



## Bookrapt Author: PHYLLIS JOHNSTON

---

Phyllis has been with the Bookrapt since its first meeting in 1983 (as the Bay of Plenty Children's Literature Association), where she was elected President, a role she held until 1996. Born into a large family of readers and oral story tellers, she wrote down many of their pioneer stories when she started writing nearly three decades ago.

Phyllis teaches creative writing for adult continuing education at night school, and is a member of Writers in Schools run by the NZ Book Council. In the last 20 years she has visited over 220 schools around the country. Her books are written mainly for children and young adults.

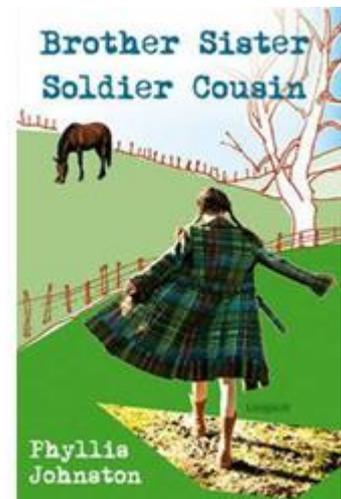
In 1998 she received an award for distinguished services to New Zealand children's literature, now known as *The Betty Gilderdale Award*, and she is a life member of Bookrapt.

### Brother Sister Soldier Cousin

2009 Longacre [BUY ONLINE](#)

Phyllis's most recent book, *Brother Sister Soldier Cousin*, was published by Longacre in 2009. Strong characters fill this warm-hearted young adult novel. The story centres on thirteen-year-old Helen, a Waikato farmer's daughter. Her soldier brother, Harry, comes home on leave during World War II and changes her life. He reveals a family secret that makes Helen question her identity.

This well-written novel shows the impact of the war years on families with sons in the armed services. Helen works hard helping her parents with the everyday grind of the dairy farm. She takes part in the twice-daily milking schedule and a multitude of household chores. Harry teaches her to drive and how to fire a rifle, just in case the Japanese invade New Zealand.

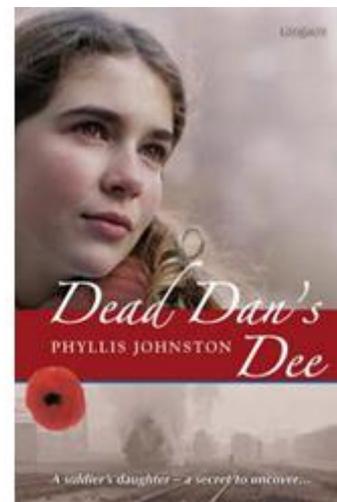


Brave young Helen copes with many challenges. Her inner thoughts give insight into the hopes and dreams of a courageous teenager. She longs to go to high school, yet it seems she may have to leave school to work full-time on the farm. *Brother Sister Soldier Cousin* is a fascinating glimpse of the mid-1940s. The tension of the war years underpins Helen's story, highlighting the intensity of relationships because of the uncertain future.

## Dead Dan's Dee

2007 Longacre Press

Phyllis's novel *Dead Dan's Dee* (Longacre) was a finalist in the junior fiction category for the 2008 New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards and was listed as a 2008 Storylines Notable Junior Fiction book. *Dead Dan's Dee* tells the story of Dee, who is proud to be the daughter of a brave soldier father who died fighting in the war. After the Great War, Dee lives at the beach along with her mother and aunt. It's a paradise for Dee, with the sun, the sea and the sky, but little by little her seaside haven disintegrates. Her mother and aunt become very ill, leaving Dee abandoned. However, soldier Joe has never forgotten his promise to his army mate, Dan, Dee's dead father. He and Essie take Dee north into half-broken bush country. Roaming the countryside, doing farm work, and making friends, Dee is almost happy again, but shadows hang over her life in Mamaku. Joe and Essie can't afford high school for her, and all the kids seem to know something Dee doesn't - something about her soldier father Dan. Told with subtlety and charm, this is a poignant, bighearted story - of honour, courage and the aftermath of war.

