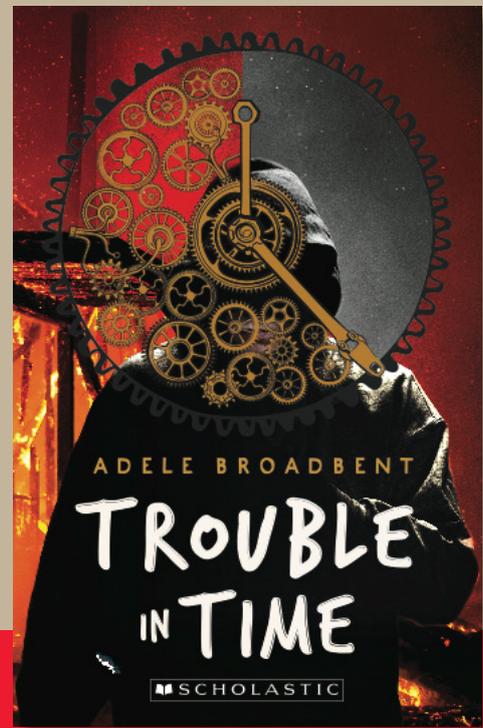


Trouble in Time

By Adele Broadbent

- Reading • Writing • Social Studies
- Science • Drama • Health



Synopsis

Trouble in Time is an exciting time-travel story set in New Zealand. Twelve-year-old Ben lives in the fictional city of Marshton, where until recently he has led had an ordinary life: going to school, hanging out at the skateboard bowl with his friends, and creating computer animations whenever he can. Recently, however, two events have made Ben's life much more difficult.

Firstly, Poppa has come to stay with Ben's family, turning Ben out of his own bedroom. Poppa is Ben's ninety-one-year-old great-grandfather. He seems like a typical grumpy old man – he's slow-moving, infirm and often reminisces about the past. He is also openly critical of how Ben spends his time. Relegated to the old family caravan, Ben is irritated by Poppa's presence and can't wait until Poppa's flat in a new retirement village will be ready for him.

Secondly, Ben's best friend, Zac, has befriended Connor, a new boy in school. From the start, Ben has had uneasy feelings about Connor, who either smirks at him or completely ignores him. Zac, on the other hand, seems impressed with Connor and is eager to hang out with him. What's worse, because Ben has to stay home to welcome Poppa, Connor takes Ben's place in the Laser Force team and does so well that Ben now feels he might permanently lose his spot in the team.

Things at school aren't much better. Ben is keen to enter a computer animation competition and win an iPad, but his teacher, Mr Sharp, is unwilling to give Ben time on the class iPads to prepare. One day, when Ben spends too much class time day dreaming about the competition, he ends up with an after-school detention.

Arriving home late, Ben finds a note from his mother explaining that she is out with his younger sister, Abby, and that Poppa will mind him. Ben feels disgruntled about this, considering himself more able to look after Poppa than Poppa is able to look after him. He goes in search of Poppa and finds him slumped in an armchair in his bedroom. Thinking Poppa might have died, Ben nervously reaches out to touch Poppa's hand. It is at that moment that he is propelled back in time.

Ben's arm seems to stretch out and meld into Poppa, and his body appears to melt. Then, 'CRACK! SLOOOP!', Ben finds himself hiding in bush, watching three boys digging for worms. The boys are wearing old-fashioned, 1930's-style clothes. Confused and frightened, Ben follows one of the boys home and is discovered in the process. The boy, named George, has the same blue eyes, light blond hair and fuzzy white eyebrows as Ben, leading Ben to wonder if he is looking at himself in another dimension. Then Ben realises that George is Poppa's name, and he realises that George must be Poppa when he was a boy.

Ben hides overnight in a hut under George's family's woolshed. In the morning, he follows George and his talkative younger sister, Mavis, on their way to school. They pass a sign saying MARSHVILLE, and Ben wonders if the town is in some way connected with his home city of Marshton. Then, when George reaches out to feel the unfamiliar fabric of Ben's shirt, a loud crack sounds and Ben finds himself back in the bedroom with Poppa, who is angry at finding him there.

