



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary/lower secondary
(ages 8+)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English and HASS
- **General capabilities:** Language, Literature, Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Investigate historical, geographic, civic and economic concepts and ideas
- Develop critical and creative thinking
- Analyse how language and writing evoke mood, tone, tension and characterisation
- Encourage creative and imaginative writing

THEMES

- History – WWII
- Relationships
- Society
- Personal and social ethics

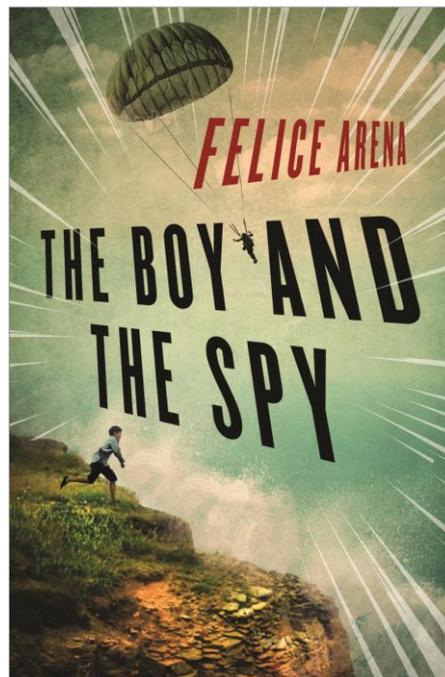
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The Boy and the Spy

Felice Arena

PLOT SUMMARY

Leap into the adventure of a lifetime . . .

Things have never been easy for Antonio, but now it seems like the war will never end. So when Antonio is caught up in the dangerous world of freedom fighters and spies, will it change his life or destroy him?

A thrilling story set on the island of Sicily, Italy, against the backdrop of WWII.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Felice Arena is one of Australia's best-loved children's writers. He is the author and creator of many popular and award-winning children's books for all ages, including *Whippersnapper*, the bestselling Specky Magee books and the popular Andy Roid series.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

The setting and characters in this story are especially close to my heart. My name means 'happy' in Italian and my mother was born in Sicily two years after World War II ended. My father, who is a few years older than my mum, grew up in a seaside town in the nearby southern Italian region of Calabria.

Life had become very difficult in Italy during and after the war and many Italians from these regions made the huge decision to leave. They emigrated to places like Canada, the US and Australia to seek better conditions for themselves and their families.

I've always wanted to write a novel about my parents' experience, but every time I started to write it I'd struggle. I even took my parents on a trip back to their hometowns hoping that a story would present itself. But it didn't. So I decided to let it go.

A couple of years ago, though, over dinner with my parents, the subject of 'rotas' came up. I hadn't heard the term before and I was fascinated. It comes from the term '*ruota delgi esposti*', meaning 'the wheel of the exposed children'. Rota is an alternative spelling and I decided to go with that as I thought it would be easier for readers to pronounce.

My mum and dad were telling me about the stigma attached to being a 'rota child' back in 'the old country'. Suddenly I could hear Antonio's voice, loud and clear: 'Write my story!' he said. 'I don't want to be invisible any more!'

I had just finished the Andy Roid books – a series about high-tech secret agent missions – and I've always loved spy books and movies, so before I knew it, I was madly writing the story of Antonio's adventures in a world of wartime espionage.

This story is fiction, of course, but I wanted to recreate the mood of that dark period in history and at the same time present Sicily as another character in the book. I visited and talked with relatives in Italy, read stories of the second world war and watched old newsreel clips.

If your students are interested in the history behind this story, they might like to read more about it. The invasion of Sicily by the Allies was codenamed 'Operation Husky' and it was the first of a series of attacks on German-occupied Europe – attacks that eventually ended one of the most terrible wars in history.

But not everything happened exactly as I've written it here. For one thing, the publication of *The Little Prince* was April 1943, and I set this story in May 1943 (two months before the invasion of Sicily). Chris would have left America for training in Africa before the book was published, but it's one of my favourites and there are parallels with Antonio's story. Maybe your students could borrow *The Little Prince* from the library and try to figure out why I chose it.

