

# NO PEACE FOR AMELIA

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## SIOBHÁN PARKINSON

### Teaching Guide

By Gillian Perdue

**RATIONALE AND THEMES** This novel is a sequel to *Amelia*, the bestselling story of a young girl's first confrontation with hardship and her family's declining fortunes. In *No Peace For Amelia*, Amelia and her friend Mary Ann find their lives touched by World War I and the Easter Rising. This novel has been selected for use in the senior classes of primary schools and for the junior classes of secondary schools as it deals sensitively with such themes as:

- Pacifism and the notion of a 'just' war
- Boy/girl relationships and affection
- Nationalism
- Changing role of women in the twentieth century
- Loyalty and friendship
- Easter Rising and World War I
- Coping with loss

#### SUMMARY

The year is 1916 and Amelia Pim is living in comfort and security in Dublin. Her friend, Mary Ann, works in the house as cook-general. Amelia's security is rocked when Frederick Goodbody, her suitor and friend of the family, defies the Quaker principle of pacifism and enlists to fight in the war (World War I). Mary Ann is faced with dilemmas of her own: her brother is caught up in the Easter Rising and, though she has nationalist ideals, she doesn't want him or anyone else getting killed for them. With Frederick already away suffering in Europe, in Dublin pressure increases for Mary Ann and Amelia. The house is raided by soldiers searching for weapons – has Mary Ann compromised her employers by hiding arms in a pacifist household? The Volunteers take over the GPO on Easter

Monday. Mary Ann's brother turns up wounded, needing medical aid which Amelia provides. The girls help him escape so that he can deliver a vitally important message – surrender! There is no good news for Amelia, though, as Frederick has died in France, gassed to death on Easter Monday. He had with him her letter and a pressed flower she had sent. Amelia goes through a long process of grieving and does not speak for many days. Eventually, she is visited by Frederick's friend and fellow soldier who tells her how he died. They had each promised that if one survived the other, he would visit the other's family and girl. This visit brings Amelia some comfort. Finally, she speaks and begins to heal.

**APPROACH** For the purposes of this exploration, the novel has been divided into five main sections, covering four or five chapters each. However, the pace at which the novel is read is entirely up to the teacher. It may suit to read one chapter per day, or in larger blocks. Possible discussion points and activities are listed at the end of each section.

### UNIT 1 WAR

#### SUMMARY

The novel begins with a Historical Note outlining the situation in Ireland in the spring of 1916, mentioning Home Rule, the Unionist position, the Nationalist position and describing the Easter Rising. It also discusses the situation in

Europe, where thousands of Irishmen have already been killed and injured in World War I. The story proper then begins with Mary Ann, now sixteen, concealing a letter from her brother, Patrick, in which he asks her to hide guns in the Pim household. Patrick is a member of the Irish Volunteers who are planning armed rebellion. Amelia is now fifteen and regularly sees Frederick Goodbody on chaperoned outings. He seems troubled and she discovers the reason when she hears through Lucinda, his sister, that Frederick has defied family tradition and religion by enlisting in the army. He is to go to Flanders. Mary Ann and Amelia discuss this, with Mary Ann voicing the question, 'How could anyone feel strongly about this war?'

Read pp.15–49.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why do you think so many Irishmen left their homes and the safety of Ireland to fight in the Great War?
- Discuss Mary Ann's lack of sympathy for Amelia's supposed tiredness on p.18.
- Amelia's mother now has a job. Was this unusual for a woman in her position? How has the role of women in society changed from the early 1900s to the present day?
- What do you think of Amelia's assertion on p.48 that 'we should be in charge of our own countries'? Does this make her a nationalist?
- What do you think Edmund might have concealed down the side of the chair (p.21)?

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Adjectives are the words we use to describe nouns, telling us what people, places and things look like, sound like or how they appear, e.g. blue sky, angry father, troubled man.

Re-read p.24 and identify as many adjectives as you can find. Write an imaginary menu for a restaurant using plenty of adjectives to describe the food in an enticing manner.

### 2. THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Women and men were expected to behave in a certain manner in Amelia's time. Women were supposed to be defenceless and pathetic and men gallant, strong and brave.

