



# The Blue Cat

*Ursula Dubosarsky*

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## **The Blue Cat** Ursula Dubosarsky

A boy stood in the playground under the big fig tree. 'He can't speak English,' the children whispered.

Sydney, 1942. The war is coming to Australia - not only with the threat of bombardment, but also the arrival of refugees from Europe. Dreamy Columba's world is growing larger. She is drawn to Ellery, the little boy from far away, and, together with her highly practical best friend Hilda, the three children embark on an adventure through the harbour-side streets - a journey of discovery and terror, in pursuit of the mysterious blue cat ...

## **The Blue Cat Details**

Date : Published April 2017 by Allen & Unwin (first published March 29th 2017)

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Author : Ursula Dubosarsky

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## **From Reader Review The Blue Cat for online ebook**

### **Pina Carrubba says**

I would recommend this book to young people exploring life in Australia, particularly Sydney during WW2. No kids on computers or phones, just soft hot summers playing and exploring their world.

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### **Lucy says**

This was a complete impulse pick up from the library after I needed a book with a creature name in the title for a book challenge. This was short and the summary sounded interesting so I picked it up.

Columba is living in Sydney in 1942 when a little boy, Ellery, comes to her school from Europe. He doesn't speak any English but Columba befriends him anyway. Interwoven with the texts are historical documents and photos from the time itself, lending a grounding air to the book which has such wonderful imagery. Throughout it all is the blue cat who we are never quite sure is good or bad.

This book is best described as vague, but in the best possible way. Columba is a dreamer, but she is also a child who picks up what the adults say but never knows the full truth. She can only guess at what they mean but, like with most children, she picks up on the atmosphere of her parents and society very well. In Sydney, Australia in 1942, they thought they were soon going to be invaded by the Japanese. Many of their young men are at war and the news they were getting from Europe and the Pacific wasn't good. While Columba never fully addresses this, the writing makes it clear that there is an underlying tension to the dreaminess of childhood. There is always something under the surface of what Columba is seeing and no one ever gets the complete picture.

This is definitely a book I want to reread, even if only to see whether I can catch certain things which I missed the first time. 4 stars!

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### **Susan Nixon says**

This book was a story about being a child during WW2 Sydney and contained some interesting primary source details! The atmosphere of the book is amazing and the story gently unfolds but you do get to the end of the book and it suddenly ends leaving you with unanswered questions - despite this it is an enjoyable read!

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### **Michael Earp says**

Atmosphere. That's where this book excels. If you want to step back into a dreamlike state of what life for a child in Sydney might have been like in 1942 during the war, this book is perfect. Beautifully written.

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## **Julie says**

A beautifully written story about Australia during the second World War set in Sydney. Written through the eyes of a young 12 year old girl and her fascination and friendship with a newcomer to her school from Europe.

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## **Kathleen Dixon says**

We've had an unproofed edition out the back of the bookshop where I work, so I decided to take it home and read it. Lovely title; great cover picture.

This story is set in Sydney, Australia during the Second World War. Columba - named after a nun who had been very special to her mother - gives her child's view of home (where there's just the three of them tiptoeing around each other), friends (especially Hilda, who is always decisive and who has an amazing and noisy family), and school (with the unfortunate headmaster who lost their trust because he stated categorically that Paris would never fall, and of course it did). Then a new boy arrives - he's called Ellery, though that isn't his name. He's pale and silent (can't speak English). And next door a blue cat adopts the elderly sisters.

What a lovely story. The voice is excellent, the history is supported with some original documents (and there's an endpiece with a note from the author and specific details, etc.), and the pace is just right.

The unproofed edition had a ending that I didn't like, but I'm delighted to say that the copies for sale inside the shop have an altered ending - and it's perfect!

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## **Dimity Powell says**

Ethereal and elegant, *The Blue Cat* slinks through your imagination with an almost unearthly inference. Columba's 11-year-Old take on a world in mid-war upheaval is refreshingly uncontaminated and jolly. This is a captivating tale of two worlds colliding, an example of one of those brief chapters in the story of your life that will remain with you forever.

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## **Kelly (Diva Booknerd) says**

The air raid siren wails throughout Sydney harbour while American Warships dapple across the horizon. The war has reached the Australian shoreline with the Japanese military threatening a hostile destruction of the land. For Columba this is simply how we survive, we live in each moment.

