.

<b>Write a letter to your parents after your first week in your billet.</b>	Think about your impressions of the village and your billet.	How can you word your letter so that you do not upset your parents with too many complaints?
<b>Write a letter to a friend after your first week in your billet.</b>	How different might this letter be compared to the one to your parents?	What sort of questions would you have for your friend still living in London?

2) Imagine you have returned home to London after the war's end.

<b>Write a letter to your billets telling them of what you have found in London now that the war has finished.</b>	In your letter, ensure that you make sharp comparisons between your London house and the billet.	Your parents have not seen you for four years. Allude to the problems this may have thrown up.
<b>Write a letter to the village school telling them what London is like after the end of the war.</b>	Include in your letter the differences between living in the village and now living in London.	Make sure that your letter makes both good and bad points about moving back to London.

## VOCABULARY

### Mentors

An important theme of *Vinnie's War*, not addressed in detail in these notes, is the role of mentors in young people's development. Students should learn the word, its derivation and derivatives – *mentoree*, *mentoring*, *mentorship* – which could lead to an interesting discussion about neologisms and the degree of comfort we feel with them eg. *Mentoree* sounds clumsy to many.

Your school may run a mentoring/mentorship program, which might provide an entry to the topic. Students may like to volunteer any mentors in their own lives, or fictional mentors they have read about.

Who are Vinnie's mentors? When he gets back to London after the war, who will be his next mentor?

### For the quirky student

I noticed many words beginning with 'V' in the story: Vinnie, Vera, victory, vegetable...

Ask the students to list all the words they can find beginning with the letter 'V'.

Make a collage or hanging or montage using V as the central component. Make sure all the words with V are somehow represented in words or pictures or...

(See activities to explore the theme of Music, below, for another link to 'V for Victory'.

**V for Victory –V for Vocabulary!**

## LITERATURE

### DISCUSSION POINTS

Put the class into small groups to discuss the novel and its treatment of children in war. Give them time to discuss several of the topics outlined below and then ask one person from each group to present this to the class. This could be done on butcher's paper, a whiteboard, or as a collage, montage, or oral presentation by the group.

If this happened today, how do you think you or your parents might react to being told to evacuate?	How might Kathleen and Joey describe their treatment at the hands of Mrs Watney to their mother?	What measures did Vinnie and the others have to take to be safe when living in London?
Why did some of the villagers view the children suspiciously?	How did the war affect the village?	What rules would have affected children's lives? What things would you have missed?
What might happen to Dobbs when returning to London?	What did the novel tell you about the government measures undertaken in London to protect the citizens?	How do we know what food people ate during the war?
How do you explain the level of bullying the children are subjected to?	What might have happened to Vinnie's friends at the pub?	How would Vinnie have described his war when older?

### CLASS ACTIVITIES

<b>Produce a village newsletter to reflect what is going on at the time.</b>	Create a 'Women's Page' with information about making do with clothing, recipes that are cheap, and nutrition.	Create a page which reiterates the rules in place during the war.	Create a page of things to do when a blackout occurs and the family is stuck inside without electricity.
<b>Produce a display in the library or classroom which reflects what has been learnt reading this novel</b>	The display may have pictures of people living during war.	Find some statistics to display about the number of children evacuated, where they came from and where they went	Find some books in the library to add to your display which have as their theme, 'Children in War'.
<b>Produce a model of the village</b>	Some students may like to be responsible for the streetscape, roads, parks, railway line	Some students may like to tackle the main buildings, post office, school	Some students may like to make up the houses where the children are billeted.

## MEET THE AUTHOR: DAVID MCROBBIE

Some students may like centre their research around the author, David McRobbie.

