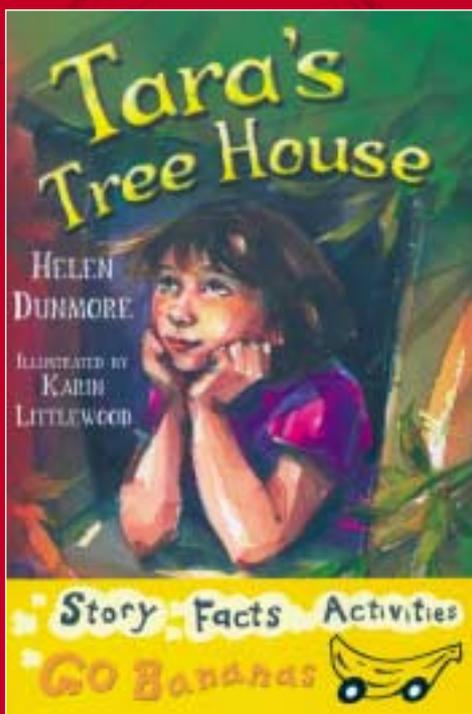


THE GREAT READING ADVENTURE 2005

TARA'S TREE HOUSE



ACTIVITY PACK

MELANIE KELLY

MAIL MARKETING
INTERNATIONAL LIMITED

TARA'S TREE HOUSE ACTIVITY PACK

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INTRODUCTION

The annual *Great Reading Adventure* aims to get the whole of Bristol reading and talking about books. The main title chosen for 2005 is a haunting novel set during World War Two: *The Siege* by local author Helen Dunmore.

To encourage younger readers to become involved in the project, we have also chosen one of Helen's children's books - *Tara's Tree House*. This refers to World War Two and what happened to children during the war. It is a chapter book for newly fluent readers at KS2. It could also be used as a read aloud book.

This pack has been devised as support material for reading *Tara's Tree House* in the classroom, in the library or at home. There is information about the author, the illustrator, children in World War Two and tree houses, and activities based around the book. There are more activities on the back pages of *Tara's Tree House*.

We would be interested in seeing copies of work produced as a result of using this pack: a selection of these will be featured on the *Great Reading Adventure* website and published in the Bristol *Evening Post*. Send to:

The Great Reading Adventure
BCDP
Leigh Court
Abbots Leigh
Bristol BS8 3RA
Email: enquiries@bristolreads.com

For further information on the *Great Reading Adventure*, including competitions children can enter, visit the project website at www.bristolreads.com

HELEN DUNMORE

Helen Dunmore wrote the story for *Tara's Tree House*.

Helen grew up in Yorkshire in the North of England. Helen now lives in Bristol. She spends most of her summers in Cornwall.

When she was a little girl Helen loved reading. Among her favourites were fairy stories, pop-up books, comics, funny books and true-life adventures. She also enjoyed learning poems off by heart. She knew that one day she would be a writer.

Helen went to university at York and then spent two years teaching in Finland. Now she spends most of her time writing. She likes to travel and to meet different people and to talk about books.

She has written poetry, short stories and novels for adults and children. Her books for children include *Amina's Blanket*, *Go Fox*, *Allie's Applies*, *Clyde's Leopard*, *Aliens Don't Eat Bacon Sandwiches*, *Great-Grandma's Dancing Dress* and *The Seal Cove*.

She enjoys writing for children and hopes the books she writes are as interesting as the ones she read when she was young. She likes to use her imagination to make up a world that is full of life and is believable. She also likes to write about children who have the chance to have some kind of an adventure.



Helen Dunmore

OVER THE GREEN HILL

A POEM BY HELEN DUNMORE

Two boys, a girl in a red coat,
a leaping, dancing, spring-mad dog
fighting its leash, released
to run like water over the hill
the green hill, with mystery running after.

Where are they going and why so happy,
why the red flag of her coat flapping
like poppy-silk against the green,
why are they all running
like water over the top of the hill,
the green hill, with secrets running after?

What is the country they are running to,
is there peace there, is there freedom
to jump and play in the spring air,
why are they all running, why do they look
behind them, and laugh, and run faster,
why are they holding hands as they run
over that green hill with the wind running after?

(from *Snollygoster and Other Poems*, 2000)

ACTIVITY

This poem describes three children with a dog running over the top of a hill. Helen leaves it to the person reading the poem to imagine who the children are, why they are so happy, where they are going and why they are running.

What do you think is happening in the poem?