As much as I loved writing the adventure and action in this story (and I hope you and your students enjoyed reading it) this was always going to be more than a spy adventure. For me this story is about family and what that means. When I was a kid one of my closest friends told me he was adopted, and my first response was, 'Are you going to find your real parents one day?' He explained to me that his adoptive parents were his real parents. Families come in different shapes and sizes – your students will know lots of different kinds of families. Each one quite different, but each one just as important and real.

WRITING STYLE

- What is the writing style the author has used? Consider how and when information is revealed, and the use of the intimate-third-person perspective. Discuss what tense is used and what the effect is for the reader. What is another way this story could have been told? Compare and contrast to another book you have read.
- How does the book's title relate to its content? What does it refer to?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Researching historical information

- Read the note from the author at the end of the book. Where in the story can you see that the author has researched using the historical methods and evidence? And what does the piece of historical evidence in the book show you?



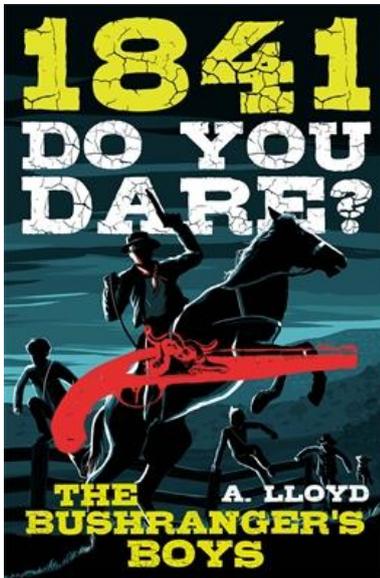
- Look up more interesting information about this period of history. Include information from one website, one online newspaper and one book.
- Read and research *The Little Prince*. What are the parallels in this story with the author's life? What are the parallels with the Little Prince's story?
- Does your family have a history of migration? Why did they leave their home country? What story would you write based on that true story?
- Do you have an adoption story in your family? Or were you adopted? What is your idea of 'family'? How has the idea of 'family' changed over time?

Storytelling

- Write a short story about Antonio's journey to America and his life when he gets there. What do you think happened to him and Chris?
- Simonetta's story is incomplete in this novel. Write a story about what you think happened to her after the bombing. Did her mother still work with the Resistance? Where did they go after the war?
- Choose an incident in the story and write it from a different perspective – choosing a character mentioned in the story.
- What does the cover tell you about the tone and content of the book?
- Is there an ethical dilemma in the book? What is it and what would you have done?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Do You Dare: The Bushranger's Boys
by A Lloyd

Do you dare . . .
Confront a bully?
Steal to protect someone?
Hide a bushranger?
It's an adventure in Australian history.
Do You Dare?

An exciting, action-packed adventure set in 1841.



Do You Dare: Eureka Boys
by P Matthews

Do you dare . . .
Join a rebellion?
Stand up to a bully?
Risk your life for a friend?
It's an adventure in Australian history.
Do You Dare?

An exciting, action-packed adventure set in 1854.



Do You Dare: Eureka Boys
by S Mitchell

Do you dare . . .
Let a girl join your cricket team?
Fight for your friends?
Risk everything to save your family?
It's an adventure in Australian history.
Do You Dare?

An exciting, action-packed adventure set in 1931.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
The Boy and the Spy	Felice Arena	9780143309284	8+	\$16.99		
History Mysteries: Diamond Jack	Mark Greenwood	9780143309260	8+	\$12.99		
History Mysteries: The Lost Explorer	Mark Greenwood	9780143309277	8+	\$12.99		
Do You Dare: The Bushranger's Boys	A Lloyd	9780143307563	8+	\$14.99		
Do You Dare: Eureka Boys	P Matthews	9780143308454	8+	\$14.99		
Do You Dare: Tough Times	S Mitchell	9780143308010	8+	\$14.99		
Once	Morris Gleitzman	9780143301950	8+	\$16.99		
TOTAL						

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