Topic	Understanding	Websites	Research questions
<b>David McRobbie's life</b>	Read what David McRobbie has said about why he wrote this book	At the end of <i>Vinnie's War</i> , David McRobbie talks about his life, particularly during WW2 in Britain. Read the afterword, <i>Another Boy's War</i>	What is there in his life which gave him the impetus to write this story?
<b>David McRobbie's writing</b>	Make a list of all McRobbie's children's fiction work so far. (about 30 books)	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/">http://en.wikipedia.org/</a> (type in his name) <a href="http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk">www.fantasticfiction.co.uk</a> (look up McRobbie in the M file)	Which of his other novels do you think may be similar to this one?
<b>David McRobbie's work outside children's fiction</b>	An interview on ABC radio tells a great deal about what else this author does.	<a href="http://www.abc.net.au">www.abc.net.au</a> Type in his name for the transcript of a talk given about David, and you can download the talk as well.	Can we talk of David as simply a children's author?
<b>Timeline</b>	Some students may like to use the information to create a timeline of his life.	Students will need to access the websites mentioned and information in the novel to gain an idea of when and where he was born, as well as significant dates in his life.	Can the timeline be displayed in the classroom for all to share?
<b>Crossword</b>	Some students may like to develop a crossword using all the words about war found in the novel, or about David McRobbie and his life.	Use the above websites and the reading of the novel to list all the new words about war, or about David McRobbie Use these to develop a crossword.	Some other students may like to have a try at the finished crossword.

## LITERATURE CIRCLE

For a Literature Circle, about 6 copies of each of the books to be read are needed. Divide the class into small groups. They can be friendship groups or teacher-directed groups. Ask the teacher librarian to give a show and tell about the books from which each group must make a selection.

Once the selection has been made:

- A time limit is set for the books to be read;
- Groups must select a leader and possibly a scribe and researcher;
- The group must decide how much they will read in class (usually one lesson a week is devoted to a Literature Circle), how much they will read for homework and whether they will meet to read and discuss between time;
- A roster could be set up with chapters allocated during the term;
- Part of the Literature Circle lesson each week could be devoted to a sharing of the reading done so far, an opportunity for students to talk about the themes and its similarities to *Vinnie's War*;
- The leader's task will be to check that the group is on task;



- One student may like to research some of the terms come across, while another may like to keep records of the group's reading and discussion;
- The important thing is to keep the students interested and keen about their reading, and link it back to the novel being studied.

For more information about Literature Circles see **The Literature Base**, June 1994 (Vol 5, no 2), August 2001 (Vol 14, no 3), August 2006 (Vol 17 no 3) and November 2009 (Vol 24 no 5).

### **Suggestions for a Literature Circle**

There are a number of books written with evacuees as a theme or sub-plot, and many of these are classics. Doing a Literature Circle using a range of these novels is a good chance for students to read a book with a similar theme, so widen their reading, compare it with the novel, and read a classic tale – as promoted by the new Australian Curriculum.

The classic tales include:

1. **Goodnight Mister Tom** by Michelle Magorian, which was first published in 1981 and has been in print ever since. The story of a small abused boy evacuated from London in 1939 tugs at the heart as he finds an unlikely home. (filmed in 1998)
2. **The lion, the witch and the wardrobe** by CS Lewis begins with a quartet of children being evacuated from London to live in the professor's house. It is here they enter Narnia through the wardrobe. The evacuation is a small part of the story. (many publications and many film versions, the latest being 2005)
3. **Lord of the flies** by William Golding (Penguin, 1999) sees young evacuees fleeing from London because of war. When their plane is forced down on an unknown island, the real horror begins. Very few hints are given about the situation in Britain, but enough is said to know these children are being evacuated. Some of the more mature students may like to read this one. (filmed in 1990)
4. The **Green Knowe** stories by Lucy Boston also tell of a young boy evacuated from London to stay with an estranged grandmother while his mother searches for news of her husband. **The chimneys at Green Knowe** has recently been filmed as **From time to time** (2011).
5. **Carrie's war** by Nina Bawden is a classic, often reprinted since 1973. It tells the tale of several children evacuated from London to a small Welsh village where Carrie and Nick are boarded with the hateful Mr Evans, while a friend is boarded with Mr Evans' relatives on a farm not far from the town.

