

FARAWAY HOME



by Marilyn Taylor

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In 1938 Nazi troops march into Vienna. Karl and his sister Rosa, young Jews who escape the terror on a Kindertransport, are forced to leave their family behind. After frightening experiences and a harrowing journey, they find a safe haven at a refugee farm in Millisle, County Down. Here they meet Judy, a reluctant volunteer from Dublin, and Peewee Crawford from the Shankill area of Belfast. Gradually these young people from different religions, cultures and backgrounds come to understand each other and to appreciate each other's problems. Judy learns that not everyone enjoys a childhood of peace and security, and Karl learns what it is to be a refugee. The devastating Belfast Blitz of 1941 provides the climax to this moving and atmospheric story of the horrors of war, of young people coping with racist violence, homesickness and loss, and learning to face a difficult future with courage and hope.

LANGUAGE – ENGLISH

- ◆ Vocabulary extension: Raucous, diminishing, plaintively, gantries, morass, compulsively.
- ◆ Descriptive writing: E.g., 'scribbled over with the white and grey of a pigeon's wing' (p.118), 'chequered with wedges of vivid sunlight' (p.131).
- ◆ Metaphor: E.g., Oma's iron ring (pp.17–18, 42, 110), Rosa's doll (pp.88, 110, 151, 166).
- ◆ Discussion: Karl initially felt 'joy and relief' (p.45), but homesickness, insecurity, fear and loss predominated (pp.51, 62, 54, 79). List the difficulties experienced by refugees and discuss how these could be lessened by ordinary people and by governments.
- ◆ Discussion: Karl felt hurt and resentful when Lisl explained that their friendship 'was all a mistake' (p.28), but is it always possible to stand by friends, especially when those friends have become 'outsiders' for whatever reason?
- ◆ Poetry: The universality of poetry with reference to the epigraph. Discuss how the poem, inscribed by a sensitive teacher, helped Karl; how poetry can speak across time, across cultures (p.154).
- ◆ Creative: Letter-writing. You have been transplanted, almost without warning and with virtually no money, to a strange country where you know no one and don't speak the language. Write to an old friend or relation, describing your feelings and reactions as you come to terms with the experience.

SESE – HISTORY

- ◆ Local studies: Games and pastimes in the past. Exploring aspects of the leisure interests and games of local people in the past and comparing with those in the present: Model aeroplanes, listening to wireless and gramophone, collecting autographs and photographs of filmstars, playing ping-pong and Monopoly were all pastimes enjoyed by the children on the farm.
- ◆ Local studies: Feasts and festivals of major world religions. Studying some of the ceremonies, stories, dances and music associated with these feasts and festivals, e.g., the Sabbath (lighting candles, sweet wine,

- prayer on Friday night, blessing food, pp.31, 98); Passover to commemorate deliverance of Jews from slavery, symbolic foods (pp.183, 191–192); Kosher or permitted foods (bacon, ham, pork and shellfish forbidden, pp.48, 116); the Hora (traditional dance, pp.101–102).
- ◆ Local studies: Buildings, sites or ruins. Investigating various aspects of these sites: Origins and location, maps of sites then and now, purpose of construction, elements which have changed or remained unchanged, lives of people in this place over time. For information on Ballycopeland Windmill and the farm at Millisle, see Afterword, pp.213–214.
- ◆ Life, society, work and culture in the past: Life during World War II. Becoming familiar with aspects of the lives of people: Foods and farming (pp.51, 114, 133), technologies developed (pp.60–62, 84), simple treatment of some of the social, political and religious issues of the time, e.g., rise of Nazis, legalised anti-Semitism, forced migration, fall of democracy, Anschluss, Kristallnacht (pp.11–43); the 'Emergency' (pp.73, 80, 175); the Blitz (pp.194–206).

SESE – GEOGRAPHY

- ◆ Maps, globes and graphical skills: Using maps to record routes and directions in the locality and wider environments. (1) Karl and Rosa's journey: Vienna–Hook of Holland–Harwich–London–Heysham–Belfast Donaghadee–Millisle. (2) Karl, Judy and Peewee's journey: Millisle–Newtownards–Craigantlet Hills–Dundonald–Scrabo Hill–Cregagh–River Lagan–Lisburn–Dublin Road.
- ◆ Trade and development issues: Coming to appreciate the inequalities between the developed and the developing world, acquiring some knowledge of the origins, work and Irish involvement in the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Contact ncde@eircom.net for information.

SPHE

- ◆ Myself: Self-identity. Recognising and appreciating that each person is a unique individual and that this individuality is expressed in many different ways, e.g., through lifestyle,

- clothes, beliefs, personal attitudes and principles. Discuss the initial fears and prejudices of Judy (pp.68, 75, 97) and of Granny, who was suspicious of Judy before she knew her (pp.132–133).

- ◆ Myself: Taking care of my body. Examining some of the strategies adopted in the community for promoting health and for protecting people from ill-health. Tilly suffered from tuberculosis or consumption, examine measures taken to eradicate this disease.
- ◆ Growing and changing: Feelings and emotions. Discussing how to express and cope with feelings in an appropriate manner: Choosing carefully the time to talk and empathising with the feelings of others. Judy wanted to hear about Lisl, feeling that then she would really know Karl (pp.111, 155), but Karl found it difficult to express his anger and grief, except in a letter (p.176).
- ◆ Myself: Making decisions. Exploring the factors and levels of thought that influence decisions and choices: Impulse, values and beliefs, social constraints. Karl 'refused to consider the effect his running away would have ... told himself he wasn't going to think about the consequences ...' (p.189), but, on reflection, changed his mind (p.200).
- ◆ Myself and others: Myself and my family. Discussing families and homes and how they can vary in many ways: Adoptive parents, foster-parents, group homes, hostels; exploring what belonging to a family means: Having a sense of belonging, caring for and supporting each other; comparing and contrasting the lifestyles of families in different cultures, both in Ireland and abroad.
- ◆ Myself and the wider world: Developing citizenship. Exploring how inequality might exist in the local community and suggesting ways in which this might be addressed: Prejudice and discrimination against particular individuals or groups; acknowledging the various cultural, religious, ethnic or other groups that exist in a community; exploring ways in which these differences can be respected.