Synopsis continued

Ben is frightened by what happened, and at first he avoids Poppa. When he heads out early to the skateboard bowl to meet Zac, he sees Connor apparently selling something to older teenagers. Ben suspects something illegal is happening. Then, Connor tricks Zac and Ben into dropping paint bombs onto cars on the motorway. Ben decides that Connor is a loser, and argues with Zac about whether they should hang out with him.

Ben is forced to think about Marshville again when Poppa reveals that his childhood best friends were named Frank and Charlie, the same names as the boys George had been catching worms with when Ben was in Marshville. Ben decides to try to get back there. When Poppa is napping, he touches his arm, and once again he is propelled back in time. This time he continues to build a friendship with George and helps him fight off Smeeten, the local bully. In doing so, he touches George and is again transported back home. Ben tells Poppa what happened, and once Poppa is convinced, Poppa tells Ben that he remembers the incident but didn't realise that the boy he met was Ben. Poppa also warns Ben about Connor, saying he has a bad feeling about him. Zac, however, convinces Ben to go bike riding with him and Connor, and this time Ben involuntarily becomes involved in a nasty graffiti attack. Connor convinces Ben he can't tell anyone because he's now implicated himself.

Poppa discovers that Ben's time travelling is somehow improving his own agility and health. He is keen for Ben to return and, in doing so, to learn about life in 1935. He sends Ben back with a note to George, his younger self. Once young George understands that Ben is his great-grandson, he decides to take him eeling. On the way, they take a short cut across Beaumont Bridge, a railway viaduct, and Ben narrowly misses being run over by a train.

Poppa becomes concerned that Ben will do something back in Marshville that will change the course of history and warns him to be careful. In the meantime, Zac tricks Ben into meeting up with Connor once more, and this time they are involved in the torching of a rubbish skip. On Ben's next trip to Marshville, George takes him rabbit shooting, they meet a police constable who is searching for the culprit who broke a shop window, and Ben has a meal with George's family – his own ancestors. He also gets covered in cow dung when he tries to help out with the milking.

Back home, Ben finds Connor being his usual bullying self. Connor talks about rabbit hunting and tells Ben to watch out for Constable Gibbs, which confuses Ben as this is not the name of the local policeman. Ben wonders how Connor could know about Marshville as he hasn't told a soul. Ben's family then go to see Poppa's new flat. On the way there, Ben is nearly run over by a nasty old man on a motorised scooter.

Ben returns to Marshville and has an unpleasant morning at school with George's ultra-strict teacher. Then, in the playground, Ben is shocked to meet Connor, who explains that he can time travel in the same way as Ben. Connor is Smeeten's great-grandson. Ben realises that it was Connor who broke the shop window in Marshville.

When Ben returns home, he tells Poppa what happened, and the two go to visit Smeeten, who turns out to be the nasty old man from the retirement community. They warn Smeeten not to let Connor go back to Marshville because he could change the past and so destroy the present. At school, Ben and Connor get into a fight after Connor tells Ben he intends to take Zac back to Marshville, do something terrible and then abandon Zac in the past. In the principal's office, Ben is reprimanded and accused of stealing his classroom's iPads. Ben realises that Connor probably stole them and set him up to look like the thief.

When Ben is finally free to return to Marshville, he and George find Zac tied to a headstone. They free him, and Ben takes him back to the present. In the process, George is rendered unconscious, and Ben realises that the time travel is harming him. He decides to return only once more. Back in Marshville, he finds Connor trying to burn down Beaumont Bridge, and ends up fighting with Connor in an attempt to stop him. George comes to his rescue but is knocked out, triggering Smeeten to step in. Even he thinks Connor has gone too far. The bridge is saved and so is the future of both Marshville and Marshton.

Back home, things are changing – for better and for worse: Zac is Ben's friend again and the police discover that Connor stole the iPads, but Poppa loses his new-found youth. The friendship between Poppa and Ben remains strong, however, and at Poppa's birthday celebration, Ben learns that his animation inspired by his adventures has won him his own iPad. He also learns that Connor has moved away and won't be able to time travel ever again.