More recent novels concerning evacuees include:

1. **My dog** by John Heffernan and illustrated by Andrew McLean (Margaret Hamilton Books, 2001) is a gut wrenching picture book telling of a child evacuated from his home because of sectarian violence. (Though not a novel, this is an award winning picture book which has engendered much discussion.)
2. **Blitz** by Vince Cross (Scholastic, 2008) is one of the series, *My Story*, and is set in Britain during the Blitz at the start of World War 2. In diary format, it tells of one girl and her small brother being evacuated to an unfriendly house, and their eventual escape back to their family in London.
3. **Blackout in the Blitz** by Terry Deary (Scholastic 2009) Two children evacuated from Coventry during the Blitz, find a way to escape their horrible billet. By Terry Deary of *Horrible Histories* fame, this book will prove an alternative for those students a little less inclined to read another book!

4. **The amazing story of Adolphus Tipps** by Michael Morpurgo and illustrated by Michael Foreman (HarperCollins, 2005) tells of a village by the sea which was used by the Americans to plan their D-Day operations. The village was evacuated and used as a model for northern France where the armies could practice their landing. Several of the children in the village are evacuee children and their stories are included.
5. **David McRobbie's novels.** There is a list of his novels on the Wikipedia web site <http://en.wikipedia.org/> Some of the students may like to read and discuss another of his novels as part of the Literature Circle. (Teachers should exercise caution, as some titles intended for older readers contain violence and/or sex eg. *Tyro*.)

[NB: Wikipedia's site for *Evacuated Children* has a list of novels based on war time experiences, including ones by Noel Streatfield and Dianna Wynne Jones. I could not find copies in Adelaide, but there may be some at other libraries or they may be able to be sourced from online book shops]

## THEMES

The following activities explore the themes of:

- The impact of war on daily life
- Family
- Music
- Bullying

### WAR —IMPACT ON DAILY LIFE

War is the pervading theme of this novel. The war has an impact on every aspect of the childrens' lives: their family, school, clothing, friends, housing and even their toys and leisure time.

Use **Blackline Master 1** to note the places where the children's daily lives are affected by war.

**Blackline Master 2** allows students to record the ways in which wartime laws affected daily life.

On **Blackline Master 3**, students can note the changes that the children notice to daily life in the village.

These Blackline Masters could be assigned to different groups while reading the novel and used in a jigsaw exercise where students re-group, with representatives of all three topics in each group, to share their information. They will then be ready for the following activities.

#### **Class Activity: Food and rationing**

Reread the chapters which contain information about food, eating and rationing.

- List the food the children eat in the village.
- Find an outline of the rations allowed each person during the war.
- Find an outline of the daily food input recommended today by the Heart Foundation in Australia.

Place the 2 lists side by side

- What do you notice?
- Many British people say that during the war they were better fed and healthier than any time in their lives. Why might this be so?

Reread the afterword by David McRobbie

- What does he add to our knowledge of food during the war?
- What is the recipe he quotes? Can you find any other recipes promoted during the war?

In Germany, rationing occurred as well. Many staple foods were cut or copied. The word 'ersatz' came into our language from WW2.

- Can you find out what it means?
- How did it apply to German food?
- What 'ersatz' food was manufactured?

**Small Group Activity: Plane Spotting**

Plane spotting was an activity many children were involved with during World War II. Reread Chapter 14, 'A German', to see how much Vinnie and Dobbs know about the aircraft that sometimes fly overhead. Many children and adults had cardboard cutouts of the shapes of the planes so they could be easily recognized and authorities alerted. At least three planes are mentioned in this chapter.

Find a book in the library which gives you pictures of some of the planes used by the English and German air forces. Make cardboard cutouts of them ready for plane spotting. Hang them around your classroom.

**Small Group Activity: Finding Shelter**

Everyone feared being bombed through the Blitz. Many places were prepared for large numbers of people to shelter in during an air raid.

