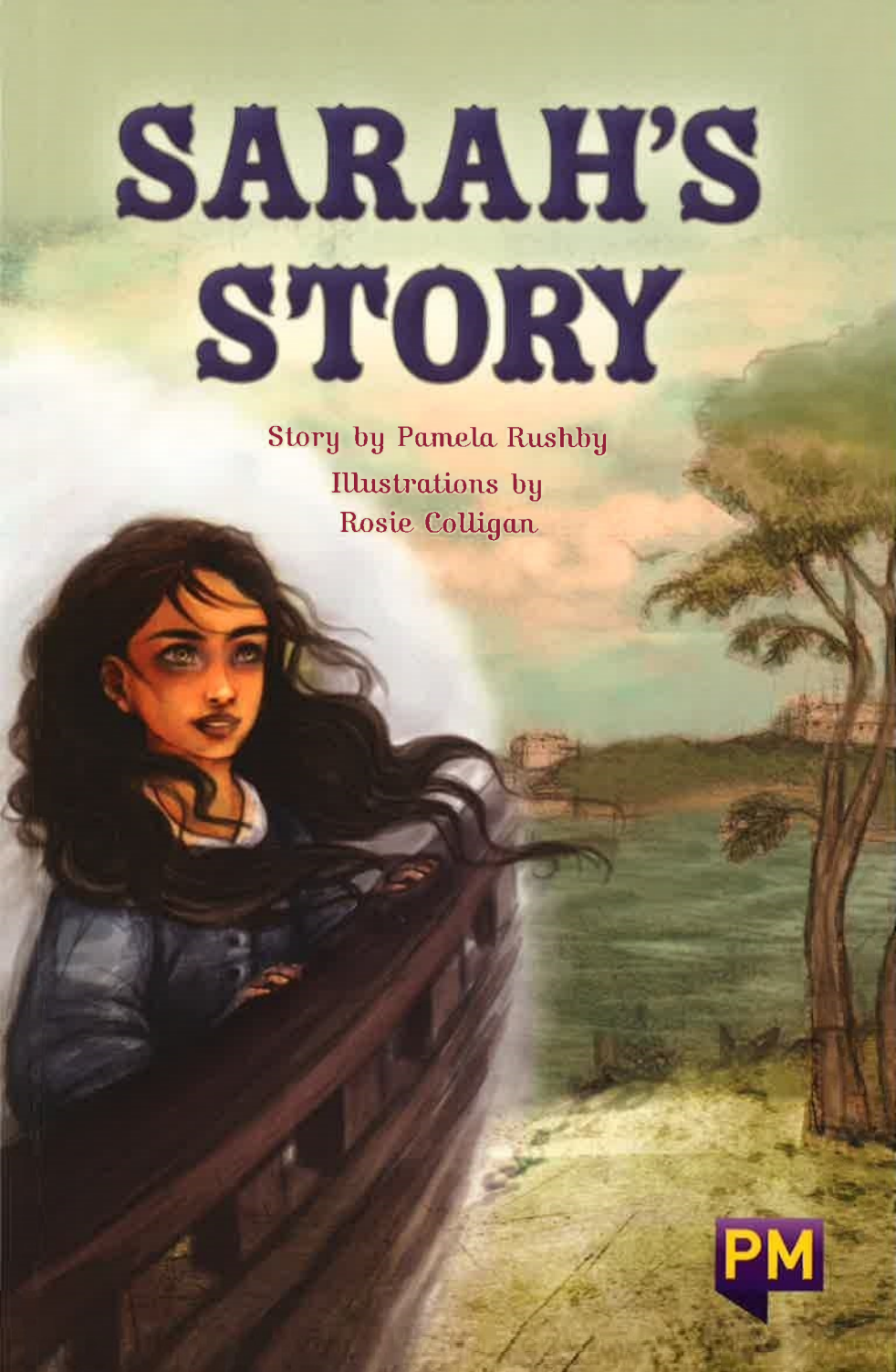
SARAH'S STORY

Story by Pamela Rushby
Illustrations by
Rosie Colligan



PM

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Sarah's Story

Level 29

Running Words 7848 **Text Type** Narrative (Imaginative)

Curriculum Areas Literacy; Humanities – History

Oral Literacy Focus for Students

Key issues from the text to encourage critical thinking and stimulate group discussions:

1 Explain why girls in workhouses in Ireland during the 1800s never had the opportunity to learn to read

2 Establish why Matron was so determined that Sarah should go to New South Wales

3 Design a map showing the voyage of the ship from Cork, Ireland, to Sydney, Australia. Insert a timeline.

4 Identify the many joys and fears Sarah experienced on the ship. Establish how these incidents would have assisted her later in life.

5 Imagine what became of Sarah and Maggie during the 10-year period after they became apprentices to Miss Pettigrew.

Written Literacy Focus for Students

Key issue from the text to present in visual and written form to an audience:

1 Research the topic 'Immigrating to a new country'.

2 Prepare a documentary of an imaginary child aged 10–12 years who has immigrated to another country.

3 Edit and revise the documentary

4 Present the documentary to an audience.

5 Critically evaluate your presentation.

Links with other PM Guided Reading Books and Cards

Level 30	Book	Narrative	*Riverboat Boy*
Level 30	Card	Narrative	*The Anderson Shelter*

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Chapter 1

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Sydney, Australia, 2015

"Here's something!" Sam leant forward and immediately bumped his head hard on the beam above him. "Ow!" he said. He rubbed his head. He had to remember he was working under what had been the floor in the old building, and that the beams that had supported it were only just above his head.