Re-read Amelia's reaction to the war poster (p.26). How has the role of women in society changed since then? Write an essay entitled: 'Women have come a long way'.

### 3. CHAPERONING

Look up chaperoning, a common practice in respectable families at the turn of the century.

Are young people supervised like this nowadays? Would it be a good idea if they were? Write an account, fictional or other, of your first chaperoned date.

### 4. WORLD WAR I

What can you find out about World War I? What were the weapons used in this war?

Write a short account of what you have learned. Contact the Somme Heritage Centre, Bangor Rd, Newtownards. Tel: (048) 91823202 or visit [www.irishsoldier.org](http://www.irishsoldier.org).

### 5. HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Arrange a class visit to the Pearse Museum, St Enda's Park, Rathfarnham (Tel: 01-4934208. For more information visit: [www.heritageireland.ie/en/HistoricSites/DublinArea/PearseMuseumDublin/](http://www.heritageireland.ie/en/HistoricSites/DublinArea/PearseMuseumDublin/)) You could also visit Fernhill House, the People's Museum, near Belfast (Tel: 048 90715599. Visit [www.fernhillhouse.co.uk](http://www.fernhillhouse.co.uk) for more information.)

Type in Home Rule on a search engine. List the names of its main advocates. What can you find out about the Irish Volunteers and

the Ulster Volunteers? List possible reasons why Patrick Pearse and the Volunteers went ahead with the Rising even though it had been cancelled.

## UNIT 2 SOLDIERS

### SUMMARY

Frederick calls to the house in full uniform, to say goodbye. On the day he is due to leave, Amelia and Mary Ann sneak out of the house before dawn to see his ship set sail. On their way back home, they see Countess Markievicz and members of the Citizen Army marching through town. Amelia finds herself in trouble with her parents for being out without permission, though Mama is understanding, if not approving, of her wish to bid farewell to Frederick. The house is raided by soldiers searching for weapons. All they find is Edmund's toy gun but they wreak havoc in the Pim household.

Read pp.50–89.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Both Grandmama and Mary Ann are disapproving of Irishmen going off to fight in this war, but for different reasons. What are their reasons?
- Amelia says, on p.59: 'It doesn't really matter who it is he's fighting. It's just the whole idea of marching bravely and...oh, it's quite, quite wonderful!' Discuss.
- Have you ever had to witness something precious being destroyed, as happened to Mary Ann in this unit? What were your emotions?
- Discuss Mama's reaction to Amelia's dawn adventure (see p.77).

### ACTIVITIES

#### 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION

Try to locate the page where the following words appear (clue: Dawn Farewell): disconcerted, disgorged, appendages, khaki, civvies, incumbents, nonchalantly, accoutrements, agile, unprepossessing.

Using a dictionary, write a definition, and perhaps a sentence, using each word correctly.

#### 2. NEWS REPORT

Imagine you are a TV reporter observing the farewell scene on pp.63–65.

Write the report you might give, live to camera. Act out in class.

#### 3. WRITE A LETTER

Imagine you are one of the people left behind – son, daughter, sister, brother, wife, parent, and so on.

Write a letter to your soldier on the morning his ship sets sail for France.

#### 4. CLASS DEBATE

Mama believes that 'the way to resolve these problems is through reconciliation.' Organise a class debate/discussion on this motion.

#### 5. TRADE UNIONS

The men of the Citizen Army are described as 'trade unionists' (p.70). What does this mean?

List the names of modern trades unions operating in Ireland and Britain today.

#### 6. GEOGRAPHY

These locations are mentioned on p.67: Le Havre, Flanders, France.

Look them up in an atlas and list the reasons the soldiers were sent there.

## UNIT 3 LETTERS

### SUMMARY

Amelia arrives home to see the house in disarray after the soldiers' visit. Mary Ann gives notice because she's ashamed to have brought trouble into the household. The Pims persuade her to stay as they trust and believe in her. Amelia receives a letter from Frederick in which he sounds miserable and heartsick. She writes one in return, trying valiantly to find the right tone and enclosing a pressed flower that he had noticed on their windowsill. Mary Ann also receives a letter, from Patrick. In it, he warns her of the imminent rising, on Easter Sunday. Amelia goes along with Mary Ann to the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday evening. The next morning, the Rising has been cancelled.