Draw a picture to illustrate this poem.

KARIN LITTLEWOOD

Karin Littlewood is the illustrator of Tara's Tree House. This means she drew and painted all the pictures in the book. She tells you here about herself and her work.

Ever since I can remember I've wanted to be an illustrator. I drew and painted all the time when I was a little girl. In fact, it was the only thing that stopped my crying on my first day at school! My sisters would sometimes make little books and I'd illustrate them. I'd also spend hours looking at beautifully illustrated books, especially the ones from Germany my mum would read to me.

We had a family friend who was a successful painter, so luckily I knew that it was possible to do the thing you love most - and get paid for it!

Art was my favourite lesson all the way through school, so it was the most natural thing to then go into Art College. What a joy to be able to draw and paint all day long!

And that's what I've been doing ever since.

I live in Stoke Newington in London and cycle in each day to my studio near the centre which I share with other illustrators, painters and animators. Lots of illustrators work on their own at home but I love being around other creative people.

Karin Littlewood



Karin's studio



Sketches for *Tara's Tree House*

I love travelling. I've been to India, Kenya, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, Nepal. There are so many new things to look at when you're away. And I spend as much time as I can visiting friends and relatives in Germany, Spain and Italy.

Quite often I'll be walking in the mountains, camping or canoeing as I enjoy being outdoors.

I love being in London too. There's so much to see and do and it's a city which is so full of surprises and you can meet lots of interesting people.

I don't only illustrate children's books - my work can be found on packaging, and in magazines and newspapers too - in fact, anything that requires something done in my style of splashy water colour.

It's a good feeling knowing that I'm doing what I always thought must be one of the best jobs around - being an illustrator!

You can find a list of books illustrated by Karin on the [Great Reading Adventure website](#). Her books have been published in the USA, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain and Australia, as well as Britain.

Karin will be coming to Bristol to run some illustration workshops during the February half-term as part of this project.

Pictures from other books illustrated by Karin



CHAPTER BY CHAPTER SUMMARY

- 1: Tara comes to stay with her nan for six weeks while her mum is in hospital. She's cross about being away from home so long and is bored stuck in her nan's flat. She goes to have a look at the downstairs garden. It belongs to Mr Barenstein. Nan has told Tara she must not go down there as Mr Barenstein is old and does not like noise. He sees Tara in the garden but does not speak to her. Tara thinks she must be in trouble now.
- 2: Mr Barenstein phones Nan and says he wants everyone in the house to use the garden. Tara is very pleased as now she will have somewhere to play.
- 3: Tara climbs a pear tree while Nan looks for a place to grow vegetables. Nan says when she was a little girl she was sent away from home for five years. It was during the war and it was too dangerous for her to stay in London. She went to live on a farm.
- 4: Nan's neighbour Mr Giovanni takes Nan and Tara to buy things for the vegetable plot. He also buys a lot of wood. The next day Nan takes Tara to the cinema so they are not in Mr Giovanni's way when he is building something in the garden.
- 5: Tara looks out the window the next morning and sees a tree house in the pear tree. When Tara is in the tree house, Mr Barenstein comes into the garden. He tells her about his sister Hannah who used to climb trees when she was young. Mr Barenstein looks sad when Tara asks what happened to Hannah.
- 6: Nan says that when the war came there was no place safe for Hannah. She lived in another country. Tara thinks about what might have happened to Hannah. She looks forward to her friend Lisa coming to stay and thinks six weeks away from home isn't long at all.

ACTIVITY

The book ends with Tara alone in the tree house. The next day, her friend Lisa will be coming so she'll have someone to play with.

Write a few paragraphs about what you think Tara and Lisa might have done on their first day in the tree house together.

Draw a picture of Tara and Lisa to illustrate what you have written.

TARA'S TREE HOUSE PUZZLE

Can you find the answers to the questions about **Tara's Tree House** in the Word Search box? The words run down, across and diagonally, and letters can be used more than once.

1. What did Nan learn to make on the farm in the war?
2. What is the name of Tara's best friend back home?
3. What is the name of Mr Giovanni's granddaughter?
4. What is Mr Giovanni's job?
5. What did Nan give the orphan lambs?
6. What other animals did she feed and what did she collect?
7. Where did the milk come from?
8. What fruit grew in the tree Hannah climbed?
9. Who drew the pictures for Tara's Tree House? Karin _____
10. Who owns the garden where Tara plays?
11. What will the buds on the tree turn into?
12. In what city did Nan live when she was little?
13. What fell from the sky in the war?
14. What did Nan pull up from the kitchen garden?
15. What was the name of the farmer? Mr _____
16. How long was Nan away from home?
17. What did Nan pickle?
18. What did Tara have with her sausages?
19. As well as beans, what vegetable beginning with 'b' will Nan grow?
20. What tools did she buy for the garden?
21. What was the ladder to the tree house made of?

