

# BARBED WIRE AND CHERRY BLOSSOMS Read Free

Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms. 2020: Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms. .



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Anita Heiss  
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Simon & Schuster Australia  
9781925184853  
English  
East Roseville, Australia

**Love in the time of racism: 'Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms' explores the politics**

## **of romance**

**Very clever and worth a read. May 12, Andy rated it it was amazing. A great Aussie story that is well worth a read for anyone. Beautifully conceived, researched and written. Such a great premise. It is written with a gentle hand, more for reflection and healing than admonishment. Must read more of Anita's work. Oct 03, AusRomToday rated it it was amazing. Presented empathetically and with much historical consideration including importantly Heiss' own family recollection , Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms is what makes Anita Heiss brilliant.**

**Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms explores the aftermath of the Cowra Breakout in during which over Japanese soldiers being held as prisoners of war plotted and carried out a prison break. Many perished, were recaptured, or in an act of pride took their own lives in the attempt, however one man, Hiroshi Presented empathetically and with much historical consideration including importantly Heiss' own family recollection , Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms is what makes Anita Heiss brilliant. Many perished, were recaptured, or in an act of pride took their own lives in the attempt, however one man, Hiroshi, managed to escape and was taken in by an Aboriginal man, Banjo Williams, and his family. Knowing what it was like to live an existence of restrictions and exclusion from the general population due to the White Australia policy of the time, Williams and his family, notably daughter Mary, work hard to afford Hiroshi as many dignities and we're talking absolute basics here —food, water, bathing as is manageable while keeping his existence at the Mission secret lest they be caught harbouring a prison escapee.**

**At first, the romance between Hiroshi and Mary is slow in the sense of Heiss' very measured storytelling. Their attraction to one another is evident very quickly however with many cultural and indeed legal barriers in play Aboriginals having no rights at that time and Hiroshi being an escaped prisoner of war it was important to the believability of the story for Heiss to take this approach.**

**Though at it's essence this is a love story, it's not a 'throw-caution-to-the-wind' romantic situation. That Heiss presents the enormity of the challenges Hiroshi and Mary faced without skimming over the less 'glamorous' aspects of their relationship yet still presenting the beauty of their romance is a testament to her storytelling abilities. Heiss seamlessly weaves in depictions of the landscape, the community of the Mission, and the characters in a way that is truly encapsulating.**

**It's hard to shake off the story once you've read it and I expect this will be a novel that stays with me for some time. Throughout, there is an astonishing amount of research that Heiss has included from Aboriginal elders that adds to the depth of the storytelling and the characters. Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms is at heart a story of love: Hiroshi and Mary's love for one another, the unconditional love from family, the love Aboriginal people have for the land, and the restorative power that true love of any kind can have on the human soul. Nov 19, Nicole rated it it was amazing Shelves: historical-fiction. I've seen Barbed Wires and Cherry Blossoms in the shops recently because of its gorgeous cover.**

**To be honest though, while I've read Anita's previous contemporary novels this one**

didn't really appeal to me. It wasn't until a friend lent it to me that I gave it ago. And I'm so glad I did because the story of Mary and Hirosho is unlike any love story I've every read. Set in Cowra , it's also a lesson about the realities for the Indigenous Australians all those years ago and their role in both Wo I've seen Barbed Wires and Cherry Blossoms in the shops recently because of its gorgeous cover. Set in Cowra , it's also a lesson about the realities for the Indigenous Australians all those years ago and their role in both World Wars, the treatment of Japanese POWS and most importantly, humanity. With so many issues being tackled, Anita's writing is simple and powerful, bringing tears to my eyes at the end. View 2 comments.

Jun 28, Narissaphelps rated it it was ok. A book which lacked sophistication and depth. More a chick flick book than a novel of substance. Nov 18, Stef Rozitis rated it really liked it Shelves: chick-lit , romance , women-writers , read-women , australian , women , historical , young-adult , , woc. This won't be easy to review. At first glance it is just a historical romance. The setting is one that doesn't get written about enough, life in an Aboriginal mission.

