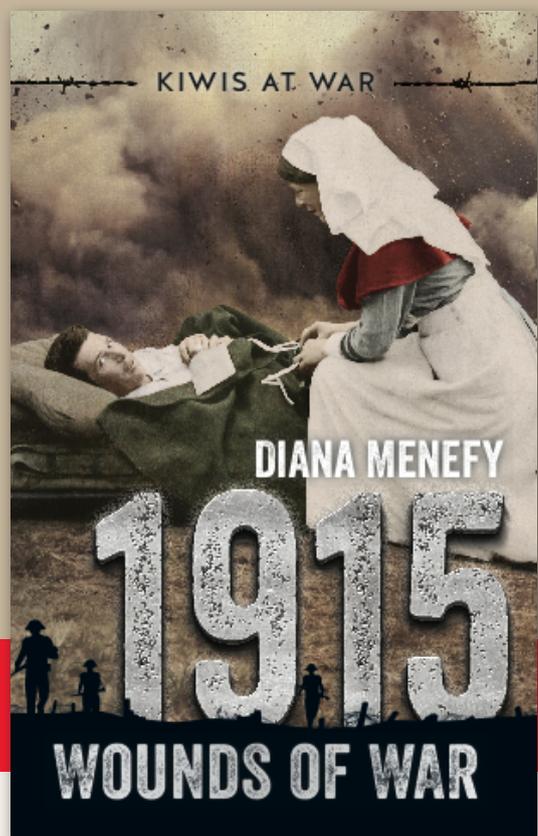


Kiwis at War: 1915: Wounds of War

By Diana Menefy

- Reading • Writing • Social Studies
- History • Research Skills



Synopsis

1915: Wounds of War is an exciting young-adult novel that follows the dramatic experiences of two young nurses serving in World War One (WWI). The main settings and events are real, and provide an engaging introduction into the history of New Zealand's participation in the war. It is the second book in Scholastic's *Kiwis at War* series, following on from *1914: Riding Into War*, which was published in 2014 to critical acclaim.

Wounds of War begins with siblings Mel and Drew Burlace discussing signing up for service. Drew has already enlisted as a soldier, and Mel is considering volunteering as a nurse, like her confident, high-achieving role model, Harriet Mills. Harriet soon arrives, and readers discover that not only is she Mel and Drew's cousin, but she is also a cousin to Billy, the main character in *1914: Riding Into War* (in which Harriet plays a minor but important role). Drew wants Harriet to be present when he tells his mother he has enlisted so that she will respond more calmly. However, Harriet is not as positive about Drew's choice as he had expected. She is more aware of the realities of war and tries to tell him that it won't be one big, glorious adventure. She also reads aloud a letter from her brother, Frank, who is an untrained orderly waiting to be sent to war.

The second chapter comprises two letters from Harriet to Mel. In the first, Harriet describes her preparations for departure, including her uniform fittings. In the second, she describes her terrible seasickness on the voyage to England, and her experiences in London. The third chapter also focuses on Harriet, but returns to a third-person narrative, like the first chapter. It describes Harriet's journey from England to Egypt, where she is assigned to the 19th British General Hospital in Alexandria. There she will be the sister in charge of C section. At first, she finds the job difficult because she is working alongside a German sister who speaks no English, all the records are in German and the measurements are in metric (which she does not understand). The German sister soon leaves, however, as being from an enemy country, she is no longer permitted to work there. From then on, Harriet's concerns involve dealing with the large number of severely wounded patients and battling the intense heat. She must also deal with vast amounts of paperwork and has little free time. The chapter ends with a visit from her brother Frank, who is on leave. He tells her of his experiences at Anzac Cove, and the two spend an idyllic afternoon sailing a falucca across the harbour.

Chapter four focusses on Mel, who is now a staff nurse aboard the hospital ship *Maheno*. Fortunately, Mel does not suffer seasickness and is able to enjoy her departure from Wellington. Ellie, Mel's friend from school, accompanies her on this part of the journey, intending to leave the ship in England and nurse over there. The nursing staff take part in practice drills and enjoy a stop over in Colombo, but they later discover that their ship has been diverted from England to Gallipoli.



