

## AUDREY'S BIG SECRET

### Teachers Notes

Written by **Christine Harris**

Illustrations by **Ann James**

Published by **Little Hare Books**

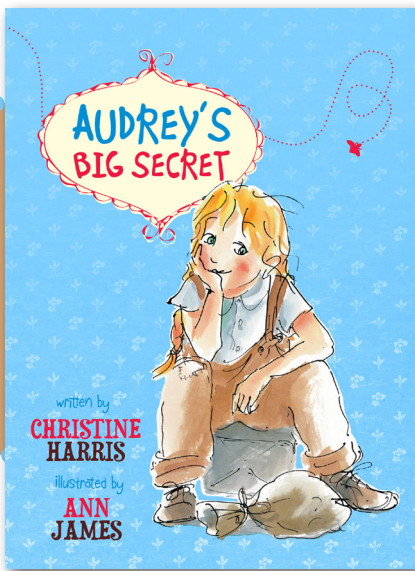
## SYNOPSIS

Audrey Barlow has woken up in the dead of night and needs to go to the dunny. The only problem is, the dunny is out the back and down the garden path. And if that isn't bad enough, Audrey sees what she thinks is a ghost! It's not such a far-fetched idea, especially as her twin sisters, Esther and Pearl, who died as infants are buried near the back path. But Audrey soon discovers that it wasn't a ghost she spotted at all, but a young aboriginal girl, her own age called Janet. Audrey soon learns that Janet has run away from a mission and together they must think of a way to keep Janet from the authorities and being taken again.

In Audrey's Big Secret Audrey faces her biggest dilemma yet – how can she protect her friend Janet and help her find the family that she so dearly misses without lying to her own family. Audrey's Big Secret is about loss and missing the things you love but no longer have. It offers a glimpse into the tragedy of the stolen generation, through the eyes of a child. It is tender and heart-felt. Readers will love Audrey and her plucky determination to see that something so wrong must be made right.

## THEMES

Loneliness  
Friendship  
Loss  
Life/ Death  
Right/ Wrong  
Truth  
Secrets  
The Stolen Generation



## AUDREY'S BIG SECRET

### Teachers Notes

Written by **Christine Harris**

Illustrations by **Ann James**

Published by **Little Hare Books**

## WRITING AUDREY'S BIG SECRET: CHRISTINE HARRIS

### What inspired you to write *Audrey's Big Secret*?

I wanted to explore a moral dilemma with Audrey. The keeping or telling of secrets is a big part of life, anyone's life, not just that of a child. But children take some time to work out what their stand is on things like this. Also, it is more intriguing to explore a choice between two apparent 'rights' than an obvious 'right' and 'wrong'.

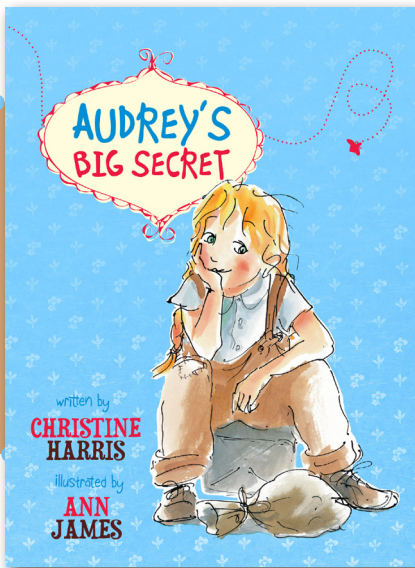
### How did the writing process for *Audrey's Big Secret* differ from writing the previous two books?

A little more weight of responsibility because after the first two books, I had fans who were eager for the next adventure and I wanted to keep them happy and interested.

Also, I had to be careful about how I portrayed Janet and the friendship of the two girls. Even a simple thing like how would Janet talk? Her English, being a second language learned at a mission, would not be perfect. But I didn't want her to look or sound as though she wasn't very bright. So I made sure that Audrey also stumbled over some words (after all she is only young) and that the girls were in sympathy/understanding with each other.

### How did you research your character Janet? Was she a real girl?

I read a lot of material to get the words and voices of people who had been taken from their homes and sent to missions. I used a photograph as a prompt for Janet, but I didn't keep a record of the person's real name. It was just a face that fascinated me. I did know a Janet who was taken from her parents and I shocked to learn about it. And that was when I was a grownup. Until then, I hadn't heard anything about times in Australia's history where things like this happened. It all came out because we were discussing our ages and the real-life Janet said she had no idea how old she was.