While the city of Paris falls to the Germanic forces, European refugees are migrating to Australia, fractured and displaced by conflict. Ellery is a Jewish boy, withdrawn and unable to verbally communicate. Children are remarkably resilient and Columba was a wonderfully compassionate young girl and curiously, approaches Ellery.

I had never heard Ellery laugh before, not out loud. I loved the sound, it filled me up. It tinkled like a magic bird.

Ellery and Columba engage in apprehensive smiles and amiable silences, a tentative companionship leading to adventure. Columba is influenced by friend Hilda, a young girl fond of telling tales and repeating rumours. I found Hilda's character quite manipulate and relentless, insisting Ellery has migrated from Germany where his mother had perished, a casualty of war. The narrative being told through the narration of a young girl although charming, is unreliable.

At the essence of the narration is a stray Blue Cat, suspected to have escaped from the Warships dappled throughout the harbour. The role of the feline is of little significance, temporarily residing at an elderly neighbours residence when it disappears into the night. Is the Blue Cat mere symbolism for a greater relevance? Bringing communities together? The infusion of magical realism felt incoherent and as though an integral aspect of the storyline was absent, creating an incredibly abrupt ending.

The Blue Cat is beautifully written, lyrical and delicate, within the nineteen forties atmospheric Sydney harbour. Although the narrative required direction, author Ursula Dubosarsky has created a wonderfully Australian ambiance, breathing life into our historical city landscapes.

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### **Ashleigh says**

Wonderfully executed story about WW2 in Sydney, told through the eyes of a child.

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### **Nicole says**

This is a beautiful book of evocative language, incredible imagery and rich symbolism. Set in Sydney in 1942, *The Blue Cat* is a deceptively simple story of a young girl, Columba, her best friend, Hilda and a young Jewish refugee, Ellory. It is the story of Australian school aged children during World War 2. It is a story of small mischiefs and big hopes, tinged with the fear of war that occasionally enroaches into their world. Through Columba's story is woven a thread of a story of a mysterious blue cat who followed her neighbour home and then disappeared.

Marketed as a book for young readers, I suspect that many will miss the depth of the book. Even reading reviews here on Goodreads, this is quite evident. For this reason, I suspect it will become a classroom novel, although I hope that that does not take the joy and enchantment from it.

I really wish that I had the chance to share this book with my dad. He was also a wartime immigrant to Sydney, not from Europe but an English boy from Hong Kong. I would have loved to ask him his opinion. So much of this story reminds me of things that he said about his time as a young child in Sydney.

Dubosarsky's love of history is evident. Photographs, ephemera and other memorabilia illustrate the book, adding an extra dimension to it. Indeed, I feel the need to reread it to better understand these layers.

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## **SReed says**

This is a lovely slice of life from a child's point of view; school age at the start of world war 2 and growing up in Neutral Bay. It is a beautifully written and sensitively told story that is definitely worth the couple of hours it takes to read it. I loved this book and place it beside the boy in the striped pajamas as one of those insightful tales that when told from a child's perspective makes one think differently about some of the issues we faced then and now.

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## **Sean Harding says**

Another Dubosarsky and this is for older readers and is the story of a friendship of a young Australian girl and a Jewish refugee boy during world war two.

Told without revealing everything, and with remarkable illustrations which are actual pictures of things of the time, this book is very effective in telling a story and learning about the time period.

Beautifully written and very effective, with a satisfying ending.

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## **Sharlene Evans says**

Like listening to stories of old times, making connections with the now you know and the old of where the character is, this story places the reader in the world of a child in 1942 Sydney with the threat of war imminently present. This is a book that I feel needs the joint effort of a book club to truly uncover the mystery of the cat and the boy who cannot speak any English. Loved the detail of historical artifacts - even more details a book club could explore with much discussion!

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## **Trisha says**

Affecting and unexpected.

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## **Dana Dunham says**

Disclaimer: I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway, however, the review is entirely my own opinion on the book and was not influenced in any way. I liked this book. I think for the age group it's aimed towards, it's really well written and a really interesting story. I will say though that the ending came faster than I expected and it ended really suddenly, which was the only thing I didn't quite like about it. Overall though, it was a really good book and I'm glad I got the chance to read it.

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