



# Outlaw Girls

## EMILY GALE & NOVA WEETMAN

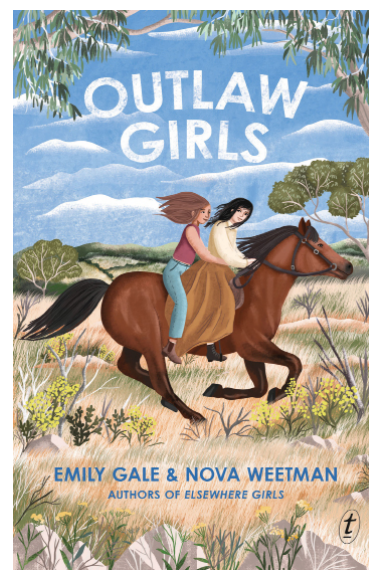
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Fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 10+

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### CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.



Credit: Text

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Emily Gale's books include *The Other Side of Summer* and its companion novel *I Am Out with Lanterns*, the Eliza Boom Diaries, *Steal My Sunshine* and *Girl, Aloud*, as well as her recent middle-grade collaboration with friend and fellow author Nova Weetman, *Elsewhere Girls*.

Nova Weetman has written thirteen books for young adults and children. Her middle grade books include the much-loved novels *The Edge of Thirteen*, *The Jammer* and *Sick Bay*.

### SYNOPSIS

Ruby Miles and her friends, Emmie, Mack and Hugo, like to see how much they can get away with. They show up late to school, they steal chocolate bars from the local supermarket. But when they get caught stealing Hugo's dad's tractor, they learn very quickly they've pushed too far.

Ruby's mum sends her to stay with her Uncle Harry and her pregnant Auntie Tina on their farm. The only good thing about this is that Ruby will be able to ride their horse, Queenie, again. One day Ruby is riding Queenie through the paddocks when she comes across a strangely dressed girl. Kate (or Ada, as she introduces herself) could be Ruby's twin, but she's lost in time. In fact, she's travelled through a portal from 1878 and is bewildered by the modern reality she's landed in.

Ruby takes Kate back to Harry's. She feeds her, and gives her a place to sleep. But Kate is desperate to get home. When she slipped through the portal, she was in the middle of leaving food for the infamous Ned Kelly and his gang, who are on the run from the police. So, in the middle of the night she sneaks back to her portal to try to find a way back to her own time.

Ruby, woken by the noise of Kate leaving, follows her new friend and is shocked and frightened when she finds herself pulled through the portal to 1878. She'd known Kate didn't belong in her time, but didn't really believe that she was from the past. Ruby feels trapped, particularly when she finds herself committed to helping Kate and her family evade the police. Will she ever get home?

Ruby is in way over her head, so when she sees an opportunity to go back through the portal, she takes it.

Kate feels betrayed, and assumes she'll never see her friend again. But two years later Ruby is back on Harry's farm, and Kate needs her help more than ever.

Promising her friend Emmie that she won't be gone long, Ruby follows Kate back through the portal to 1878, just as



the siege of Glenrowan is about to unfold. Can Kate and Ruby change the past? Is there anyone they can save?

*Outlaw Girls* is the second in a series of co-authored timeslip novels by Emily Gale and Nova Weetman, using fiction to introduce contemporary readers to significant figures from Australia's past.

### BEFORE READING

1. Compare the title of this book to the title of the first book in the series, *Elsewhere Girls*. Discuss the differences and what they might mean for the plot of *Outlaw Girls*.
2. *Outlaw Girls* is set in Victoria's high country. Google some pictures of this area and describe the landscape. What are some of the features that make it an interesting setting for a story?
3. Both *Outlaw Girls* and *Elsewhere Girls* are timeslip novels which means that one part of the narrative is set in the present and one is set in the past. Read the blurb of the book. Which year does the past narrative take place in? Do some research and create a timeline of major events happening in the world and in Victoria during that time

### WHILE READING

1. How do Ruby, Emmie and Mack get caught stealing the tractor?
2. Why is getting caught by the police worse for Emmie?
3. How does Ruby feel when she's riding?
4. Where do Kate and her family hide food for 'the boys'? Why do they need to?
5. What are some of the dangers that lurk in the Warby Ranges?
6. Why doesn't Kate want Ruby to tell her uncle about her?
7. Make a list of the things that Kate doesn't understand about Ruby's world.
8. Why doesn't Kate take Queenie?
9. What do you think Ruby was thinking when she followed Kate through the portal?
10. Why does Ruby have so much trouble believing that she's in Kate's time? What ends up convincing her?
11. What does Ruby know about Ned's future?
12. Why is Ned wanted by the police?
13. What does Kate give Ruby as she's about to go home? Why?
14. What is frog bread? Why does Kate make it for baby Jack?
15. Kate wonders if her meeting with Ruby was chance or fate. What do you think? Why?

