



READING GUIDE

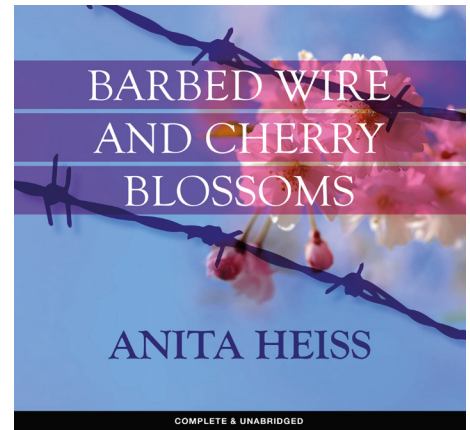
June, 2025

Barbed Wire And Cherry Blossoms

Anita Heiss

In short

A story about a love that transcends all boundaries, from one of Australia's best loved authors.



Synopsis

August, 1944: Over a thousand Japanese soldiers attempt to break out of a prisoner of war compound near Cowra. In the carnage, hundreds are killed, many are recaptured and imprisoned, and some take their own lives rather than suffer the humiliation of ongoing defeat.

But one soldier, Hiroshi, determined to avoid either fate, manages to escape...

At nearby Erambie Aboriginal mission, Banjo Williams, father of nine and proud man of his community, discovers a distraught Hiroshi, pleading for help. The people of Erambie have seen enough death and heartache, so Banjo and the Erambie community decide to offer Hiroshi refuge. Mary, Banjo's daughter, is intrigued by the Japanese stranger, and is charged with his care.

Love blossoms between them, and they each dream of a future together. But how long can Hiroshi be hidden safely and their bond kept secret?

Discussion points

1. How does the historical setting of World War II and the Cowra breakout influence the events and characters in the novel?
2. How do Mary and Hiroshi's backgrounds and experiences shape their relationship? What challenges do they face, and how do they overcome them?
3. How does Anita Heiss's background and perspective as a Wiradjuri author influence the narrative and its themes?

4. How did the book affect you personally? Did it change your perspective on any issues, or leave you with any lingering thoughts?

Next, you should listen to...

Tiddas by Anita Heiss

The Thinning by Inga Simpson

Australian Gospel by Lech Blaine