



The Year It All Ended

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

World War I has ended. In Australia the four Flynn sisters get ready to celebrate. They are eagerly looking forward to welcoming their brother, Louis back from Europe. He is one of the many Australians who signed up to fight for 'King and Country'. Their joy is tinged with sadness; their cousin, William, will not be coming back. He was killed early in the War - fighting on the German side. Then the news arrives - Louis also is dead. The effect on the family is devastating.

Our perspective on World War I inevitably, perhaps, is almost completely Euro-centric. It also tends to concentrate on the years of the war itself; the Trenches, Ypres, the Somme, Passchendaele - rarely [Gallipoli](#) [4]. Young readers are not often presented with what happened after the war ended nor how its effect stretched across the world. The story of the Flynn's is set in Australia and the reader is quickly brought to realise how young the European part of Australia was and how close ties with the Old Country still were; the Flynn's are German, and to some Germany is 'home'; a situation that creates tensions. Against the backdrop of celebration, the trauma experienced by the returning soldiers - and its effect on their bemused families - is seen through the youngest sister Tiney's eyes. The aftermath of war is not always joyful.

Murray has written a very accessible story with characters who are lively and believable; situations that are both recognisable and instructive without any heavy didacticism. This is history writing, that, like the novels of [Mary Hooper](#) [5], opens a door to the past in a way that draws the reader in. The narrative follows events chronologically, presenting them like snapshots in an album, moving the story along without dragging and allowing the author to introduce background details of attitudes and society with a light touch. This is a story about a family very much in the tradition of **Little Women** and its sequels. Enjoyable, warm-hearted and handling its facts lightly, it is a novel that can be confidently recommended to young readers from KS3 on.

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