"What have you got?" Casey said, as she wriggled up beside him. She didn't sound very hopeful. "Another broken comb? A button? A bit of china? Chop bones? Something really exciting, like a belt buckle?"

The two students had volunteered to work on an archaeological excavation at Sydney's Hyde Park Barracks during their school holidays.

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It had seemed an exciting thing – a real excavation! They had watched as floorboards had been lifted from part of the old building, where free female immigrants had been quartered many years ago. Two narrow trenches had been dug under the place where the flooring had been.

Then it was their turn. It was Sam and Casey's job, along with other volunteers, to work their way across the trenches on hands and knees, carefully sifting through the dirt to see what was down there. They had leapt into the trench on their first day, alight with enthusiasm. Who knew what they might find? Objects dropped or lost or hidden by people who had lived over 150 years ago! Maybe coins, maybe jewellery …

In the first few days they had found, as Casey had said, broken combs, buttons, bits of smashed china, a belt buckle or two. It was rather disappointing.



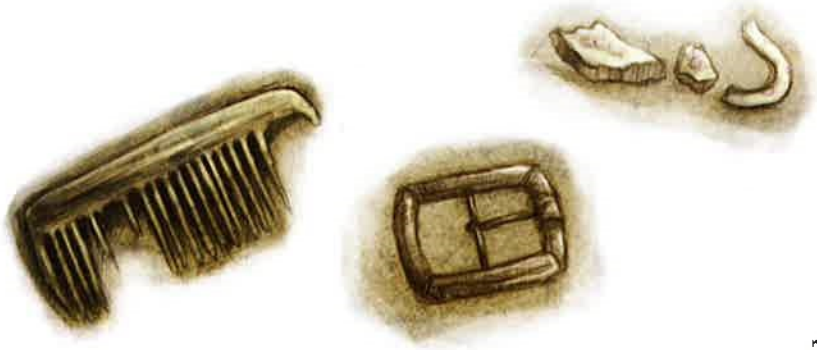


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"You have to remember," their supervisor said, grinning at Sam and Casey's despondent faces as they showed her another boring day's haul, "that the women who once lived in this building weren't wealthy. They weren't convicts, though. They were poor girls – orphans, many of them. They were free immigrants who came to the colony to find a better life than they'd have had in England, or Scotland, or Ireland, in the 1800s. They didn't have many possessions. And those they had were usually not of high quality. But we're learning a lot about them and the way they lived from what you're finding. So keep going!"

Sam and Casey kept going. Day after day of bits of brushes and combs and chips of china. Occasionally, other people found something more interesting: a rosary or a piece of cheap jewellery. But not Sam and Casey.

Until today.



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"Can you tell what it is?" Casey asked.

"Not sure yet. It's in another rat nest," Sam replied.

"Erk," said Casey. Even though the rats that had lived under the floorboards were long dead and gone, she didn't like the ancient nests they'd left behind.

"And there's something – different – in it," said Sam. He reached for a brush and began, very gently, to clear dirt away.

Casey watched him. "Careful!" she said. Some of the things they'd found were very fragile, and broke easily.

"There," Sam said. "I think I can pick it up now." He put the little object into the palm of his hand. "What do you think it is?"



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"Well, I'm not sure. It could be made of leather." Casey touched it gently with a fingertip. "It's folded, like a little wallet, maybe. And it's been decorated – it looks like flowers and leaves carved into the leather."

"Surely it's too small to be a wallet," objected Sam. "I think I can open it. There!"

They both stared at the small, unfolded piece of leather.

"It's been lined with pink fabric," Sam said. "And look – needles! Rows of them. It's not a wallet. It's for sewing."

"A needle case," said Casey. "It would have been very pretty, once. It's definitely the nicest thing we've found. But if the women who lived here didn't own much, surely this would have been very special to someone. I wonder who it belonged to? How could she have lost it? She must have been very upset."



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Chapter 2

YOU'RE FOURTEEN!

Cork, Ireland, 1856

"You, girl. How old are you?"

Sarah knew it was the matron's voice.

She kept her head down and continued with her work. She was sweeping yesterday's ashes out of the fireplace in the kitchen. Surely the matron of the workhouse couldn't be speaking to her? She hoped not. No good ever came of the matron taking notice of you.

"Yes, I mean you." The voice boomed again. "How old are you?"

Oh, no. The matron did mean her. Sarah stood up, nervously wiping her hands on her skirt. She looked up at the matron from under her tangle of hair. "H-how old? I, um, don't rightly know, missus."

"You don't know how old you are?" The matron sounded outraged.

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Sarah leads a hard and lonely life in the orphanage, in Ireland. Until one day, she is given some news. She is old enough to set sail to the Australian colony of New South Wales for a new job and a new life, as a free immigrant.

The long sea journey to Australia is a different experience for Sarah. She happily learns how to sew and read for the first time, but there's also seasickness, storms and quarrels with Maggie.

Will Sarah be able to make a successful life for herself in her new home of Sydney?



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