About the Author

Napier-based Adele Broadbent has a passion for children's books, especially those for 'twins' – children aged 9 to 13. As well as writing, she is also a children's bookseller and on her weekends is a children's librarian. She also enjoys running writing workshops in schools. While *Trouble in Time* is her first book for Scholastic, she has already written several educational readers, two stories for the *School Journal*, and three other children's novels: *Just Jack*, *Too Many Secrets* and *The Last Herrick Secret*. *Too Many Secrets* was nominated for a New Zealand Post Children's Book Award in 2011, and is also published in Australia, Finland and Sweden. In 2012, *Just Jack* was a finalist in the New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards and was also a Storylines Notable Book. Adele lives with her husband and her two teenage sons.



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Writing Style

Trouble in Time is a fast-paced, action-filled time-travel story suitable for readers in the eight-to-fourteen age group. The storyline switches between the present and 1935, with a serif font used for the parts set in the past and a sans serif font used for the parts set in the present (2014).

The events are retold in the first person by the main character, Ben, who is twelve years old in 2014. Ben lives in the fictional New Zealand city of Marshton, which is an amalgamation of several towns, including Marshville, where the events in the past take place. As well as time travel, the book contains themes of bullying and loyalty, which many school children will relate to.

Many chapters end with dramatic cliffhangers that will encourage reluctant readers to keep reading. While following the plot, they will come to understand what life was like for children living in rural New Zealand in the 1930s. They will also be led to explore the concept of time travel and how interfering with the past could damage the future.

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 settings of the story and keep track of the characters and plot. Also encourage the students to make predictions about what will happen next and to identify important themes and ideas.

INTRODUCING THE NOVEL:

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

- What can you already tell about this book? What do you think it will be about?
- Who is the main character? Who are some of the other characters in the book? What sort of people are they?
- Why do you think this quote from the book was put on the back cover? Even though it is hard to understand, it does tell us a bit about the book. What does it tell us?
- What does the front cover design tell us about the book? Why are there cogs on the cover? What do you think the flames might relate to?

SETTING THE SCENE, CHAPTER 1:

- Who is Poppa? Why doesn't Ben like him?

- Who is Zac? Why is Ben texting Zac during dinnertime?
- What sort of person do you think Connor is? What gives you this impression?
- Why does Ben have mixed feelings about Connor helping his Laser Force team win the game?
- Why does Ben get an after-school detention? Do you think he deserves it?
- Why does Ben reach out to touch Poppa? What is he afraid of? How would you feel in this situation?
- What happens when Ben touches Poppa? What do you think might be about to happen? Why?

FIRST JOURNEY BACK, CHAPTER 2:

- Why do you think Ben hides in the bush?
- What are the three boys doing? What do they plan to do?
- Why does Ben follow George? Would you have done that?
- Why does Ben think George might be himself in a parallel dimension? What does he mean by this?
- Who is George really? How does Ben come to realise this?
- What sort of person do you think Smeeten will be? What clue does the author give you on page 26?
- Why does Ben get exhausted following George?
- Why does Ben choose to stay near George's home?
- How would you have felt hiding under a woolshed overnight? Why is Ben worried about his mother?
- What do you think might be the connection between Marshville and Marshton?
- What happens at the very end of the chapter? Why do you think the author finished the chapter here?

BACK IN THE FUTURE, CHAPTERS 3 AND 4:

- When Ben returns to his own time, he finds his shirt is not ripped. He also finds that very little time has passed in the present. Why might these things be? Was it just a dream?
- Why does Ben avoid Poppa when he gets back?
- What do you think Connor is doing with the teenagers in the park?



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- Why is Ben so angry with Connor when he tricks him and Zac into paint-bombing cars? What could have happened? Who would have been responsible?
- Why does Ben think his best friend, Zac, has turned into the 'world's biggest jerk'?
- Why is Ben so upset when Poppa starts talking about his childhood friends Frank and Charlie? (pp.52–53)
- What method does Ben plan to use to travel to Marshville and back again? Would you have been tempted to go back there, too? Why or why not?
- If you went back in time to where your great-grandparents lived, where would you be? How might it look different from the way it looks today?