Synopsis continued

In chapter five, Harriet breaks with protocol by approaching Major Gordon Stead, a surgeon, asking him to look at Joe, a wounded patient, who is low on the priority list because he is deemed unlikely to live. Harriet thinks he has a chance and so intervenes on his behalf. She risks a severe rebuke, but ends up saving Joe's life and winning the admiration of Major Stead. The next chapter tells of Mel's experiences on the hospital ship off the coast of Gallipoli. She – and the reader – learn about the soldiers' experiences through the things they tell Mel while in her care. There are many wounded, and their stories are often tragic. Mel finds the work exhausting but copes well until her brother Drew is brought in as a casualty. He has a serious leg wound, which will probably take him out of the war. Mel is relieved to learn that he will survive, and the two spend what time they can catching up. She learns that Bert and Sam, the two farm hands who had accompanied Drew to war, have been killed. Mel's life then falls into the routine of nursing aboard the ship as it travels between Gallipoli and Mudros, picking up and dropping off patients. The constant noise and the fleas add extra stress to an already arduous role.

In chapter seven, Drew arrives in Alexandria and encounters Harriet at the hospital. Readers learn more about his experiences fighting in Gallipoli as he tells Harriet what happened there. Later, Harriet departs for three days' leave at Aboukir Bay. There, she stays with other nurses, swims, rests and goes sightseeing. Back in Alexandria she receives a letter from Frank and goes on a dinner date with Major Stead. Chapter eight describes Mel's experiences when the *Maheno* travels to Malta and is involved in a strike. She also goes on leave and visits the pyramids and Cairo. After that she goes to Alexandria and is able to spend time with Drew. She does not see Harriet, however, as Harriet has been transferred to the New Zealand Hospital at Pont de Koubbeh. Harriet's experiences in Pont de Koubbeh are the focus of the next chapter, chapter nine. She writes a long, happy letter to her brother, Frank, and begins her new job nursing mainly New Zealanders.

Chapter ten is aptly titled *Everything Goes Wrong*. There is bad news from the fighting front, a British nurse is executed by the Germans, frightening Harriet, and then a nurse from Christchurch dies of enteric fever. Soon after that, Harriet and some other nurses are involved in an accident when a wagon they are travelling in is hit by a train, killing one nurse and injuring the driver and another nurse. There is also news that the transport ship *Marquette* has been sunk, killing 32 members of the medical corps, including three nurses from Christchurch. The only good news is a letter from Mel, who is enjoying time in England. But then comes the worst news of all – Harriet's brother Frank has been killed.

In chapters 11 and 12, Mel is given the opportunity to return to New Zealand, but she opts instead to stay. She is promoted to Sister and is assigned to the hospital ship *Assaye*. Mel uses her leave to visit Drew and Harriet in Pont de Koubbeh, then starts her new job. It is winter now, and cold becomes a problem. Mel learns to treat frostbite, and is soon treating Scottish fighters off the shores of Cape Helles. Back in Alexandria, she reads the good news that Anzac and Suvla were evacuated with very few casualties. Chapter 13 tells more of Mel's experiences on the *Assaye*, and includes a former patient's description of the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Mel is transferred to the *Gascon*, taking wounded soldiers to England. There she meets up with her old friend Ellie, who tells her about the terrifying experience of being aboard the *Marquette* when she sunk.

Chapter 15 describes Mel and Ellie's leave in England and the *Gascon's* dangerous return journey to Boulogne through mine-filled waters. After that the ship fills up with Indian patients going to Alexandria. There, in chapter 15, Mel receives a letter from Harriet, whose romance with Gordon Stead is continuing well despite Harriet's previous fears. Mel learns that Drew is being sent back to New Zealand, and she and Ellie are assigned to work on land at the British No. 27 General Hospital in Cairo. She also learns that there is to be an Anzac Service on April 25th. The final chapter is a moving description of both Mel and Harriet's experiences at the Anzac Commemoration.

About the Author

Like Harriet in *Wounds of War*, Diana Menefy trained to be a nurse at Christchurch hospital. She grew up in Riccarton, near Christchurch, and later married a young farmer. Together, they farmed in Whangamata, Helensville and Tapuhi and raised their three children. Diana's writing career began in the late 1970s, when she wrote several stories and articles that were published in the *School Journal* and *New Zealand Farmer*. She enrolled in a correspondence course in writing and developed a passion for children's literature, which in 2001, she made the topic of her master's degree in education. Diana has since written fiction and non-fiction educational readers for companies such as Learning Media, and she has also written two junior novels, *River Crossing* (2001) and *Shadow of the Boyd* (2010). This won the LIANZA Esther Glen Medal in 2011 and was a finalist for the New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards. In addition, Diana has put her love of history to use by writing historical non-fiction material for adults. Currently, she is also the Applied Writing Programme Coordinator for NorthTec in Whangarei.