## AUDREY'S BIG SECRET

### Teachers Notes

Written by **Christine Harris**

Illustrations by **Ann James**

Published by **Little Hare Books**

### **How important was it for you to include the theme of the Stolen Generation in the Audrey books?**

The Stolen Generation is too big for one book, and too big for me to tackle, and not my place actually. 'Audrey's Big Secret' is about two girls, friends, with much in common, including a shared secret. However, I did discuss having the character of Janet with a writer who is Aboriginal. She said, 'How can you write a story about the Australian Outback in 1930 and not have Aborigines in it.' So I felt comfortable with including a single child, Janet.

### **What sort of a reaction are you getting to Audrey's Big Secret? From teachers? From kids?**

It's early days. I haven't spoken to any child, yet, who has read it. But, the reviews are starting to come in and they are very positive.

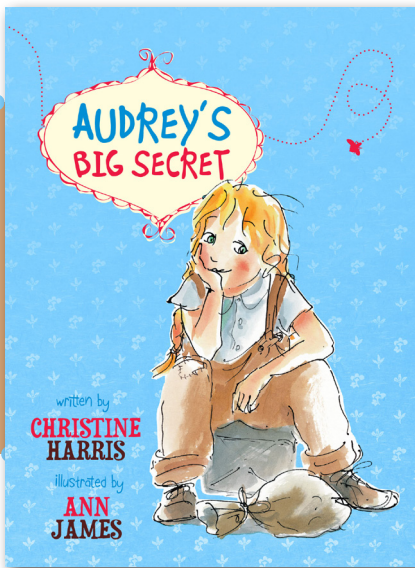
### **Why do you think kids enjoy the Audrey series so much?**

They love the character. Recently I was asked to sign an autograph by a young boy. 'I've already signed it,' I told him. But he said, 'Sign Audrey.' So now Audrey is not only getting more fanmail than me, the writer, she is now being asked for her autograph. That is wonderful. I also think children identify with Audrey's imagination. And they laugh over the funny things she says.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHRISTINE HARRIS has lived in many parts of South Australia, including some isolated rural locations. As a child her best friend, Jennifer Hobbar, was imaginary. Christine has always loved reading books and she had her first go at writing one perched in a tree when she was nine years old. She hasn't stopped writing since.

To date Christine has written more than fifty books including short stories, historical fiction, thrillers, horror, speculative fiction, humour, plays and picture books. She has received many awards for her writing, including being shortlisted for the Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award (*Jamil's Shadow*, 2002) and an Aurealis Award for speculative fiction (*Foreign Devil*, 2000). In 2006 she was honoured to receive the Carclew Fellowship.



## AUDREY'S BIG SECRET

### Teachers Notes

Written by **Christine Harris**

Illustrations by **Ann James**

Published by **Little Hare Books**

Today Christine lives in the Adelaide Hills with her family. She travels widely, taking up writer-in-residence positions, speaking at conferences, holding writing workshops and visiting schools to talk about her books. This doesn't stop her writing because she usually has a laptop handy, though when she doesn't, she has been known to resort to a pen and a serviette.

Find out more about Christine and her books at: [www.christineharris.com](http://www.christineharris.com)

## QUESTIONS/ COMPREHENSION

### Chapter 1

What does it mean to have a 'good nose' for weather?

### Chapter 2

Why does Audrey send Price outside?

### Chapter 3

What did Price see outside?

### Chapter 4

Why do you think Audrey wants to know about her sisters, Pearl and Esther?

Why do you think Audrey's dad doesn't want to talk about Pearl and Esther?

### Chapter 5

What is a bunyip? Are they real?

### Chapter 6

What does Audrey see on the tree line? What is a tree line?