L	C	A	R	P	E	N	T	E	R	R	J
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A	I	F	I	V	E	Y	E	A	R	S	E
B	P	G	N	T	S	P	A	D	E	N	S
C	G	V	S	B	U	T	T	E	R	U	W

WRITE A REVIEW

ACTIVITY

Imagine you are asked to write about Tara's Tree House by the local paper.

If people have not read Tara's Tree House before, they can read what you have written and decide whether they would like the book. People who have already read the book can decide whether or not they agree with you.

Use the headings below to guide you. Remember to include the name of the book, the author and illustrator in your review.

Setting

Where and when does the story take place?

Plot

What happens? Was it interesting? Why?

Characters

Who are the main characters?

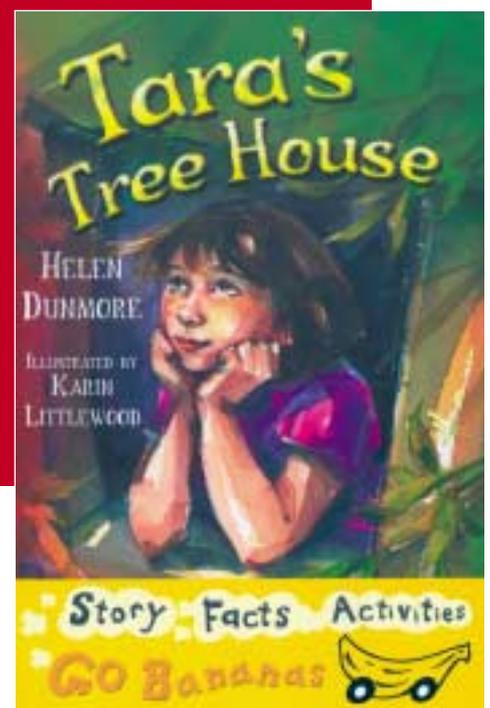
Who did you like most? Why?

Your opinion

What did you like or dislike about this book?

How would you rate it?

Brilliant? Good? Average? Terrible?



TREE HOUSES

People have built tree house for hundreds and thousands of years. They are often the safest places to live - high enough to escape the wild animals or floods that might be below.

Children love to build and play in tree houses. They make good dens and can be the place for real and imaginary adventures. Some tree houses are made very simply, with some old planks of wood lain across the branches of a tree and maybe a piece of canvas hung overhead to keep out the rain. Some are very grand with floors at different heights, steps, a proper roof and windows.

ACTIVITY

Would you like to have a tree house where you can play with your friends or be on your own?

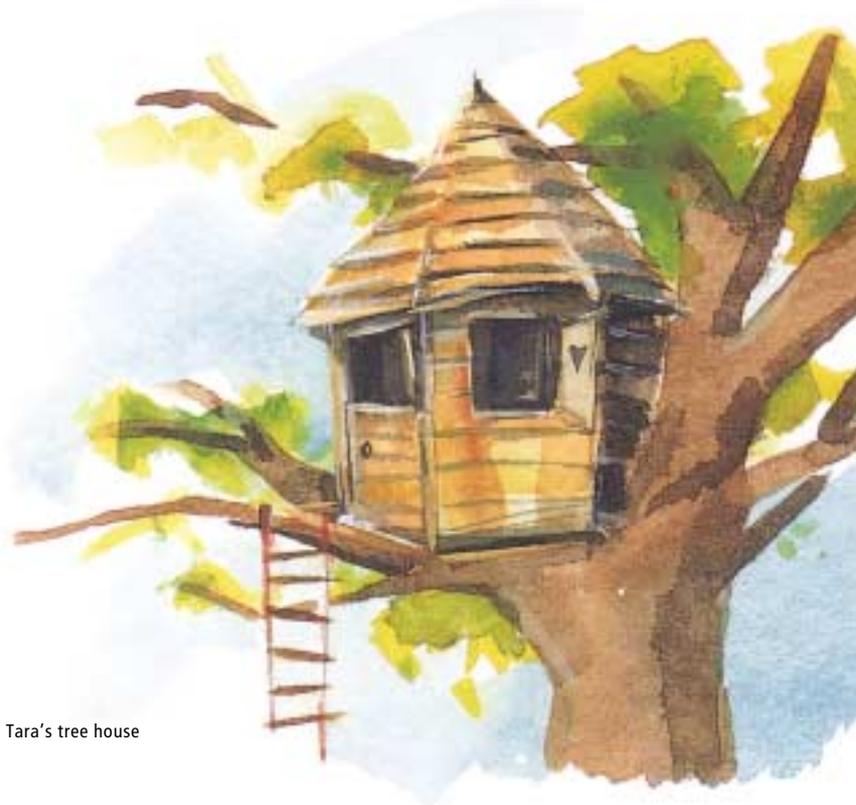
Draw the outside of your dream tree house and colour it in.