- List some of the places you have read about where people could take shelter
- How did people prepare themselves in their own backyards?
- A group may like to build a model of an Anderson Shelter for the class
- Think about where you might shelter in the event of an air raid
- What precautions do people take when cyclones come to Australia – for example, in the summer of 2011?

**Small Group Activity: Clothing**

People during the war had to 'make do'. Clothing coupons did not stretch far, new clothes were rarely bought, children were used to secondhand and hand-me-down clothing, and special occasions meant people pooling their coupons for the event.

On several occasions, the novel illustrates wartime clothing restrictions.

- Find these and comment on how you would have coped with this deprivation.

**Small Group Activity: Theft/criminal activity**

On several occasions, theft plays a part in the story, showing just how easily some people can be lured into taking things for themselves in times of privation.

Ask the class to brainstorm where theft occurs in the novel. Write their ideas on the electronic whiteboard, adding where the theft is in the book.

Theft	Chapter	Who it involves	Results
Custard Powder			
Coal			
And...			

## FAMILIES

A range of families is shown in this novel, from Vinnie's home life before his mother was killed, to his life with Vera, then the Rosens, and as an evacuee with Miss Armstrong. The other children also have different experiences of family and home life.

- List all the children in the novel
- Have each student concentrate on one child from the story
- On a piece of paper, add the family and where the child lives
- Add information given in the novel about the family
- Look hard in the novel for hints about the family
- Are they happy? Content? Unhappy? Selfish?
- Tabulate the results for the class
- Discuss Leo Tolstoy's quote: "*Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.*" — Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Chapter 1, first line.

## MUSIC

Music plays a large role in the novel, firstly with Vinnie being able to play the harmonica; then finding Isaac, who, as a gifted pianist, helps Vinnie learn to play; and then with Miss Armstrong, who recognizes Vinnie's talent and teaches him.

1) Students could tap out the Morse code for V — dot-dot-dot-dash — then listen to the opening of Beethoven's 5th Symphony. This symphony was broadcast to Europe nightly throughout the war as a symbol of hope.

2) Small groups may like to take one of the following to research:

List the tunes and piano pieces that Vinnie learns to play (see chapters 2, 7 and 9 ... )	Name the instruments that Vinnie plays during the novel
Some of the songs were those sung regularly in pubs and shelters to keep spirits high during bombing raids. Which ones might these be?	Tunes like 'Knees up Mother Brown', 'Beautiful Dreamer', 'We'll hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line' and 'Run, Rabbit Run' can be found on the Internet and shared with the class
Vinnie learns some of the Italian words linked with piano lessons and music. Find these in chapter 10, look them up in a dictionary and write out their meanings for the class	The hymn 'Jerusalem' is sung at church in chapter 15. Find the whole hymn and its words. Can a sung version be found for the class to listen to? It is often sung in times of need. What might this hymn have meant to the people singing it?

(NB: There are many CD compilations available of WW2 songs.)

3) The whole class can then join in a discussion:

*How does music help bring the characters together in the story?*

## BULLYING

Bullying plays an important role in the novel, and there are a number of examples of it happening in various forms.

Use **Blackline Master 4**. In small groups, students can revisit the chapters where bullying occurs and make notes in preparation for a class discussion on how the children in the novel cope with the bullying that they encounter.

## ABOUT THE WRITERS

### DAVID MCROBBIE

David McRobbie was born in Scotland. He has worked as a ship's engineer, a primary-school teacher, college lecturer, parliamentary researcher in Papua New Guinea, scriptwriter and producer of children's radio and television programs for the ABC. He is now a full-time writer and lives in Queensland.

David has written many best-selling books for children and young adults including the 'Wayne' books which were adapted into the successful ABC television series, 'The Wayne Manifesto', screened in 54 countries. *See How They Run*, *Eugenie Sandler PI* and *Fergus McPhail* have also been adapted for television. His young adult novel, *Tyro*, was shortlisted for the 2000 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award for Older Readers.