MORE TIME TRAVEL, CHAPTERS 5 TO 9:

- What do we learn about Smeeten in Chapter 5? Is he the sort of person you expected him to be? Does he remind you of anyone in Ben's life in Marshston, in the present?
- How does Ben convince Poppa that he really went back in time?
- What do you think Poppa might have been going to say about Connor on page 68? Do you think it would have been good or bad? Why?
- Why do you think Ben chose to go out with Zac and Connor when he didn't like Connor?
- What reasons might Connor have for wanting Zac and Ben with him when he does the graffiti attack? Why does Zac join in?
- Why doesn't Ben stop them from doing the graffiti or tell on them later? Why does he feel bad about the incident?
- What does the term 'blackmail' mean? How is Connor blackmailing Ben?
- What are some of the old people napping in the armchairs on page 84 really doing?
- Why does Poppa want to remember the ordinary, everyday things he did as a child?
- Why is Poppa keen for Ben to go back to Marshville? Do you think he is right to allow Ben to go back?
- How is Ben's relationship with Poppa changing?
- What is it about the note Poppa writes that convinces George that he is Ben's great-grandfather?
- Why can't Ben tell George all about the future? What could be dangerous about doing this?
- What is a bob? How is it used to catch eels?
- Ben uses modern slang and George uses 1930s slang. What does George mean by 'my cobbbers' on page 103?
- What might have happened in the past and in the future if Ben had been killed by the train on the viaduct?
- Who do you think cut Tango's rope and stole the eels?

COMPLICATIONS BUILD, CHAPTERS 10 TO 13:

- Why was Beaumont Bridge so important in the history of Marshville and Marshston?
- Why does Poppa now have an old scar on his hand when he didn't have one last week? What does this tell us about how Ben's time travel is affecting the present?
- Why does Poppa think Ben needs to be extremely careful next time he goes back in time? Do you think Ben should go back at all? Why is Poppa allowing him to go?
- Why do you think Zac lied about how they were meeting up with Connor on their night-time bike ride? Would Ben have gone if he had known the truth?
- Why does Ben throw a rock through a window? Was he right to do this under the circumstances? Why?
- On page 133, Connor talks about Constable Gibbs. Why does Ben find this confusing? Who might Constable Gibbs be?
- Why does Ben choose to shoot a tree instead of a rabbit? What does this tell us about Ben?
- Why was Ben nervous about meeting George's family?
- Why does Ben turn as white as a sheet when Mr Talbot mentions Constable Gibbs?
- What does Ben do that would be considered good manners today, but was not done in those days? Why wasn't it done back then?
- What trick do Ben and George play on Smeeten? How could this backfire on them?
- What happens when Ben tries to help milk the cows? How come he gets angry and decides to go back to the future?
- Why didn't Ben want to tell Poppa that Connor knew about Marshville?



CONNOR CAUSES TROUBLE, CHAPTERS 14 TO 16:

- Why does Ben think he should go back to Marshville even though Poppa tells him it might not be safe?
- Why is Dad's early return from his conference a problem for Ben and Poppa?
- When Ben, Dad and Poppa visit the retirement village, Ben is involved in an unpleasant situation. Is it Ben's fault or is it the old man's fault? Why?
- In what ways was school in George's day (the 1930s) different from school today? Would you like it if school was still like that? Why?
- Have you ever played marbles? What do you have to do? How does it compare with the games you play at school?
- In George's day, students were allowed to go home for lunch, which they called dinner. Why might this practice have died out?
- What horrible surprise does Ben get when he goes into the playground at dinnertime (i.e. lunchtime)?
- How did Connor get to Marshville? What does he think of it?
- When Ben returns to his own time, why do he and Poppa visit old-man Smeeten even though they don't like him?
- Why do Ben and Connor get into a fight at school?
- What does Connor threaten to do to Zac? How many people might be affected if he got away with it?
- What does the school principal accuse Ben of doing? Why does Ben think he has been set up? Who does he think set him up?