Use your imagination. What shape do you want? How big will it be? What will it be made of? How will you get up and down? And in and out?

ACTIVITY

Nan was going to get Tara a table and chair so she could eat her meals in the tree house.

Draw the inside of your tree house. What do you want up there? Games? A hammock? Books? A radio? A spyglass? A cool-box full of icecream? Try to fit all the things you want in the picture - including you!



Tara's tree house

BRITISH EVACUEES



Bristol evacuees

Nan tells Tara about what happened when she was an evacuee during World War Two. Evacuees were people who were sent away from big cities that might be bombed in air raids. They went to safe places in the country.

Before the war began, plans had already been made in Britain for getting as many people out of danger as possible in case Germany attacked.

The people to be evacuated were children aged between five and fifteen, mothers with children under five years old, pregnant women, and disabled people. Most of the children were to be sent away in school groups with their teachers. The plans explained how people could join the evacuation, how the transport would be arranged, where people would be sent, how they would be organised when they arrived, who they would live with.

The cities that seemed likely to be bombed included London, Portsmouth, Southampton, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Glasgow. These were places where there were a lot of factories, offices and government buildings, which the Germans would want to destroy.

When the war began in September 1939, council officers and teachers made lists of all the people who wanted to be evacuated. Parents were given lists of what to pack for their children. The evacuees were taken away by train and bus. Many parents said goodbye to their children not knowing if they would ever see them again.

Some of the younger children thought they were going on a holiday and didn't really realise what was happening. After a long day travelling, they arrived tired and hungry in a place they'd never been before where they were sent to billets (homes that took in evacuees) to live with people they had never met. The evacuees would assemble in a village hall and local people would pick the ones they wanted to live with them. Children who looked as if they might be unhealthy or badly behaved or dirty would be left to last. Brothers and sisters might get separated as no one could take them all together.

By Christmas 1939, half the children who had gone away returned home as there had not been any air raids after all. In June 1940, the Germans conquered France. There was now a fear that Britain would be invaded and people moved away from the south coast, which was closest to France. British cities and ports were attacked by the Germans in what were called blitzes because so many bombs were dropped. Evacuation began once more and many children did not see their homes again until the end of the war in 1945.

It is thought that over three million children were evacuated during the war in Britain. Some children enjoyed the experience and had fun living in the country; others were miserable, as the people they lived with were unkind and the places they lived in were horrible.

You can read more about evacuees and what happened in Britain during World War Two on the Great Reading Adventure website at www.bristolreads.com and in the Great Reading Adventure readers' guide.



Bristol evacuees



ACTIVITY

Imagine that you live in the country during World War Two. Your parents take in two evacuees from London. You have to share your bedroom and your toys with them and you are supposed to look after them.

In your diary you write what you think about these strangers.

Do you like them? Are they a nuisance? Do you feel sorry for them?

They've probably never been to the country before. Do they seem silly to you because they don't know about cows and fields?

You've never been to the city and don't know about some of the things they talk about. You may not always understand what they say because of their accents. Do they treat you as if you are dim?

Or are you all interested in the different things you've each done and seen?

Now what do you think the London evacuees would write in their diary about you?

There are more activities about evacuees on pages 46 and 47 of [Tara's Tree House](#).

BRISTOL IN THE WAR

At the beginning of the war, some of the evacuees from London and other big cities came to Bristol. Some stayed here in the city or caught trains to smaller towns and villages in the South West.

Bristol was called a neutral area because it was thought it would not be attacked. Therefore, there were no official plans to move people out of the city. However, some parents didn't want to take a chance and sent their children to live with friends and family in the country.