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Writing Style

1915: Wounds of War is a moving and informative story about the experiences of the New Zealand nurses who served during World War I. It is a mix of fact and fiction with invented characters taking part in real events in real places. The warmth and caring portrayed make it suitable for young readers without shielding them from the realities of war.

Most of the book is written in the third person. There are two main characters, the young New Zealand nurse Mel Burlace and her cousin Harriet Mills. One or other is the focus of each chapter. The book also features letters between the two women. These first-person descriptions bring the characters to life and break up the form of the book. Readers also learn about what is happening to the male soldiers through the voices of the nurses' patients and relations.

Maps, a time line, a glossary and a bibliography assist readers in understanding the events and the language of the time.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

SHARING THE NOVEL:

During the shared sessions encourage the students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of the words and ideas presented in the novel. Have them describe the setting of the story and identify which elements are fictional and which relate to real events. Encourage the students to make predictions about what will happen next and to identify important themes and ideas.

INTRODUCING THE NOVEL: COVER & CHAPTER 1

Tell the students to study the front cover and read the back-cover blurb. Then ask:

- What can you tell about the setting of this book? Which war does it involve?
- What kind of novel do you think it is? Is it realistic or fantasy? Is it serious or funny? What sort of ending might the book have? What makes you think this?
- The photo on the front cover is a real photo from World War I. What roles did these two people play in the war?
- Who do you think will be the central characters in the story? What experiences do you think they will have?
- Read the excerpt from the book on page 1. Why might the ship have started to vibrate? Why do you think the publishers chose to put this bit of the story here? Why didn't they let us know what happened next?
- Follow the route marked on the map. What does it tell us? Why do you think one part of the map shows greater detail than the other part?

- What is the relationship between Mel, Drew and Johnny? How do Bert and Sam fit into the story? Where do they work?
- What does Drew think the war will be like? Why does he want to sign up?
- What do Drew and Mel mean when they talk about Home, with a capital H? (Encourage the students to use the glossary at the back of the book.)
- What has Mel done with her life since she left school? How did her cousin Harriet help her do these things?
- What sort of person is Harriet? Have you read about Harriet and her cousin Billy in another book? (They appear in *1914: Riding Into War*.)
- Why does Drew want Harriet to be around when he tells his mother he has signed up to become a soldier?
- Why does Harriet think nurses should go to war?

HARRIET'S JOURNEY: CHAPTERS 2 & 3

- Who is the writer of the letters in chapter two? Why does she think it is important to write before she boards the ship? Do you think Mel would have been interested in what Harriet told her? Why?
- How have travel and written communication changed since 1915? Would you like to have lived back then?
- Why didn't Harriet and the other New Zealand nurses understand metric measurements, such as temperatures in centigrade? What measurements did they use? (New Zealanders used imperial measures in those days.)
- Why did the German nurses have to leave the hospital even though more nurses were needed?
- What factors made nursing in Egypt harder than at home?
- Why didn't Frank want to tell Harriet about the war? Why did he find it hard to stop talking once he started?
- Why did Frank shiver when the sky glowed red at sunset? Why was he not as relaxed and happy as Harriet?

MEL'S JOURNEY CHAPTER 4

- What did Mel think of the hospital ship? Was she impressed by it or critical of it? What makes you think this?
- What difference do you think it made to Mel having an old school friend on the ship with her?



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- On the ship, Mel pretends she is on *Gypsy Girl* on Pegasus Bay? What do you think *Gypsy Girl* is? Can you find Pegasus Bay on a map of New Zealand? Where is it?
- What was the ‘no fraternisation rule’? Why do you think there was such a rule on the ship?
- Why doesn’t Mel want to tell Ray Ridge her name?
- Why does Mel think the hospital ship will be safe? Do you think she is right to think this? Why or why not?
- Where is Colombo? What do we call this country today? Why does the author describe the people as Ceylonese?
- Why was the sunset so much faster there than in New Zealand? (It is closer to the equator.)
- What was involved in the lifeboat drill? Why was Mel so exhausted at the end of it?
- Can you work out where the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait (Hell’s Gate) is located on the map at the start of the book? (You may need to use an atlas or the Internet.)
- Where is the Suez Canal? Why was it built? (Again, it may help to use the Internet to answer this question.)