THE CLIMAX, CHAPTERS 17 TO 20:

- Why do Poppa and Ben need to find Zac urgently?
- Where do Poppa and Ben find Zac? What are Zac, Connor and old-man Smeeten doing?
- When Ben sees Zac, Connor and old-man Smeeten in Smeeten's home, he realises something about his own time travels. What does he realise?
- Where do George and Ben find Zac? How does Ben get Zac back to his own time?
- What bad thing happens to George when Ben and Zac return? What does it mean?

- Why does Ben return to Marshville one last time?
- If Beaumont Bridge had been destroyed, it would have changed the future of Marshville and Marshton? Why?
- Why doesn't Connor care if he changes the future?
- Smeeten is a bully and Connor's great-grandfather, so why does he stop Connor from burning down the bridge?
- Why might Connor have looked scared when he returned to the future?
- What happened to Connor when he got back?
- What happened to Poppa?
- How have Poppa and Ben changed because of their adventures? How has their relationship changed?
- What do you think your parents or grandparents would have been like when they were your age? Would you be friends with them if you travelled back in time?
- What idea do you think Ben got for his computer animation? What makes you think this?
- Was Ben right to be friends with Zac again after Zac had let him down so badly?
- Why won't Connor be able to go back in time again and cause more trouble?
- Did the book have a happy ending? Why?

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: OUR TOWN IN THE PAST

Discuss with your students the differences between Marshville in the 1930s and Marshton in the 2010s. Write a class list of the changes they can recall.

Then, ask the students what their school's town or suburb was like in the past (e.g. in the 1930s or the 1950s). Arrange for the students to find out more. For example, they could:

- examine old and new photographs of the location (the local library might be able to help with resources)
- read old newspaper articles and magazines
- interview older family members or a chosen elder
- view an old movie from that time.

Assist the students in finding important or interesting information (perhaps using skimming and scanning techniques) and in recording their finds in note form.

Then, arrange for the students to use their notes to create texts and artworks such as:

- a then-and-now wall mural
- poetry or prose about the time period being studied
- a play involving time travel or set in that time period
- a 'diary' of someone living in the town back then
- a digital presentation of the findings.

ACTIVITY 2: TIME TRAVEL STORIES

Many children find the concept of time travel fascinating. Discuss the theoretical problems related to changing the present by going back in time and making changes (e.g. by preventing one's parents from ever meeting). Talk about how this concept was important in the plot of *Trouble in Time*. If appropriate, the class could then view the movie *Back to the Future*, which also deals with this idea and may help students fully comprehend the problem. (Additionally, interested students might enjoy the award-winning children's novel *When You Reach Me* by Rebecca Stead.)

Assist the students in writing their own time-travel narrative involving issues to do with changing the present. Model writing a suitable plan using bullet points. The information could be divided into sections such as: title, introduction, rising action, climax and conclusion.

Instruct the students to share their plans with one another and iron out any issues before they begin writing their actual stories. The finished stories could then be collated into a book for students and class visitors to read.

ACTIVITY 3: THE PROS AND CONS OF TIME TRAVEL

Pose the question: is time travel safe? Then, discuss some of the reasons why it might not be safe (e.g. changing the future, not being able to return, spreading modern diseases, etc.) Ask the students whether, knowing all this, they would still choose to go back in time if they had an opportunity? Discuss the reasons why some might do so. Create a class pros and cons list relating to time travel. This information could then be used for subsequent activities such as writing persuasive texts or holding a class debate.

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLORE THE ISSUE OF BULLYING

In *Trouble in Time*, both Smeeten and Connor are bullies. Discuss how such bullies operate, and use this as an introduction to exploring the issue in more depth. Together create a class chart on ways to deal with bullying when it happens to yourself or others. (To build your understanding and to initiate greater, school-wide changes, see <http://pb41.tki.org.nz/Deter-bullying> or other reliable resources.)

Author: Mary Atkinson