

ANN TURNBULL grew up in south-east London but now lives in Shropshire. She has always loved reading and knew from the age of ten that she wanted to be an author. Her numerous books for children include *Alice in Love and War*, *A Long Way Home* and *House of Ghosts*, as well as her Quaker trilogy – *No Shame*, *No Fear* (shortlisted for the Guardian Children’s Book Award and Whitbread Award), *Forged in the Fire* and *Seeking Eden*. For younger children, she has also written *Greek Myths*, illustrated by Sarah Young.

Local history was the inspiration behind the powerful and poignant trilogy of books about a mining family, the Dyers. *Pigeon Summer*, *No Friend of Mine* and *Room for a Stranger* follow the family and its fortunes from 1930 through to the early years of the Second World War. *Pigeon Summer* has been dramatized for TV and radio as well as being shortlisted for the Smarties Book Prize and the WH Smith Mind Boggling Books Award.

Find out more about Ann Turnbull and her books
at **annturnbull.com**



Praise for *No Friend of Mine*

"A masterly book." *School Librarian*

"A brilliant book which should be at the top of every 9- to 12-year-old's reading list." *Sunday Telegraph*

"Turnbull examines the class conflict from both sides, rigorously but without preaching. The material differences between the boys are picked out in revealing details." Geraldine Brennan, *TES*

"A thought-provoking and realistic read."

School Library Journal, US

"This fine historical novel evokes the time and place with spare detail. The class conflict is a burning reality ... just as strong is the personal struggle with friends and enemies."

Hazel Rochman, *Booklist, US*

"[Turnbull] has a clear and lively style... [The] perennially relevant themes of relations between the haves and have-nots and the difficulties of flawed friendship make it appealing to fans of contemporary dramas as well as historical fiction."

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, US

*No Friend
of Mine*

ANN TURNBULL



WALKER
BOOKS

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"The Wild Swans at Coole" by W.B. Yeats

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To Sally Christie

Chapter One

Lennie knew they would be waiting for him. As he came out through the school gates he saw them, on the corner by the King's Arms: Reggie Dean, Alan Revell, Bert Haines.

Every day for nearly half a term they had caught him there. If he left school early they sprinted after him. If he hung back, they waited; they never tired of waiting.

Not today, Lennie decided. He'd had enough. He had to try and give them the slip.

He eased himself out of the gateway alongside a crowd of girls, turned left instead of right, then pelted down the road and round the corner into Waters Lane.

Halfway down the lane, where a footpath led into the woods, he stopped for breath. He glanced round – and saw them coming, dodging between groups of dawdlers.

In panic he plunged onto the woodland path and down into the dingle. At the bottom was a shallow brook forded by stones. He sprang from stone to stone, hearing behind him the familiar voices: “Hey! Dyer!” “Miss Neale’s pet!” He turned to see them charging down the slope.

He wouldn’t run. He wouldn’t give them the satisfaction. He stood on the far bank and faced them.

Bert straddled the ford. “Forgotten the way home, Dyer?”

Alan and Reggie sniggered.

“You’re not allowed to play in the water, are you, Mummy’s boy?” And, as he spoke, Bert stamped in the stream, sending a spray of water up Lennie’s leg.

Bert was the one Lennie was most afraid of. Reggie had been all right last year, until Miss Neale came, and Alan was the sort that would follow any idiot. But Bert was big, with a bashed-in nose and flat, hard eyes. Lennie hated him.

He brushed the water from his trousers and tried

to walk past. Bert shoved him and he staggered and fell into the muddy brook, dropping his coat. His lunch tin clanged on the stepping stones. Reggie kicked it. The lid flew off and an apple core rolled into the water.

Two girls approaching the brook from the other side stopped and stared. One of them shouted, “Leave him alone, can’t you? He’s never done you any harm.”

Lennie knew the girls. They were in his class. He wished they would go away.

He tried to get up. Bert kicked him and he fell again, grazing his knee on a stone.

“I’m telling Miss Neale,” said Margaret Palmer.

“Telling Miss Neale,” mimicked Alan in a girly voice, but he sauntered off. The other two followed. Bert chucked a screwed-up piece of paper at Lennie as he went.

“Look at his coat!” exclaimed Sylvia Lee. She pulled it out of the water.

Lennie picked up the paper and smoothed it out. With a shock he recognized his own writing. It was a page torn from his school exercise book – this morning’s handwriting practice: the date, Friday

22nd October 1937, followed by some poetry.

*The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry...*

Margaret turned to Sylvia and sucked in her breath. "They've torn a page out of his book."

Lennie felt hot with anxiety. Miss Neale hadn't even marked it yet; she'd be furious.

"I'll tell Miss Neale it wasn't you," said Margaret.

Lennie was alarmed. "No! Don't."

He daren't tell on Bert; it would only make things worse. He'd have to pretend it was an accident.

He became aware of Sylvia, holding his coat.

"I could have got that," he growled.

He didn't want their help. He felt a fool. Some other children had appeared and were staring at his bloodied knee and wet clothes.

He put the paper in his pocket, picked up his tin, and turned for home.

But he didn't want to go home. He'd face a wall of questions, arriving there wet and bleeding, with his coat in such a state. If he waited a bit he might dry out and could brush himself down.

He turned off the road and made his way across field paths to Love Lane, on the far side of town, near the brickworks.

There were no other children here. A few cottages were clustered at the top of the lane, but soon the path dwindled to a dirt track that led into woodland. Lennie followed it for half a mile or so. The ground was soft under his feet and in the breeze a scatter of leaves fell continuously: red-gold, amber, yellow, brown. He picked up a crimson cherry leaf. Miss Neale would like that. She had made an arrangement of autumn leaves, nuts, tree bark and toadstools on a table in the classroom. The boys sneered, but Lennie secretly enjoyed it. He imagined his leaf on the table, part of the display. But he wouldn't give it to her. He didn't want her attention; he had too much already. He threw the leaf away.

He saw some big stones scattered around, and went to investigate. They were the remains of a cottage, almost buried in undergrowth. Doors, windows and roof were gone, but parts of the four walls still stood, grey-white amongst the dark holly and elder.

Lennie pulled away the ivy that grew across the doorway, and went in.

It was tiny – a labourer's cottage with an earth floor. The home, perhaps, of someone who'd worked on the land, or at the brickworks, years ago. There were traces of a campfire in the centre: ash and blackened sticks in a ring of stones. But nothing recent. No one had been here for a long time.

This could be my secret place, Lennie thought.

No one would find him here. He could bring sacking to sit on; he could bring some of his things from behind the settee.

Lennie had no space of his own at home. Behind the settee he kept a few sheets of paper – opened-out envelopes and sugar bags – with his conkers and marbles, some comics, a dried flattened frog and a jay's feather. Every so often when Mum was cleaning she would move the settee, and if she wasn't in a good mood his treasures were in danger of being thrown away.

But here – here he could bring a tin, then even his paper would keep dry. And a mug. And matches. He could light a fire, boil water, make tea, even roast things... Lennie had never caught an animal

in his life, let alone cooked it on a campfire, but he'd watched enough Tarzan films to know how it should be done.

The thought of cooking reminded him that he was hungry. It must be tea time. Phyl and Mary would be home from work and Mum would be laying the table.

He gave a last look round the cottage.

I'll come back tomorrow, he thought, first thing. And next week – next week was half term, a whole week without school.

The mud drying on his clothes no longer seemed important as he ran home.