On 25 June 1940, the first German bombs fell on Bristol. The worst attacks were between November 1940 and March 1941. This was called the Winter Blitz. The German bombers tried to destroy the docks, the aeroplane company at Filton, the railway lines and the city's factories.

In February 1941, over 6,000 Bristol children were sent to Devon from schools in the centre of the city and in Avonmouth. More children left after April 1941 when the city was officially declared an evacuation area. During the war over 20,000 children left the city. Many went to Somerset and to Cornwall.

Not everyone was sent away: some parents preferred to keep their children with them at home even though it was dangerous. When the bombs fell, they would hurry to the air raid shelters. Some people had shelters buried at the bottom of their gardens; other people had to go to the big public shelters. When they came out again at the end of the raids, they could see the damage that the bombs had done. During the raids on Bristol over 1,000 people died, over 3,000 were injured, 3,000 homes were destroyed and 90,000 homes were damaged.

You can read more about Bristol in the war and see pictures of the city during the blitz on the Great Reading Adventure website at www.bristolreads.com and in the readers' guide.

Digging in the rubble





ACTIVITY

Look at the picture above of a house in Bristol that was bombed during an air raid. There are two little girls in the picture, and a boy pointing to the damage.

Imagine the man in the flat cap is a reporter from the local paper.

What questions would he ask the children?

What do you think they would reply?

Write a few paragraphs for a newspaper report about what happened.

ACTIVITY

Look at the picture on the right of a Bristol church that has been damaged by bombs. There are some children climbing on the rubble while grown-ups try to clear up.

Do you think the children are frightened by what's happened? Are they upset? Amazed? Excited?

Write a poem about what is happening in the picture.



EVACUEES AND REFUGEES IN THE REST OF EUROPE

People had to be evacuated in lots of other countries in Europe during the war. In Germany, for example, at the beginning of the war, thousands of people were moved away from the border with France to escape the fighting. At the same, on the other side of the border, French people were being evacuated too. In 1945, near the end of the war, the Russian army invaded the east of Germany. Over two million Germans were evacuated from the area, many forced to walk because there was not enough transport to carry them.

Many people were on the move even before the war began. Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party had come to power in Germany in 1933. Jews and other people disliked by the Nazis tried to leave the country, as they knew their lives were in danger. Only a few were successful. You needed money and special documents to get away, and countries willing to accept you. In late 1938, around 10,000 Austrian and German Jewish children were rescued and brought to Britain. Thousands more were left behind, unable to escape. As the Nazis occupied more and more countries, more and more people, many of them children, were trapped. In Tara's Tree House, Mr Barenstein's sister, Hannah, was among those who could not find somewhere safe to go to.

By the end of the war, with all the fighting and cruelty that had taken place, over 16 million people in Europe had become refugees: people forced to leave their homes and looking for a safe place to live.



Leningrad evacuees

ACTIVITY

When Mr Barenstein looks out his window and sees Tara in the pear tree, he is reminded of his sister Hannah.

How do you think he feels as he stands there?

Write a poem about Mr Barenstein watching Tara and thinking about the sad things that happened in the past.

EVACUEE PUZZLE

Can you find the answers to the questions about evacuees in the Word Search box? The words run down, across and diagonally, and letters can be used more than once.

- Who was in charge of Germany during the war? Adolf _____.
- What were his supporters called?
- In what month in 1940 was France defeated?
- Find eight things an evacuee had to pack when they left home.
- What was tied to them with their name and address written on?
- Find three counties the Bristol children were sent to.
- Who looked after them when they arrived? The _____ officer.
- Which Scottish city beginning with G was in danger?
- What type of area was Bristol called before April 1941?
- What was the slogan to encourage people to grow vegetables in the war? ____ for _____
- What name was give to the Bristol raids? The _____ Blitz.
- Where was the aeroplane factory near Bristol the Germans bombed?
- Which side of Germany did the Russians attack?

W	O	O	L	L	Y	J	U	M	P	E	R
F	W	A	R	M	C	O	A	T	R	H	A
I	B	I	L	L	E	T	I	N	G	A	T
L	J	V	A	T	U	S	D	Y	N	N	I
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N	A	Z	I	S	N	K	Y	E	L	H	K
G	L	A	S	G	O	W	C	R	M	I	E
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B	N	H	I	T	L	E	R	L	R	F	S
V	I	C	T	O	R	Y	D	A	L	A	T

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Great Reading Adventure is a collaborative effort and thanks are due to all those who have given their time and support.

