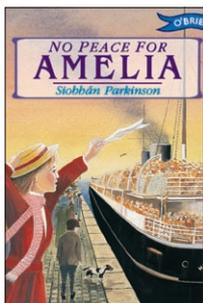


NO PEACE FOR AMELIA

by Siobhán Parkinson

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When Frederick Goodbody defies his parents and upbringing to enlist as an infantry soldier in the Dublin Fusiliers, Amelia is forced to examine her own confused feelings about the heroism of war. Her friend, Mary Ann, must choose between her initial feelings of elation at the thought of Irish citizens finally making a stand for independence and her increasing concern for their fate. As soldiers fight and die, in France and at home, both Amelia and Mary Ann experience first-hand the dreadful effects of war. Their mutual suffering brings them closer together and helps each to an understanding that people are more important than political aspirations.

LANGUAGE – ENGLISH

◆ Vocabulary extension: Disconcerted, peremptorily, agitatedly, duplicity, incoherent, unruffled.

◆ Descriptive language: E.g., 'rain coming down in stair-rods' (p.15), 'dusty, musty, horsehair-smelling darkness' (p.21), 'bobbing and swaying with chatter like flowering elder at the mercy of the breeze' (p.24), 'her Sunday-gloved hand' (p.124).

◆ Sustained description: E.g., description of the train arriving and the ship leaving (p.64).

◆ Discussion: Mary Ann's mother died 'a lonely death of consumption', not allowed to see family or friends (pp.32–34). Why had she been ostracised in this way? Is society always kinder and more understanding nowadays to sufferers of serious illnesses?

◆ Creative: No words having been exchanged, Amelia understands that Frederick is troubled (p.28). Write a short piece about a chosen character using descriptions of body-language and facial expressions that clearly demonstrate his/her mood.

◆ Creative: In the early 1900s, people were very conscious of social etiquette and table manners (p.38). Imagine that Amelia and Frederick visit a burger-bar in the early 2000s and write the scene, describing their reactions to current table manners and foods.

◆ Creative: Mary Ann used rhyming slang to describe the 'hooks and crannies' (p.46). Find examples of Dublin or Cockney rhyming slang in common use, e.g., Joe Maxi (taxi), or invent your own.

◆ Creative: Mary Ann used her mother's favourite curse, 'Christmas in the workhouse!' (p.33). Why might this have been used as a curse? Discuss the significance of this curse in the early 1900s and think of other colourful curses or blessings that might convey a sense of history to the listener.

◆ Creative: Write the chaperone's diary entry after the day-trip to Kingstown (pp.24–31).

◆ Poetry: Read and analyse the poems of Patrick Pearse and Joseph Mary Plunkett (p.35) in which they idealise blood shed in the cause of freedom. Compare and contrast with the work of anti-war poets such as Siegfried Sassoon, Francis Ledwidge and Wilfred Owen.

SESE – HISTORY

◆ Local studies: Homes. Comparing and classifying a range of homes: Size and location, decoration, furniture and fittings, heat, light,

environs. Examine the description of Amelia's home (pp.15–18). Though smaller than their first house in Kenilworth Square (see *Amelia*, pp.12–18, 71–79), it was still relatively luxurious for the time. Find information on homes of the working class in 1916 and compare life in the tenements with life of the middle classes.

◆ Local studies: Games and pastimes in the past. Being Quakers, Amelia's family took care to keep Sunday special. Compare their Sunday afternoon pursuits (p.23) with current Sunday leisure activities.

◆ Local studies: Feasts and festivals in the past. Becoming familiar with the origins and traditions associated with feasts and festivals of major world religions. Examine the special Easter ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church (pp.116–122) and Amelia's confused reactions (p.122). Find information on how other Christian churches would have observed Holy Week in 1916.

◆ Eras of change and conflict: Changing roles of women in nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Becoming familiar with the ways in which the everyday lives of people changed and the long-term effects of these changes.

Amelia's mother had taken up work as 'a lady typewriter' (p.18) and this was regarded as 'a terribly modern sort of a thing'. Amelia 'fancied herself as a bit of a physician' (p.163). Examine how the campaign for women's rights at the turn of the century influenced Amelia and her mother and paved the way for career choices of the late twentieth century.

◆ Eras of change and conflict: World War I. Many thousands of Irishmen joined the British forces to fight in World War I, enduring unimaginable horror for their beliefs (pp.103–104, 201–205). Very often they were regarded with contempt and suspicion by those who resented Ireland being part of the United Kingdom, and who believed that 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity' (p.48). Mary Ann sympathised with this statement, although she had many reservations. Find information on those Irishmen who fought and died in World War I. Visit the War Memorial Gardens in Islandbridge, Dublin.

◆ Politics, conflict and society: 1916 and the foundations of the State. Exploring and discussing the attitudes, beliefs and motivations of those who took part in the Easter Rising of 1916. Having read Patrick's letter (pp.113–114),

Mary Ann wondered if his 'passionate and committed friends' would make an impact on a world imperial power like England, and later she and Amelia discussed his motivations with the injured Patrick himself (pp.166–179). The long-term effects of the Rising became evident after the surrender (pp.194–197).

◆ Visit the Road to Independence exhibition at the National Museum, Kildare St, Dublin (Tel: 01-677 7477), or Kilmainham Gaol (Tel: 01-453 5984), contact Dúchas, www.heritageireland.ie

SPHE

◆ Myself: Developing self-confidence. Developing the ability to express personal opinions, thoughts and ideas; listening to, respecting, thinking about and commenting critically and constructively on the views of others. Throughout the book, both Amelia and Mary Ann confront their conflicting opinions and loyalties about themes such as war, pacifism and relationships. Examine the development of their thoughts and ideas as events force them to come to terms with harsh realities.

◆ Myself: Growing and changing. Identifying and discussing the changes that are experienced in growing from child to adult: Changing interests and leisure activities and increasing personal independence (Amelia and her friends spending Sunday afternoon together while her family stayed at home, pp.22–23); increasing personal and community responsibility (Amelia's mature and responsible reactions to Patrick's injuries, pp.166–179).

◆ Myself: Making decisions. Recognising that opportunities to exercise choice can increase as responsibilities are accepted and as the trust of others is earned: Mary Ann's knowledge that she had gained the 'trust and esteem' of her employers (p.36) and her recognition of their attitude to guns and fighting influenced her thinking as she struggled 'to choose between her brother and his convictions ... and her employers and their convictions ...' (p.37).

◆ Media education: Exploring and understanding how information is conveyed, exploring the role of newspapers and other print media in transmitting messages, identifying information that may be deliberately excluded. Examine the effects of the war posters on Frederick and Amelia (p.26) and discuss why Eoin Mac Neill's 'cryptic message' (p.126) might have failed in its intention of cancelling the Rising. Had he had access to television, might his message have reached its target audience?