SISTER HARRIET: CHAPTER 5

- What is a chaplain? Why did the chaplain hand out cigarettes? Why wouldn’t a chaplain do that today?
- Joe was seriously wounded and yet the surgeons had not operated on him. Why wasn’t he a priority? Do you agree with this policy?
- Why do you think chapter five was titled *Breaking Protocol*?
- What sort of person is Major Stead? Do you think he and Harriet will ever go out to dinner? Why?

MEL JOINS THE WAR: CHAPTER 6

- What sort of personality would you need to nurse in a war zone? Do you think experience would help new nurses and orderlies gain these qualities? Why or why not?
- Why do Mel and George play down the seriousness of his wounds when they are talking?
- What is a ‘tourniquet’? Look it up if you don’t know.
- Where did the nurses put some of the patients to free up more beds for new patients?
- What does Drew mean when he says that Sam and Bert copped it? Do you think Drew was expecting that to

happen when he left New Zealand? How do you think witnessing their deaths will change him?

- What happens to the soldiers who die on the ship? Why do you think this has to happen?
- Which do you think would be worse: the fear of the ship being blown up; dealing with so many sick and wounded; or the fleas and lice? Why?

HARRIET AND DREW: CHAPTER 7

- Why doesn’t Harriet complain when her night out dancing is cancelled?
- What does the nursing sister mean when she says Drew is SW? (The answer is in the glossary.) What is shrapnel? Why would it cause bad wounds?
- What does ‘septic’ mean? (See ‘sepsis’ in the glossary.) Why were septic wounds such bad news?
- What does Drew mean when he says: ‘I’m on velvet’?
- How do you think Harriet feels when she hears Drew’s story? How does his story compare with hers? Who has had the harder time?
- Why do you think so many of the nurses couldn’t swim? Do you think it was fair that mainly boys learned to swim in those days?
- What do you think would have been the best things about going on leave for the nurses? Why?
- Why did the censors read the soldiers’ letters and black out some of the things the soldiers had written?
- Why do you think Gordon looks worried when he hears about Harriet’s brother, Frank, working with the medical corps near Anzac Cove?
- Drew and Harriet talk about war changing people. In what ways do you think it could change a young person?

MEL GOES TO MALTA: CHAPTER 8

- Why don’t the soldiers complain when they are uncomfortable?
- Why do you think the author calls the troops ‘boys’ rather than ‘men’?
- Where is Malta? Who were the Knights Hospitaller? (See the map and glossary.)
- What role did the stokers have on the ship? Why did they go on strike? Why was it illegal to strike during wartime?



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- How does Mel's time on leave compare with her usual day?
- What makes Mel cry at the end of chapter eight?
- Why did the Scottish soldiers burn the things they couldn't carry?
- Why is Mel happy to be going to Alexandria for Christmas?

HARRIET AT PONT DE KOUBBEH: CHAPTERS 9 & 10

- Why is Harriet so happy to be assigned to the New Zealand hospital?
- Why was the execution of a British nurse by the Germans such a shock to Harriet?
- Read the article at: www.thefreelibrary.com/Nurses%27+Memorial+Chapel+celebrates+75+years.-a0114701998. How does it relate to the text on pages 157 and 158?
- What tragedies struck in chapter 10? Which one affected Harriet the most? Why did she want to go home?
- Neither Mel nor Harriet are involved in the actual fighting. What techniques does the author use to let the readers know what the soldiers were doing?
- What was a Zeppelin? How were Zeppelins used in war?
- Why was the matron kind to the nurses from the *Marquette*?
- Why did the French soldiers have fewer cases of frostbite than the English?

MEL IS PROMOTED: CHAPTERS 11 TO 14

- What happened at the clearing stations? Where were they?
- What decision did Mel have to make? What would you have decided in her position? Why?
- Why does Mel think she is no longer following in Harriet's footsteps? Why does she think she is more like Harriet than she had previously thought? What qualities does she have that Harriet also has?
- Why did the English train travel with its blinds down?
- Why did the big city of London seem quiet to the nurses?
- Why do you think the nurses were not always informed about what was happening, such as when their ship did not take the planned route?
- Why did Ellie find the lifeboat drill so terrifying?