The protagonist is Mary, just 17 years old and surrounded by an extended network of family and neighbours. The love interest is an escaped Japanese POW. So a romance, a coming of age story, one of those clash of cultures tales Because for a start Mary's family does not fit the trope. They don't misunderstand her. They This won't be easy to review. They don't attempt to control her or bring her into line. They don't hate, ostracise or even betray Hiroshi. They seem unusually wise in their interpersonal relationships, they work hard to be politically savvy which at first I thought was a stretch given how hard their lives would have been then I considered that sometimes ignorance is the luxury of the privileged and began to wonder. The book is sometimes heavy-handed with the critical politics, having characters converse about the injustice of their situation constantly and in detail somehow it is still a positive book.

I wonder if that is because as white Australians we have been notoriously slow over they years and continue to be and have preferred to trivialise and erase Aboriginal experience of injustice Heiss would be more than aware of this. In any case it was broken up with enough light-hearted relating to not be a major flaw. I loved Mary's mother, although she is a bit too-good-to-be-true but I loved her so I can deal with that.

I didn't much like any of the male characters in the book and the way they threw their weight around, I thought the gender in the book was one of the least enjoyable things and I couldn't work out whether Heiss meant for that to have a subtle critical shading over it or whether she accepts that view of men and heter0 sexuality. I hated King Billie, but we are meant to. He has no redeeming features but I didn't want him to. He fit with the simplicity of the book and even he was treated with less than the bitterness he might have deserved from a clearly disapproving author. The movement seems to be toward a naming of experience and a hope for reconciliation. The characters live in a world before Aboriginal people were even allowed to vote or make basic choices of where to live, work or how to look after their families google "basics card" if you want to know how some people these days wish to turn the clock back.

They don't want to fight anyone, hurt anyone, harm anyone but they are pretty pissed

off by the status quo. They want freedom, dignity and prosperity and point out that even prisoners have better access to these than they do. The extent of their poverty and lack of choice is stark and something we do need as a society to face instead of figuring we "fixed it" and can forget it ever happened.

Having said all that read the book! If you can tell me what purpose the epilogue serves then you are one up on me. But a worthwhile and flowing read overall. View 1 comment. Aug 15, Rosalie rated it really liked it Shelves: aboriginal , australian-author , racism , australian , historical-fiction , inequality , ya , romance , coming-of-age , ww2. Mary is the perfect spokesperson to explain the situation of Aboriginal people living in missions and to listen to and understand the situation of young men forced to go to war within a proud Japanese culture which cannot except defeat or capture. The incredible treatment of Aboriginal people, including the forced confinement in missions, unpaid labour, segregation in public places and general dispossession of their land and rights is revealed throughout the story whenever the main male characters who live in the Erambie Station mission discuss and compare the differences in the conditions in the prisoner of war camps, both Italian and Japanese which are obviously better than those that they endure at the mission.

Also, the Government Protection Act which enabled the moving of Aboriginal people out of towns and into reserves is expounded when Mary tries to explain their situation to Hiroshi. The mission manager and his family are credible characters of that era.

This white family does not question their right to control and use their Aboriginal charges as cheap labour also to humiliate and abuse them if they find them wanting. Nevertheless, Mrs Smith is usually kind to Mary and even allows her to take home the newspapers and to borrow books, which she shares with Hiroshi. This is a fine book, a sad and inevitable romance but a very worthwhile read. Far too few Australians are aware of the Cowra breakout. It lacks the simplistic 'goodies vs baddies' we prefer in our history, and raises uncomfortable questions about confinement, racism and patriotism. But it's not only a really important part of our history, it is a fascinating story.

In Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms, Heiss explores the dynamics of the break out, alongside the dynamics in the neighbouring Erambie Mission Wiradjuri community. Heiss weaves the issues of the communities together Far too few Australians are aware of the Cowra breakout. Heiss weaves the issues of the communities together through dialogue and plot, exploring the prejudices and dilemmas of the locals. The book is also a romance and Heiss effectively portrays the growing relationship between two shy, time-limited, and culturally reticent people. This plotline veers a little between believable and less so, but Heiss remains true to the emotional realities of the situation.