### Chapter 7

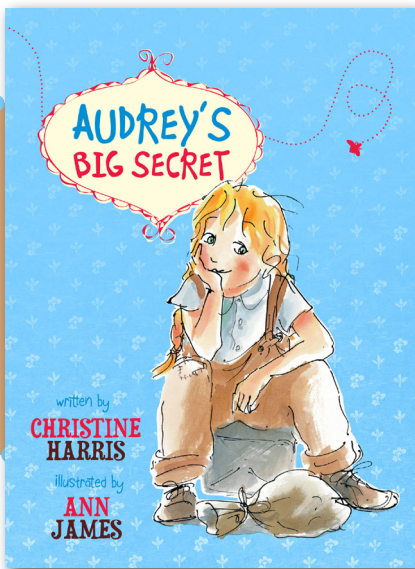
Was it Bloke that Audrey saw on her trip to the dunny?

### Chapter 8

What is a min min?

### Chapter 9

Why did Bloke remove her teeth? What did she pull them out with?



## AUDREY'S BIG SECRET

### Teachers Notes

Written by **Christine Harris**  
Illustrations by **Ann James**

Published by **Little Hare Books**

#### *Chapter 10*

What does Audrey's mum give her for her morning tea?

#### *Chapter 11*

How does Audrey know that something is different about her cubbyhouse?

#### *Chapter 12*

Who does Audrey find in her cubbyhouse? Why do you think she is there?

#### *Chapter 13*

Why doesn't Janet want to say her other name out loud?

#### *Chapter 14*

Think about how Janet describes life on the mission. How is it different to the lives of other children at the time?

Why does Janet want to go home?

Why do you think Janet doesn't want Audrey to tell Mr and Mrs Barlow that she has run away from the mission?

#### *Chapter 15*

Why doesn't Audrey tell her mum about Janet?

Do you think this was difficult for Audrey? What sentences in this chapter might make you think it was difficult for Audrey to keep a secret from her mum?

#### *Chapter 16*

In this chapter, what does Audrey do to Dougie? What do you think this says about Audrey?

#### *Chapter 17*

In this chapter, what does Audrey bring for Janet?

#### *Chapter 18*

What do Bloke and Janet have in common? We find out towards the end of the chapter.

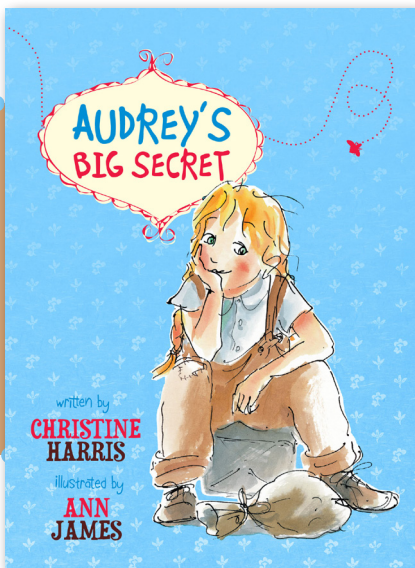
#### *Chapter 19*

How can Audrey tell that a car has been to her house?

#### *Chapter 20*

Do you think Audrey's mum might suspect something is going on? What sentences from this chapter





## AUDREY'S BIG SECRET

### Teachers Notes

Written by **Christine Harris**

Illustrations by **Ann James**

Published by **Little Hare Books**

makes you think that?

#### *Chapter 21*

In this chapter Audrey asks the question - 'If you believe something, does that make it true?' (pg 110). What do you think the answer to this question is? NB. You could have a discussion about this question rather than trying to establish the right answer.

#### *Chapter 22*

When Audrey sees the first star, what does she wish for?  
Do you think Audrey is a good friend? Why?

#### *Chapter 23*

What does Audrey do to distract everyone from the missing meat?

#### *Chapter 24*

What does the Barlow family do to entertain themselves after the family meal in this chapter?

#### *Chapter 25*

How do the girls cover their footprints? Why do they do this?

#### *Chapter 26*

Who arrives at the end of chapter 26?

#### *Chapter 27*

Does Audrey trust the policeman? Does Audrey's mum? Why? Why not?  
Why does the Aboriginal man have to wait outside near the car? And not come in for a cup of tea like the policeman? What do you think about this? Is this fair?

#### *Chapter 28*

Do you think that Audrey's mum and Price are on Audrey's side or the policeman's side? Or both? Why?

#### *Chapter 29*

Why do you think Audrey and Price run so fast to the cubbyhouse?

#### *Chapter 30*

Who has Janet left the cubbyhouse with? What clues does she leave behind?

#### *Chapter 31*

What does Audrey's mum say the hardest choices are? What do you think she means?