Of *Vinnie's War*, David says:

*Vinnie's War* touches on the importance of making friends and making allowances for people who may be carrying a burden of hurt and injury. It also shows that it is right to stand up to bullies, whether they are children or adult. Finally the story indicates the importance of having a mentor in one's life and being able to make use of the advice and help that a mentor offers.

I think the book also shows the value of humour in the face of a bad situation.

I hope the book will appeal to today's children, who can try to imagine how they'd cope with being evacuated in such a manner. The war touched every facet of life — shortages and restrictions were everywhere. Beaches were mined or fenced off with barbed wire, parks were requisitioned as army camps and food was rationed. Newspapers were full of war news and even children's comics carried wartime propaganda. (Some examples of this are contained in the book.)

I was an evacuee in about 1940, but I had the good fortune to travel with my family from Glasgow to a smaller town about 56 kilometres to the south. We stayed in this town and didn't return to Glasgow after the war. *Vinnie's Other War* came about because I felt it was a story worth telling, especially since British people had recently marked the 70th anniversary of this mass evacuation. As I did the research for the story, I found that many of the photographs and posters of the time were haunting.

### FRAN KNIGHT

Fran is a semi-retired teacher librarian who loves to read adolescent fiction. She has read and reviewed children's books since the 1970's, for magazines such as *Magpies* and *Fiction Focus*, as well as newsletters for English teachers, history teachers and teacher librarians around Australia. Her love of reading has led her to talk at conferences about her reading and enthusing kids to read. She has written teacher notes for many books published in Australia, and her articles about using books in the classroom are often found in *The Literature Base*, and sometimes in *Magpies*, *ACCESS* and *Viewpoint*.

In 2005, her book, *Ngadjuri: Aboriginal peoples of South Australia's Mid North Region* was published, following 20 years of research into this group. Pledger Consulting has published five books which reflect Fran's reading. Each of the five contains lists of books she has read, placed under subject headings which can be used in schools to help students find novels that reflect their interests.

Now living in the City of Adelaide, where a short walk takes her to a range of libraries and bookshops, Fran continues to answer queries about what books to give students; talks to students about good books to read; writes teacher notes, articles and reviews; volunteers at several schools where there is no teacher librarian; and reads.

Fran's contribution to teacher librarianship has been recognised with the South Australian Teacher Librarian of the Year awarded in 2005, and Honorary Life Membership of SLASA (School Library Association of South Australia) in 2007.

# The Impact of War . . . on daily life

As you read *Vinnie's War*, make notes on this sheet about how the novel illustrates the impact war has on daily life.

<b>IMPACT</b>	<b>WHERE THIS IS MENTIONED</b>	<b>WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CHILDREN?</b>
Home life		
Clothing		
Rationing		
School		
Church		
Friends		
Toys		
Meals		

# The Impact of War . . . new laws

As you read *Vinnie's War*, make notes about the impact of the new wartime laws on daily life for children.

<b>LAW</b>	<b>WHERE IT IS MENTIONED</b>	<b>WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CHILDREN?</b>
Blackout		
Food		
Cars		
Bicycles		
Protected occupations		
Rationing		
Gas mask		

# The Impact of War . . . village life

The children notice various things that show the impact of the war on everyday village life.

<b>THEY NOTICE</b>	<b>WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?</b>	<b>WHAT IMPACT DOES THIS HAVE?</b>
Telegrams		
Use of coupons		
Blackout windows		
Young man driving the bus		
A woman running the post office		
Home Guard		
And ...		



# BULLYING in *Vinnie's War*

<b>Who?</b>	<b>Chapter</b>	<b>What happens?</b>	<b>How does the bullied person react?</b>
Vinnie and Aunt Vera	1		
Nazi Germany and the Jews	2		
Two boys on the train	3		
Village children	7 & 8		
Mrs Watney	6, 9 & 10		
Dennis	7 & 11		
Mr Murdoch	9		
And ...			