Romance is not my thing, and this part of the book didn't hugely engage me, but I appreciated the historical fiction of it all. Read a book during the season it is set in Feb 14, Calzean rated it really liked it Shelves: wwii , author-australia , culture-japan , culture-australia , woman-author. I found the premise of the book a bit far fetched - one of the Japanese POWs who escaped during the Cowra break-out is hidden in a bomb shelter by a family of local aborigines, he is visited at night by the 17 year old

Mary who brings food, water and news, they converse he speaks English well and they fall in love. But I think the book is not so much about the blossoming romance, but more about exposing how Aboriginals were treated during WWII, with confinement, restriction in employment and e I found the premise of the book a bit far fetched - one of the Japanese POWs who escaped during the Cowra break-out is hidden in a bomb shelter by a family of local aborigines, he is visited at night by the 17 year old Mary who brings food, water and news, they converse he speaks English well and they fall in love.

But I think the book is not so much about the blossoming romance, but more about exposing how Aboriginals were treated during WWII, with confinement, restriction in employment and education, rationing and lack of opportunities to live anywhere else unless they get a certificate to declare they are no longer an Aboriginal or if a woman they marry a white man. Also described is the lack of rights of returned indigenous soldiers, their respect to others who also lack equality and an interesting sharing of cultural appreciation of nature and the land. The book is one that should be read by Australians. Aug 22, Monique Mulligan rated it really liked it. I had little knowledge of the Cowra breakout before this book, so the A slow, tender novel that focuses on events following the Cowra Breakout in NSW in , Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms is about love, crossing boundaries, and home.

I had little knowledge of the Cowra breakout before this book, so the historical events were of great interest to me. I think she wants readers like me to become more aware of how history has been recorded, and some of the deeper, buried truths that need uncovering, understanding, recognition and change. Above all, this is a love story, and leaving history aside, the story is beautifully rendered and had me in tears by the end. Nov 18, Theresa Smith rated it really liked it Shelves: aww Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms was such a meaningful novel, clearly depicting certain race and cultural relations within Australia during the WWII era, against the backdrop of a gentle love story. Anita Heiss has done a marvelous job with this novel. There are a lot of challenges posed to the reader and many uncomfortable truths, but her style of writing is entirely non confronting and culturally informative.

I learnt a lot from this novel, far more than I did from any Australian history lesson Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms was such a meaningful novel, clearly depicting certain race and cultural relations within Australia during the WWII era, against the backdrop of a gentle love story. I learnt a lot from this novel, far more than I did from any Australian history lessons back at school. It made for an excellent bookclub choice as we all had much to discuss and contemplate after reading. I highly recommend this as a novel all Australians should read as it's message of tolerance and love is one that could benefit us all in the modern era. It's also highly suitable for teens and would introduce them to an important episode of Australian history that they are unlikely to learn about in school. Well done Anita Heiss, very well done! Jun 02, Caren rated it liked it. Although I would have preferred a more complex handling of this real event, the author certainly had a purpose in her imaginative recreation of the escape and of its impact on the Aboriginal residents of the community.

Hiroshi, one of the surviving escape 3. Hiroshi, one of the surviving escapees, is hidden

by the Williams family and given refuge, protected from the Mission Manager and from the hatred and fear of the Japanese enemy by the whites and Indigenous who live and work on the compound. A close relationship developed between Hiroshi and Mary, the 17 year old daughter of Banjo Williams, one that threatened the safety of both the prisoner and of the Williams family.

What kept me engaged was not the love story, but the restrained commentary by the author, through her Indigenous characters, on the unfair, racist restrictions under the Acts of Protection and Assimilation, the powerlessness they endured in their inability to make decisions about their own lives and future. In essence, both Hiroshi and the Aboriginal residents of the mission were prisoners - the "incarceration" of the Aboriginal men, women and children less rational and more an indictment of White Australia.