Read pp.90–127.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

- What do you think were Frederick's emotions when he wrote the letter to Amelia (pp.103–104)? Why do you think Amelia had such difficulty composing a reply to him?
- Discuss Patrick's letter to Mary Ann on pp.113–114. Do you think he has a realistic outlook on the imminent confrontation?
- Amelia thought that Frederick should ask for new, better-fitting boots. Is this a realistic proposal? What does it tell us about Amelia's perceptions of the war?

#### ACTIVITIES

##### 1. SYMBOLS

The following symbols are mentioned in this unit: a little evergreen twig; a church in darkness being illuminated by candles; and a small, pressed flower. Write a paragraph explaining what each of these symbols means.

##### 2. FIGURES OF SPEECH

What does Amelia mean when she says Mary Ann 'just bit her nose off' in the hall? Write meanings for the following figures of speech:

The place was black with people  
My dad took the head off me  
I was black and blue

Can you think of any more?

##### 3. NAPOLEON

On p.107, Amelia mentions Napoleon and his saying that an army marches on its stomach. What does that phrase mean? Look up 'Napoleon Bonaparte'. Write a brief account of his life and famous deeds.

##### 4. DENOMINATIONS

Why did the service on Holy Saturday seem so strange to Amelia? Re-read the account on pp.120–121. What do you think Mary Ann would make of Meeting, if she were to go with Amelia?

Look up Christianity and list the many different branches of Christian believers. Is there room in the world for such variety? Write your opinion.

##### 5. SOLDIERS

See if you can find photographs or pictures of a World War I soldier and an Irish

Volunteer. Contact the Somme Heritage Centre, which details Ireland's contribution to World War I and shows reconstructed trenches of the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

## UNIT 4 UPRISING!

#### SUMMARY

The Pim family and Mary Ann head out for a picnic on Easter Monday. Amelia is reminded of Frederick by a poster she sees at the railway station. They have a great day out and return to find that they've missed the Rising. While they were gone, the GPO has been taken over by Patrick Pearse and his soldiers. Other buildings and strongholds in the city are occupied also. Amelia is troubled and confused by it all and Mary Ann is worried about her Patrick. He then appears one afternoon in the Pim's back garden. He is injured and has a message to bring to Ashbourne – the Volunteers are about to surrender. But he is in no fit state to travel and needs medical attention. Amelia steps in and does a great job treating his wound and fever. They get him out of the house and on his way in secret.

Read pp.131–179.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

- The slogan, 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity,' was used by many of the rebels and their sympathisers. Mary Ann also believed this. What did it mean?
- Discuss the problem that Amelia ponders on p.142: how many (policemen) did you need to shoot before the King gave in? Change the nouns with reference to the current Northern situation and discuss the prospects for peace.
- Mary Ann believes that you can't do better than to sacrifice your life for your country. Amelia and her mother would say that you can do better, by living and striving to make it a better place. What do you think?

#### ACTIVITIES

##### 1. WHAT ARE THEY FIGHTING

#### FOR?

On pp.170–171, Amelia and Mary Ann argue passionately over the wars their loved ones are involved in.

Write a list or essay entitled 'What Patrick is Fighting For'. Repeat for Frederick.

##### 2. INTERVIEW

Interview an elderly person who may remember the Rising or World War I through their parents' or even their own experiences. Perhaps the interview could be re-enacted in class.

##### 3. UPRISING!

Why did Eoin MacNeill publish a notice in the *Sunday Independent* newspaper, cancelling the manoeuvres?

Write an account detailing what happened subsequently. Which leaders pressed on with their plans for the Rising? Name the centres/buildings captured by the insurgents.

##### 4. HIPPOCRATIC OATH

Amelia shows promise for a future medical career once again (p.164). Look up the Hippocratic Oath and discuss with reference to Amelia's statement: 'I won't let him die.'

