



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary  
(ages 9-12; years 5 to 7)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, Humanities & Social Sciences; Health & Physical Education.
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking; Personal & Social Capability; Ethical Understanding; Intercultural Understanding.

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Analyse how language and writing can evoke mood, tension and characterisation.
- Encourage creative and imaginative writing.
- Understanding relationships and stress, discussing resilience, perseverance and the power of human connection.
- Discuss social and economic inequality.
- Use of humour and figurative devices.
- Examine historical context.

## THEMES

- The impact of war
- Tolerance
- Morality
- Abuse of power
- Loss and grief
- Being a displaced person
- Families
- Hope, Resilience & Optimism

## PREPARED BY

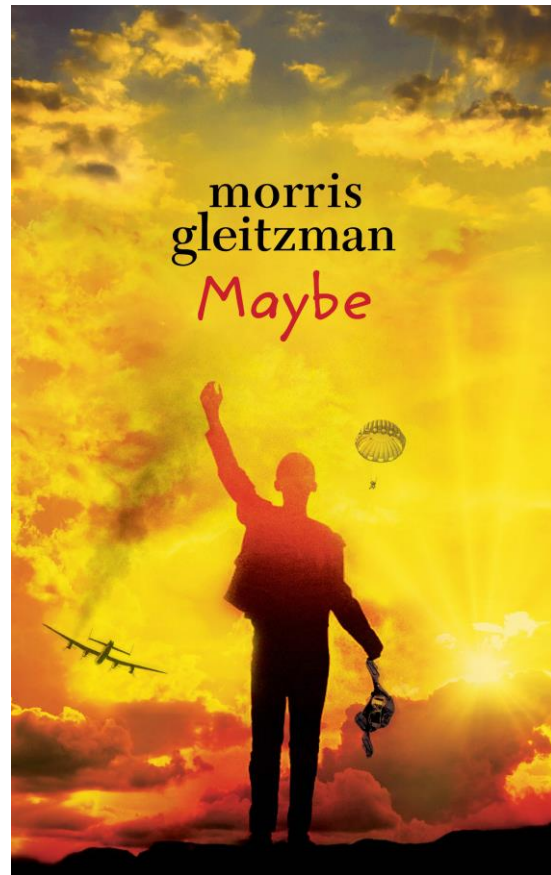
Penguin Random House Australia

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## Maybe

Morris Gleitzman

## PLOT SUMMARY

The next compelling chapter in the life of Felix, hero of the award-winning *Once, Then, After, Soon and Now*.

It's 1946. Europe is in ruins. Millions of people dream of finding happiness somewhere else.

Fourteen-year-old Felix is one of them. When he's offered a journey to another country far away, he seizes the opportunity. So does someone very dear to him, even though she wasn't actually invited.

They have high hopes for this country, and their dramatic arrival there makes them want to stay. But before Felix and Anya can embrace the love and friendship of their new land, they must confront the murderous urge for revenge still alive in the old.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Morris Gleitzman grew up in England and came to Australia when he was sixteen. After university he worked for ten years as a screenwriter. Then he had a wonderful experience. He wrote a novel for young people. Now, after 39 books, he's one of Australia's most popular children's authors.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Morris says:

Felix's whole life up to the beginning of this book has been lived in a world of maybe. War is full of uncertainty – you can never be sure if your home, family, pets, friends, school or even self will be around tomorrow. If you're an optimist like Felix, you hope they will. You want your loved ones to have a future and you want to have one with them.

You also want a future because the world fascinates you with its possibilities. Which is another type of maybe. Maybe, you think, the world will manage, with help from us, to be the best world it can. Which is one of the things I really like about Felix. He's growing up in the worst of worlds but because of the love and friendship in his life, he can imagine the best. Perhaps. Maybe. With a bit of luck.

I knew from writing *Now*, the book that jumps ahead to Felix's 80th birthday, that he comes to Australia as a fourteen-year-old. I had to write about this huge adventure he has. Crossing the world to start a new life is full of maybes. Maybe I won't like it. Maybe I will. Maybe I'll be lonely. Maybe I won't.

There's another big maybe for Felix in this book. He suspects he might need to have a fight to the death with a revenge-crazed Polish killer. Australia, he hopes, will be a better place for this to happen with its fully-functioning police force and less rubble to trip over than in Europe.

This is the kind of maybe we readers love. We want to know what'll happen, and even as we read the story to find out, we're imagining the possibilities. How will Felix survive? Maybe he'll fight. Maybe he'll hide. Maybe he'll make friends with a big tough Aussie bloke and get him to do the fighting. Maybe he won't. Maybe his friend Anya will help him instead, and not just because he's fallen in love with her.

Maybe ... maybe ... maybe ...

## PRE-READING NOTES

Handled with sensitivity and care, there is enormous potential for using this novel in the classroom with a wide range of students. It can be useful for those students who have not read the other novels in this series to have background knowledge of the Holocaust and the impact it had on those who lived through it. Perhaps extracts could be read from some of the previous books, *Once*, *Then*, *After* and *Soon*, to reinforce these feelings and some of Felix's experiences.

*Maybe* can also be studied as a stand-alone novel and still be used as a springboard for discussion about a wide range of issues, such as the historical and cultural context of the war and its aftermath; political, social and ethical issues; and the racial, religious and moral implications raised.

Even set as it is, after the end of World War Two, this novel is likely to raise some challenging issues and questions. As well as Felix's memories of his experiences during the war, *Maybe* also deals with being a displaced person in another country, treatment of children in institutions, and it touches on the growing fear at the time surrounding the Soviet Union.

Note that *Maybe* also includes a birth scene.