Having recently read Heiss's latest historical novel, "Bila Yarrudhanggalangdhuray", I noted the intensity of the text and the confidence of the author to make her commentary more pointed regarding the devastating discrimination of our Aboriginal population, more the focus of her narrative. The earlier publication might have appealed to an audience less ready to acknowledge the horror of the past within a pointed political landscape. In any case, the story was a poignant one with well-drawn characters. Nov 11, Natasha Jouljet rated it liked it Shelves: first-nations , aboriginal-australia , poc. Historical fiction about a specific chapter in Australian history and World War II, whilst also highlighting the impacts of colonialism, and policies of xenophobia and racism in our collective history too.

Hiroshi is a Japanese soldier held in the POW camp in Cowra, NSW, and after enduring the harsh deprivation of war in New Guinea, finds himself part of a breakout of his fellow compatriots into the unknown Australian land and community. Mary is the young daughter of the Aboriginal family that find Hiroshi, and decide to keep him safe in their shelter on their land. Mary is chosen to take food and water, and occasional clothes down to Hiroshi as he is hidden.

As a bond forms between Mary and Hiroshi, they also share their own cultural experiences. Having the lens brought up to the segregation of Aboriginal communities, the slavery and wage theft, the enforced poverty, harsh rationing, and tight ruling through Hiroshi's understanding is powerful. The insight that the feared and hated Japanese soldiers were treated far superior to the First Nations people on their own land, is stark. I loved the inclusion of language throughout, being Wiradjuri and Japanese words in conversation and descriptions.

The POW camp and the breakout are parts of Australian history I haven't come across before, and this story managed to also give insight into that of the Aboriginal oppression and policing in a rich character form, through the Williams family. Feb 04, Emory Black rated it really liked it Shelves: author-indigenous , genre-fic. This was a really easy read, I think perhaps because I read so much dense non-fiction. I'm usually not that interested in romance but that was a part of this book that I ended up

**being interested in, simply because I wanted a happy ending.**

**The bits that I was interested in were the This was a really easy read, I think perhaps because I read so much dense non-fiction. The bits that I was interested in were the historical and cultural commentaries which were also there. I think Anita wrote a really great book that has a lot of different elements happening in it that will appeal to a wide range of people. Aug 14, Kerri Jones rated it really liked it Shelves: highly-recommended. This was a fascinating insight into the plight of the indigenous Australian communities living on mission stations during World War 2. The story centres around the Cowra breakout of the Japanese POWs and what eventuates when the Aboriginal community harbour one of the Japanese soldiers. I learnt alot about not only the Aboriginals of that time but also what it meant to be a Japanese soldier, their sense of honour and duty to the Emperor.**

**I did feel at times that the author had an agenda to push This was a fascinating insight into the plight of the indigenous Australian communities living on mission stations during World War 2. I did feel at times that the author had an agenda to push she is of indigenous descent but the information given and the story line far outweighed this so hence the four star rating. May 07, Tricia rated it liked it Shelves: reading-challenges. This review has been hidden because it contains spoilers. To view it, click here. I had never heard of the Costa breakout until this book.**

**I liked how the book told a different perspective of the war. Sep 22, Cass Moriarty rated it liked it. The story is set around the events of 5 August, , when over Japanese soldiers prisoners of war escape from their compound near Cowra. It is a cataclysmic event - hundreds are killed or commit suicide rather than face recapture. One soldier - Hiroshi - finds his way to Erambie Station, an Aboriginal mission, and hides under the verandah of Banjo Williams. When he is discovered, Banjo and his family decide to keep him hidden and safe, and to feed and care for him until they can decide what to do. Banjo's oldest daughter, Mary, is given the task of seeing to Hiroshi's care, and through their regular, daily meetings, the two begin to fall in love. But their dreams of a future together are threatened by their forbidden love and Hiroshi's fugitive status.**

**This is a moving story that confronts the moral decisions around several historical events. Firstly, we are given the facts of the war from Hiroshi's perspective - and he was, of course, the enemy. But he was also a man, a son, a soldier wanting to do his duty for his country. Hiroshi heralds from Kochi-ken in Shikoku, an area in which I lived for almost five years, so I could readily identify with his memories of his homeland. Anita uses Japanese language, customs and stories to supplement the character of Hiroshi and to bring him alive in the narrative. Different people in the book have various opinions about the 'enemy', about the nature of the Japanese, and about how they should be treated, which allows a compassionate rendering of his position.**