## UNIT 5 GRIEF

#### SUMMARY

Amelia is in school when she hears that Frederick Goodbody has been killed. She faints and is brought home, where she grieves silently for days. The Rising is over and one by one the leaders are executed until sixteen are dead and thousands deported or imprisoned. The tide of public opinion begins to turn in favour of the rebels, who are now heroes. Amelia is visited by a soldier in Frederick's regiment who tells her, gently, how he died and how important she was to him. Finally, Amelia cries and speaks her first words in days. The girls are terribly concerned for Patrick and have had no word from him since he left to go to Ashbourne. Amelia and her mother pay a visit to the Goodbody family. On their return, Patrick is on the doorstep, alive and well. They give him a rapturous welcome and explain the whole story to Mama. He

gives Amelia a beautiful shawl; deep blue with a dash of yellow – just like an iris.

Read pp.181–215.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

- What are the signs we have seen to date of growing friendship and attraction between Amelia and Patrick?
- Discuss the reasons for the change in public attitudes to the leaders of the 1916 Rising.
- Do you think the soldier's visit was important for Amelia? In what way?
- What is your opinion of Lucinda's reaction to Frederick's death (p.209)?

#### ACTIVITIES

##### 1. SYMBOLISM

The iris appears, once again, as an image of the relationship between Amelia and Frederick. Re-read p.189 and see what Amelia notices about the irises on the day she hears of his death. What has happened the irises on p. 207? What could this signify? The last word in the book is 'iris', but this refers to a scarf given to Amelia by Patrick. What do you think this means? Write an

account of the iris symbol in this story.

##### 2. POETRY EXTRACT

Following is an extract from a famous anti-war poem by Wilfred Owen (1893–1918). In it, he describes the effects of lethal gas.

Read and discuss.

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,

Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;

But someone still was yelling out and

stumbling

And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime ...

Dim, through the misty panes and thick

green light,

As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,

He plunges at me, guttering, choking,

drowning.

From 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' by Wilfred Owen.

##### 3. CHAT SHOW

Imagine you are a chat show host who has to interview the 'odious' Lucinda Goodbody. Write a list of questions for her. Role play in class.

##### 4. CLASS DEBATE

Debate the motion:

*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*  
(‘It is sweet and honourable to die for one’s country’).


##### 5. HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Find the names of the 16 people executed after the Rising. Imagine you are a British Officer stationed in Ireland. Write a report of the Rising and its aftermath.

##### 6. JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION

An organisation has been established to commemorate all those from the island of Ireland, men and women, who served, fought and died during World War I, and to promote peace and reconciliation between all the people of the island of Ireland.

Visit the website of the In Flanders Field Museum at [www.inflandersfields.be](http://www.inflandersfields.be), which was designed in collaboration with the Department of Teacher Training of the University of Ghent.

 Denotes activities that are suitable for both senior cycle primary school use and junior cycle secondary school use.



SIOBHÁN PARKINSON is an Irish author who has written many novels to great critical acclaim. She lives in Dublin with her husband, Roger Bennett, and their son Matthew. Appointed as the Dublin Corporation Irish Writers' Centre Writer-in-Residence in 1999, her primary interests are reading and writing. Siobhán's novel *Sisters ... no way!* has been translated into Danish and *The Leprechaun Who Wished He Wasn't* has been translated into French.

#### Reviews for Siobhán Parkinson's *Amelia*:

'*Amelia* is set in that turbulent place, Dublin in 1914, and is all about loss and adjusting which, of course, is what adolescence is all about.' *Sunday Independent*

'In the end, it is hope and courage which are the mainstays of this compelling novel.' *The Echo*

'[*Amelia*] gives a tremendous insight into the way things were for the well off and the not quite so well off. It presents clearly the difficulties that arise when one is suddenly thrown into a new situation. But Amelia learns fast. A well-written and sensitive story.' *Books Ireland*

#### AWARDS FOR SIOBHÁN PARKINSON

*Sisters ... no way!*

Bisto Book of the Year Award 1997

*Four Kids, Three Cats, Two Cows, One Witch (maybe)*

Bisto Merit Award 1998

White Ravens 1998 – International Youth Library Selection

*The Moon King*

Bisto Merit Award 1999

#### ANOTHER AMELIA STORY:

Amelia Pim is a wealthy 12-year-old whose world falls apart when her father loses his fortune, her mother is imprisoned, and her brother is taken seriously ill. Dealing with these problems – and facing her own prejudices – the novel movingly describes how Amelia eventually achieves maturity. ISBN 978-0-86278-352-5.