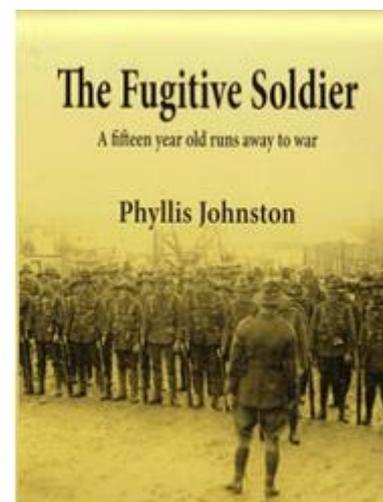


[BUY ONLINE](#)

## The Fugitive Soldier

2004 Polygraphia Ltd

In *The Fugitive Soldier* Phyllis tells the story of James, a fifteen year old brought up on his parents' farm. He left school at fourteen and is working full time on the farm in 1917. He has a bad relationship with his father – or is he really his father? There is mystery surrounding this relationship and its working out is an essential part of the story. James' response to his unhappiness and the continual verbal abuse from his father is to devise a plan to escape. He joins the army almost by accident. The story relates his experiences in the training camps and finally in the trenches in Belgium.

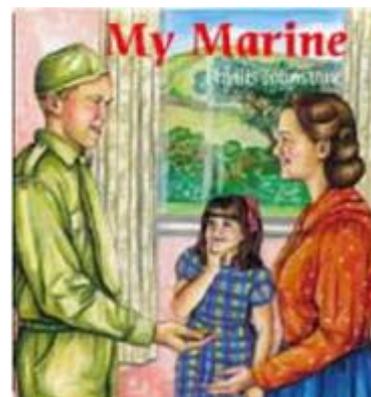


[BUY ONLINE](#)

## My Marine

2001 Raupo Publishing (NZ) Ltd

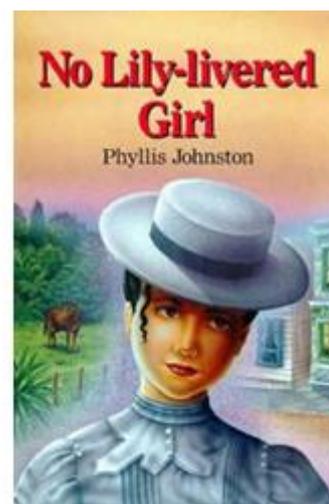
Phyllis's stories draw on her own memories. *My Marine* was inspired by the events of World War II. As a child of the time, the Japanese invasion was a real, unfolding event. With two older brothers overseas and aging parents, Phyllis's family had no idea what would happen to them, and waited daily for the invasion. They listened on a static-ridden radio as Darwin was bombed, and rumours, which turned out to be true, of Japanese submarines on New Zealand coasts began to circulate. Then the United States marines came, turning the tide of the war in the Pacific and offering protection. In the story a young girl is desperate to have an American marine of her own, just like her big sister Mary. But eight is way too young to go jitterbugging at the Saturday night dance. Just when it looks like she'll never get her own marine, her mother comes to the rescue with a surprising twist to the family history. Includes factual information about United States marines in New Zealand during World War Two.



## No Lily-livered Girl

1993 Waiaatarua Publishing

*No Lily-livered Girl* draws its inspiration from the War, although it is set in World War I, not II. It tells the story of four years in the life of May Tarrant who in 1912, at fourteen, is apprenticed to a dressmaker in Hamilton. Three years later, during World War I, she makes the decision to return with her parents to their King Country farm.



---

Phyllis is also well-known for her series of five books based on King Country pioneer stories her mother told her. These books are no longer in print, but can be found sometimes on TradeMe - with reserve prices of around \$40-50.

Series titles:

*No Lily-Livered Girl*, 1993

*Then There Were Nine*, Moana Press, 1989

*Black Boots and Buttonhooks*, Price Milburn, 1982

*A Comet in the Sky*, Moana Press, 1985

*No One Went to Town*, Price Milburn, 1980