CONCLUSION: CHAPTERS 15 & 16

- Why did Harriet's train have red crescents and stars on it? What is this symbol? (see www.ifrc.org)
- Why does Harriet feel foolish about having had romantic feelings for Gordon?
- Mel describes plans for a service to be held on April 25th. This date is still remembered. What do we call it?
- Leith, the young Scottish soldier, describes the war as the 'Great Adventure'. Why doesn't Mel agree?
- What is Harriet's opinion of the speeches at the Anzac Day service? Why does she feel this way?
- What is it that makes Harriet feel her work is worthwhile?
- What did you think of this book? Which parts did you enjoy most? What did you learn from reading it? Would you recommend it to a friend? Why or why not?
- How has Mel's job changed now she is a sister? Why does she feel nervous at first?
- What is frostbite? How did the nurses treat the different stages?
- Why do you think the troopships travel with their lights out?
- Why do the nurses at the tent city in Lemnos have such a hard time compared to those on the ships?
- Why did Mel take such interest in the planes?
- Why were the soldiers able to sleep through the noise?



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Activities

ACTIVITY 1: DOCTORS AND NURSES IN DANGER

Discuss how WWI was not the only time doctors and nurses have worked away from typical civilian hospitals or doctors' practices. Elicit other instances, such as during other wars and in response to natural disasters and outbreaks of disease. Some students may have seen television shows such as *M*A*S*H* or *Anzac Girls*. Allow them to discuss what they have learned from these shows. Discuss the risks and rewards involved in such a job.

Talk about the organisation Doctors Without Borders, ensuring that your students understand that this organisation is active today. Choose a video from www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news-stories/videos to show your students. (It is important that you view any video right through beforehand as not all videos will be suitable for all students.) Then, tell the students that you would like them to write a news report about what is happening in the video. Allow them to watch it once more and take notes. Inform them that for a newspaper article, the title must be short and catch the readers' attention. The story should have the most important information in the first paragraphs and less important information toward the end.

ACTIVITY 2: TRIAGE DEBATE

If appropriate, discuss the concept of triage with your students. This is the process of sorting patients or casualties into groups according to whether they are: a) likely to survive even if not treated; b) likely to survive only if treated soon; or c) unlikely to survive even if treated soon. Triage is used when there is not enough help on hand to treat everyone, such as during a war or immediately after a natural disaster or bad accident. Often group b is given priority, which can upset people watching as they feel those in group c are being heartlessly neglected.

Talk about how this concept is reflected in chapter five of the book when the seriously wounded patient, Joe, is left untreated. Harriet pulls strings to get him into surgery. Was she right to do this? Discuss this issue as a class, and then take it further by creating pros and cons lists or holding a class debate or vote.

ACTIVITY 3: HOSPITAL SHIPS TO THE RESCUE

Assist your students in writing a report about hospital ships. They can use *Wounds of War* for reference. Some could also do further research (see www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/first-world-war-hospital-ships and <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH1-Effo-t1-body-d7.html>). Other students could research other hospital ships, such as the *Britannic*, a sister ship to the *Titanic*, which suffered a similar fate. (The students can read Mel's description of the *Britannic* on page 212 and find further information at sites such as www.hospitalshipbritannic.com.)

Remind your students how to skim and scan the texts to efficiently locate interesting and essential information. Allow them to take notes, then instruct them on the writing process. Remind them to write a short plan that includes bullet-pointed notes (not full sentences) about their planned title, introduction, paragraph topics and summary. Also, instruct them to proofread a buddy's report. The finished reports could be displayed on a wall in the classroom or a school corridor.

ACTIVITY 4: RESEARCH THE REAL THING

Although the author invented Mel and Harriet, their stories reflect those of many real New Zealand nurses involved in WWI. Discuss this with your students. Show them the bibliography on pages 290 to 292, and talk about how the author used these resources to research information for the book. If possible, have some of the books available and/or view one of the websites (such as www.nzans.org). Allow the students to explore material relating to real nurses and soldiers.

If possible, also arrange for a trip to a local war memorial. Show the students the names of local soldiers who died in WWI. Also visit <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~sooty/nzrefroh1915Sep-Dec.html>. Point out the familiar place names from the book (e.g. Mudros, Gallipoli and Malta). Allow the students to discuss their thoughts and feelings about this great loss of life. If appropriate, guide them in writing poems or creating artworks to commemorate those New Zealanders who died during WWI.

Written by Mary Atkinson

