



Sunday, 4 April 2021

## The Flying Angel



*The Flying Angel* by Vicki Bennett,  
illustrated by Tull  
Suwannakit (Scholastic) PB RRP  
\$24.99 978 1 74383 551 7

Reviewed by Karen Hendriks

*The Flying Angel* is a picture book  
inspired by the remarkable life of  
Sister Marie Eileen Craig. She was a

nurse to soldiers on the frontline in Papua New Guinea. The nurses were known as Flying Angels and helped transport injured soldiers back to Australia. This book shines a light upon the important contribution of the Flying Angels during war.

Vicki Bennett is a best-selling author, who has a passion for Australian history. She wrote the award-winning picture book *The Little Stowaway*. Vicki's voice captures the emotion of World War Two with a certain gentleness. She doesn't shy away from the sadness of war but leaves the reader with a clear understanding of its impact. As we follow Marie's life, the theme of nursing is woven into the story from the start to the finish. The text gives a voice to Marie and we are shown a window into her world. It is as if Marie is speaking to us through the text.

This story favours longer sentences to give the reader time to absorb the story and fully appreciate its message. Dialogue is used sparingly but to great effect. I love how the story ends, with the impact of Marie's actions upon the lives of soldiers lovingly conveyed. The reader is left satisfied and knows that Marie saved lives during World War Two and that is what she set out to do.

The illustrations, by Tull Suwannakit, capture the mood and tone of this story. The cover clearly shows that this is an historical picture book with the image of Marie in her nurse's uniform and a red poppy. Her eyes call the reader inside. The endpapers of photographs, objects and sketches depict the Flying Angels and early parts of Marie's life. Although the cover and endpapers are in the colours of the era, the rest of the story is illustrated in muted tones of sepia, greys, creams, and blacks with the odd splash of red, for the red cross symbol and fire. This allows the reader to feel the impact of war and its seriousness. But it's also like looking through a lens back in time to an era when photographs were in black and white. The use of perspective in the spreads dramatize the events and feelings of Marie. Tull cleverly brings in a touch of diversity with an indigenous nurse helping to unload Alfred from the back of a truck. The text and illustrations are a perfect match in this book.

This is a picture book for children 4 years and older. Schools are seeking books that showcase the role of Australian women in war and this book fills that hole. It brings an important part of Australian history to life and it is a wonderful book for any

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### Looking for ...

\*OUTSTANDING

Australian child to understand another part of our war history. It is a special picture book.

MIDDLE GRADE

Posted by [Dianne Bates](#) at [3:00 am](#) No comments: 

PICTURE BOOK

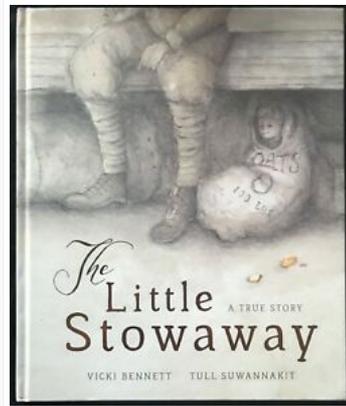
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YOUNG ADULT

Friday, 24 September 2021

YOUNGER READER

## The Little Stowaway: a true story



*The Little Stowaway: a true story* written by Vicki Bennet, illustrated by Tull Suwannakit (Scholastic) ISBN 978 1 74299 307 2 RRP \$ 24.99

Reviewed by Nean McKenzie

Set during the first World War, *The Little Stowaway* tells the real story of a young French orphan named Honoré and an Australian airman called Tim. When he finds the boy cold and hungry, Tim takes him in. He calls him Young Digger and teaches him to ice skate and box. With a stray dog called Fella, Honoré makes himself useful, becoming the official rat catcher

for the Australian Flying Corps. Then when the war finishes, Tim smuggles Honoré home to Australia so he can adopt him into his family.

The story tells from a child's perspective, the effects of war and the kindness of strangers. There's a bit of action in the middle of the book where Tim smuggles Honoré onboard a ship – first across the English Channel to France and then sailing all the way to Australia. Honoré is hidden in a basket and then a bag (hence the name the Stowaway). When he is let out, there's a lovely double page spread showing the ocean with all its freedom and peace. And the happy ending where Honoré becomes part of Tim's family is great because it is true.

With sepia tinted pages, the illustrations are a mix of drawings and old photos provided by the real family. The muted tones of the pencil and watercolour pictures blend in well with the old black and white photos. Showing the army barracks, the planes, soldiers in uniform and the ship home, the photos add to the sense of history.

Vicki Bennett teamed up with Tull Suwannakit for a book that came out earlier in the year called *The Flying Angel*, set around a similar time (just after the First World War). Their most recent book, *The Little Stowaway*, is suitable for primary school students.

Posted by [Dianne Bates](#) at [3:00 am](#) No comments: 

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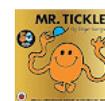
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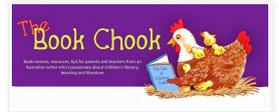
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