### Pre-reading activity

Examine the front and back cover of the book.

- What is the character on the front cover doing and, combined with the book's title, how does it make you feel?
- What do the other elements on the cover influence how you feel and what do they tell you about the story such as where it is set? Why?



## NARRATIVE

Rather than using a chapter number or chapter title, Morris Gleitzman defines each chapter with a sentence beginning 'Maybe . . .'

The author uses this device across all the books in his Felix series, where the title of the book is used as the first word at the beginning of each chapter. It serves as a focus for the narrative drive of the story and, as explained in the author's inspiration on this page, informs the emotional stage Felix has reached in his journey through his war-related experiences.

### Group Activity 1

1. Allocate a different chapter to class groups. Read aloud the opening sentence or page.
2. How has the author conveyed the setting, context and Felix's feelings in the sentence/page?
3. Review and outline what happens in this chapter.
4. What is the main theme of this chapter? How is that expressed in this first sentence/page.

### Group Activity 2

- In class groups, create a book trailer based around a quote from the beginning of one of the chapters to convey a sense of the story and of Felix. Use whatever resources you feel will best draw the reader into the drama, to entice them to read further.

## FOCUS ON FELIX

Explore and analyse the powerful roles that hope, resilience and optimism play in Felix's story.

Though still just a young boy of 14, he clearly possesses these psychological tools to a remarkable degree. We witness Felix's use of them over and over again in his fight for survival and understanding, though at times in this book, Felix seems to struggle with his optimism.

However, he consistently puts others' needs before his own, especially those most precious to him – Anya (and her unborn baby), Gabriek and Celeste. Felix's ability to always look for the best in a situation helps to preserve his own mental and physical health. In *Maybe* he allows himself to imagine a life where, maybe, he can finally be safe and happy, together with those he loves – and he will fight with his life to try to make that story come true.

Morris Gleitzman has created a wonderful character and vehicle in Felix. Through the eyes of this central character, delivered in a first person naive voice in the present tense, the reader will witness the best and worst of the human spirit – the good, the bad and the ugly – even a year after the war is officially over.

There are many ways to undertake character studies. Some suggestions are offered below or your students may be able to tailor their own studies according to aspects or issues of interest to them.

### Character

- Chart an aspect of the character's development – e.g. emotional spectrum, beliefs and understandings, relationships and interactions, impact of positive and negative experiences etc. Identify changes and turning points using written or graphic form.

### Writing Tasks

- Take a scene involving Felix and another character and tell the scene in first person from the point of view of the other character. How would they see him? How would they feel about the situation?
- Write a short story in the first person, present tense, about an important moment in your life beginning with 'Maybe'. Make sure you include the setting and give the reader an insight into your feelings relating to the event. Perhaps write one version with a pessimistic outlook and another with an optimistic outlook.

### Meaningful quotes

Select (or ask students to select) some thought-provoking quotes from different points in the story. Use these as starting points for discussion or to develop dramatisations, oral presentations, reflective or creative writing, music or artwork and other appropriate response activities.



## FURTHER ACTIVITIES

### Dedication

Morris Gleitzman opens the novel with this dedication:

*For all the children who dreamed of a safe place.*

*And for all the countries who offered one.*

- Discuss what you think this means.
- Think about the present situation of refugees in Australia and discuss the similarities and differences to Felix experiences in the book.

### Inside Cover art

- Examine the inside covers of the book. Discuss what the Australian government was trying to convey with the poster in the centre. This was a real poster from the period, see <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/objectsthroughtime/post-war-migration-poster/index.html>
- What is the significance of the background on the inside covers. How does it relate to Felix's story? (e.g. see p.205 of Maybe)
- Do some research into immigration to Australia directly after World War II. What was its purpose? What effect did it have on Australia? See: <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/changing-face-of-modern-australia-1950s-to-1970s>

### Forgotten Children

- As happens to Felix & Anya, many child migrants and Australian children were put into children's homes. Their treatment in those institutions has become the subject of serious enquiries and a public apology was made by the Australian government to those 'Forgotten Children' in 2009. Discuss the abuse of power by those in charge of these institutions, as displayed by Mr Skully in the novel. As further reference, see: <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2012/august/1354057131/christine-kenneally/forgotten-ones>.



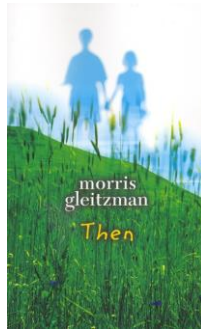
FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*Once*  
by Morris Gleitzman

The first book in this incredible family of books.

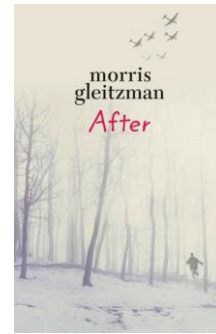
*Teachers' resources available.*



*Then*  
by Morris Gleitzman

The second book in this incredible family of books.

*Teachers' resources available.*



*After*  
by Morris Gleitzman

The third book in the chronology of this incredible family of books.



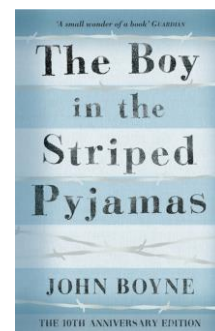
*Soon*  
by Morris Gleitzman

The fourth book in the chronology of this incredible family of books. *Maybe* follows directly after this story.



*Now*  
by Morris Gleitzman

The last book in the chronology of this incredible family of books.



*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*  
by John Boyne

Another very powerful story set in the Holocaust, also written in a naive voice, but this time from the point of view of a German boy.