**We are also given some insight into the Japanese mindset particularly at that time of honour, duty and sacrifice, of the humiliation of defeat, and of death rather than surrender. The second issue that Anita addresses is the living conditions and circumstances of Indigenous people in the 's. At that time, many were forced to live on Aboriginal missions, under the 'protection' and restrictive laws of Acts of Protection**

**and Assimilation - a hard mission manager was responsible for doling out rations, and for sanctioning travel and marriage and work permits.**

**The irony of the situation is that while Hiroshi had been imprisoned in the Camp, his food, shelter and conditions were by and large much better than those experienced by local Indigenous people. And once he was in hiding, it was those locals who provided him with safety and nourishment, at the risk of themselves being discovered and punished. Anita also explores the larger argument of Aboriginal men being firstly unable not allowed to enlist to fight for their country, and then - when recruiters were getting desperate for more soldiers - being encouraged to do so, as long as they could say they were partly white.**

**The whole concept of 'country' and belonging, and of white men fighting for freedom and equality, while Indigenous people still were not granted those rights of freedom or equality, or even of owning their own land is heart-breaking as it plays out amongst one ordinary family during an extraordinary time. Exacting research is evident in this book, and while it is a work of fiction, much of it is fact-based. It is a celebration of love over adversity, but is also realistic and raw in its depiction of the rules and conditions under which people lived at that time. I found it quite enlightening, and although it is an adult book, I would recommend it to YA readers too for its addressing of issues of race and belonging set in a historical context, bundled up in a love story to which all young people could identify.**

**Jul 18, Jeannette rated it really liked it. Book blurb... 5 August, Over Japanese soldiers attempt to break out of the No. At nearby Erambie Aboriginal mission, Banjo Williams, father of nine and proud man of his community, discovers a distraught Hi Book blurb... 5 August, Over Japanese soldiers attempt to break out of the No. At nearby Erambie Aboriginal mission, Banjo Williams, father of nine and proud man of his community, discovers a distraught Hiroshi pleading for help. My thoughts... I enjoyed this book very much - from the tightly-woven plot set in war-time Cowra to the portrayal of two beautiful, yet vulnerable characters of the fall-in-love-with type.**

**Whilst this is fiction, the narrative seemed so authentic and the characters and the harsh environment so real there were moments I came close to tears. I loved both Mary and Hiroshi. This story touched me in ways I never expected. A wonderful tale of enduring love that will tug at your heartstrings. This is a special book. As a historiographical novel it begins with Hiroshi's panicked escape from an Australian Prisoner of War camp as part of the infamous Cowra Breakout of Later on, I visited Cowra in country New South Wales and saw the site of the prisoner of war camp and the beautiful Japanese gardens.**

**Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms covers the escape and subsequent months from the points of view of two groups not often considered — the Aboriginal people of Erambie Station and the Japanese POW Hiroshi. As he runs for his life and freedom, he sees fellow POWs killed it is better to be killed than be a prisoner, as being a prisoner is shameful to the Japanese people. He makes it to Erambie, where he is spotted by Banjo Williams. To Banjo and his family, Hiroshi is just another human being — not yellow like some of the townspeople say and just as in need of support and sustenance.**

**Are the pair so different? Each restricted from doing what they planned to do — is it not a waste? It was beautiful watching this pair gently fall in love but what was to come next was painful, potentially brutal as Hiroshi is forced to come out of hiding and the pair to declare their love.... The White Australia policy, the Japanese hatred and the severe restrictions put on lives due to skin colour are all there. But the tone is much more gentle and loving than you might expect. Overall this is a love story and a beautiful one that will bring a tear to the eye. The Japanese gardens are indeed beautiful. You are commenting using your WordPress. You are commenting using your Google account. You are commenting using your Twitter account.**

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### **Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms by Anita Heiss**