16. How does Ruby feel when Kate calls her 'as brave as a Kelly'? (p. 158)
17. What is special about Ned's letter?
18. Why wasn't Mary able to return to her own time?
19. How does Kate describe her sister Gracie?
20. Kate tells Ruby that 'people like us can't trust anyone who's not from our world'. (p. 185) Why do you think this is? What makes Kate trust Ruby?
21. Discuss the book's title. What does 'outlaw' refer to for each girl?
22. What does Kate hear her brother discussing that makes her feel betrayed?

### AFTER READING

#### CHARACTER

1. What simile does Ruby use to describe Mack's brother, Jack? Why is this image more powerful than simply saying that he's mean?
2. How would you describe Ruby's friendship with Mack? Why does Ruby feel that she has to impress her?
3. 'Some people say that's not ladylike but being a perfect lady is the last thing on my mind when the police are after me.' (p. 39) What pressures does Kate feel to behave in a way that's considered 'ladylike'? Does Ruby face any of the same pressures to conform?
4. Kate says 'When you're a Kelly you know what it's like to lose something precious.' (p. 120) What does she mean by this? What's the hardest thing she's lost?
5. How does Ruby change from the beginning of the book to the end?

### STYLE AND STRUCTURE

#### Historical fiction

*Outlaw Girls* explores a very particular moment in time, when the infamous Kelly Gang rode large across rural Victoria. Events came to a head when Ned, Dan, Joe and Steve were involved in a siege at the Glenrowan Inn. Ned would later be tried for murder and executed. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/search-discover/explore-collections-theme/australian-history/ned-kelly/ned-kelly-fact-sheet#:~:text=with%20his%20gang%20ambushed%20and,tried%20to%20justify%20his%20crimes.>

<https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/ned-kellys-last-stand>



As the authors write in the afterword, 'most, but not all of the details in *Outlaw Girls* are based on historical research. Lots of information as well as people have been left out and of course the parts about Ruby are made-up.' (p. 309)

1. Which parts of *Outlaw Girls* do you think are true and which are made up? Find three examples of each. How can you tell?
2. How do the authors use the fictional parts of the story to help us understand history?

## THEMES

### Rebellion

1. What are the characters in this story rebelling against? Discuss where laws come from and who makes them. Are they always applied fairly to everyone? (Consider what Ruby reflects on about Emmie getting into trouble with the police.) Are all laws good laws?
2. Kate describes Ruby's theft of the tractor as 'no better than our boys taking horses, only Ruby and her friends are not starving and desperate, as far as I can tell.' (p. 59) What is a good reason to rebel against something? Do you agree with either/both/neither of these rebellions? Give reasons for your answer.

### Friendship

1. Make a list of the similarities and differences between Ruby and Kate. Would you say that Ruby has more in common with Kate than her friends from home? Why/why not?
2. Ruby tells Kate that she's 'good at keeping secrets for friends'. (p. 77) What other secrets has she kept? Is it always a good thing to keep secrets for friends?
3. Would you say that Kate is a good friend to Ruby when she won't help her to leave? Do you agree with her actions?
4. How does Kate feel when Ruby leaves? What else could Ruby have done?
5. What do you think Ruby has learnt about friendship by the end of the book?

### Freedom

1. What do Ruby and Kate want to be free from?
2. When they're in each other's time, what do Ruby and Kate each miss about their own? Is either girl more free than the other?
3. How does the jangle of the guard's key represent a loss of freedom? (p. 199) What images represent freedom?

## RESPONDING

1. One of the first differences Kate notices about Ruby's time are the sounds. She describes 'far off whirrings and rumblings'. (p. 45) What are these noises? Make a soundscape for Kate's time – you could do this using words or you can make it using sounds. Make one for your own life – what sounds make up your day-to-day life?
2. Imagine that someone has just arrived from 1878. Draw them a map of the local area, marking any significant landmarks, make a list of necessary vocabulary they might need to fit in, and suggest three foods to try.
3. Read Ned's letter aloud. (p. 163) Why does it contain the word 'something' in several of the sentences? Use what you know of history and what you've learnt in this book to come up with words that might take the place of 'something' in the text below.

*Sirs, I take the liberty in something you with respect to the matter of myself, my brother and our friends. And I take this something to declare most something, that my mother did not ever intend to hurt the rascal policeman Fitzpatrick. She only went to scare him, as he had scared her and her children in her own home.*

*Something has forced us to become what we are – outcasts – and bad as we are, we are not so bad as we are something to be. The law is something a something in justice in imprisoning innocent people. The police are cowards, every one of them. We will show Victoria that we are something men.*

4. Choose your favourite scene from the book and draw a before/after picture.
5. We leave Kate before she becomes involved in the events of the siege at Glenrowan, although the authors fill in some of what happens after in the afterword. Write a final chapter for the novel from Kate's perspective, describing what happens to her after she rides home to join her brothers.