**It would be selling Heiss short to say that love erases race, but she goes to great pains to show that respect and trust, patience and compassion far outweigh skin colour in matters of the heart. The genre of popular romance, long associated with female readers, also allows Heiss to make a broader point about similarities between women. Commentary on her novel Tiddas still rings true: As women what makes us the same is that we value our friendships, we treasure the relationships with our mothers and our sisters, and so forth.**

**But Heiss refuses to sugarcoat the past for the reader. Questions of enmity and friendship are snarled and unpleasant: who is fighting whom? With the nation? With her people? And, more disquieting still for the white reader, are the Japanese and Aboriginal Australians united by a common enemy? These questions are designed to unsettle the non-Aboriginal reader, destabilising conventional historical narratives and challenging the reader to learn their country anew through the eyes of its First Peoples. Re-learning the nation, though necessary, comes at a cost. It is worn on the bodies of Aboriginal women, who frequently and not always willingly find themselves cast in the role of educator.**

**Over seven pages, Mary explains to Hiroshi the degradations and deprivations of living under the Protection Act. But it also offers hope for the future: education can create change. Although Barbed Wire is set in , it presents an unerringly apt commentary on contemporary Australian society, because it precisely identifies the racism that sits at the heart of the Australian psyche. I wanted Australians generally to realise that while we treated the POWs here in the s as we were meant to under the Geneva Conventions, we have gone backwards as a nation today .... A vital first step is listening to Aboriginal voices. Gradually, a romance develops between Hiroshi and Mary Williams, the young Aboriginal woman who takes him food.**

**Her work, whether fiction or non-fiction, is always firmly focused on educating audiences about Aboriginal culture and the ongoing effects of colonialism and racism. This is a difficult road to take, as readers of this genre pick up books expecting to be entertained. There are two main techniques she uses to achieve this.**

**The second technique is the use of metaphor, specifically that of imprisonment. The prison from which Hiroshi escapes represents not only the physical camp for internees, but also the camps on which Aboriginal people were forced to live — the mission stations and reserves — when their land was taken from them. We should all be paid the same for the same work and have enough money to buy food for our families — not just flour, tea and sugar rations and whatever we can hunt or manage to grow.**

**Heiss also addresses contemporary concerns, such as negative representations of Aboriginal people in the media.**

### **Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms by Anita Heiss – Sam Still Reading**

**Join our mailing list! Trade Paperback eBook. About The Book. About The Author. Anita Heiss. Product Details. Resources and Downloads. By clicking 'Sign me up' I acknowledge that I have read and agree to the privacy policy and terms of use, and the transfer of my personal data to the United States, where the privacy laws may be different than those in my country of residence. Merv, a singer and football player, makes a name for himself in Sydney and is written up in the paper.**

**They take an interest in Hiroshi and his culture, as Noongars did in whalers and the first colonists when they arrived in south west**

Western Australia Kim Scott writes about this beautifully in *That Deadman Dance*. Through Kevin, who is jealous and has a temper, Heiss shows that every family has its arguments, and that different viewpoints need to be aired before one can arrive at a resolution.

At the heart of the novel is an important emotion: empathy. Empathy often takes some work — intellectual as well as emotional. With her people? And, more disquieting still for the white reader, are the Japanese and Aboriginal Australians united by a common enemy?

These questions are designed to unsettle the non-Aboriginal reader, destabilising conventional historical narratives and challenging the reader to learn their country anew through the eyes of its First Peoples. Re-learning the nation, though necessary, comes at a cost. It is worn on the bodies of Aboriginal women, who frequently and not always willingly find themselves cast in the role of educator. Over seven pages, Mary explains to Hiroshi the degradations and deprivations of living under the Protection Act. But it is also offers hope for the future: education can create change. Although *Barbed Wire* is set in , it presents an unerringly apt commentary on contemporary Australian society, because it precisely identifies the racism that sits at the heart of the Australian psyche. I wanted Australians generally to realise that while we treated the POWs here in the s as we were meant to under the Geneva Conventions, we have gone backwards as a nation today ....

A vital first step is listening to Aboriginal voices. Edition: Available editions United Kingdom.