

Teachers' Resource Kit

# JUNO OF TARIS

Fleur Beale

*Juno of Taris* is the compelling new novel from **Fleur Beale**. It explores the struggle of Juno, a young teen on the verge of adulthood, who is torn between her need to fit in and belong in her society, and her growing discomfort and questioning of that society's rules. Your ordinary teen? Not quite! Because Juno lives – in the not-too-distant future – on Taris, a bubble-covered island in the Pacific, to which a select few hundred people were evacuated when Earth's inhabitants took everything just a bit too far and began to self-destruct. On Taris there are many rules governing appearance, behaviour, even procreation. All are for the good of the community to ensure the survival of humankind. Or are they? As Taris' protected environment begins to break down and Juno's questioning nature takes hold, she uncovers some startling inconsistencies in many of the 'factual' histories she has grown up with. She also begins to develop some quite startling, almost supernatural, abilities. As Juno faces increasing danger, she finds allies in the most surprising places. *Juno of Taris* examines many themes: peer pressure, environmental breakdown, the fictionalisation of history, societal control and challenging authority but perhaps most of all, it is a thoroughly good read from one of our very best writers for young adults.

**FLEUR BEALE** has written 27 books for children and young adults, and has won many awards. She lives in Wellington.



Notes include classroom activities for students aged 12+, in the following areas:

- Reading Comprehension
- Character Study
- Themes:
  - Island Society
  - Authoritarian Society
  - Individuality
  - The Future
  - History
  - Genetics
- Creative Responses
- Writing Responses

*Teachers' notes developed by Raymond Huber*



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## Starter Questions

- Read the list of names on pages 8 and 9. What do they tell you about the kind of novel this is?
- Read pages 11 and 12. What do the first pages tell you about Juno and the society she lives in? Where is the story set?
- Why would people want to look the same? Do you like to be the same as others?

## Comprehension Questions

### Chapter 1

- In what year do you think the story is set?
- Why might the people of Taris have created the dome?
- What might be Outside that's so deadly? (p.12)
- Where does all their food come from? (p.16)
- Why might walking alone be a 'wayward' thing to do? (p.16)

### Chapter 2

- What does 'martyred expressions' mean? (p.22)
- Answer Marbo's question on page 23. Why would Hilto pick on Juno?
- What do the other students in Juno's learning stratum think of her?
- What is 'withdrawing'? (p.24)

- What kinds of self-expression are frowned on in Taris? Why can't the people just 'do their own thing'?
- Why do you think the Governance Companions won't answer her question about the hair? (p.25)
- What is a 'changeling'? (p.27)
- What are the 'Have you heard' statements at the end of each chapter?

### Chapter 3

- Why are new creative arts and experimentation regarded as inessential? (p.30)
- What does the pledge mean? (p.33) Why would they say it at the meeting?
- What might have happened in the 'world outside'? (p.34)
- The people of Taris can 'choose the character' and sex of new children (pp.34,35). What does this tell you about their technology?

- Why is the ‘atmospherics system’ so important? (p.37)
- Why do people ‘choose death’ on Tavis? (pp.39,40)
- What values did Irian challenge? (p.41)
- Read the songs on pages 37 and 41. Where might they come from?
- Describe Grif’s personality? (p.47)

#### Chapter 4

- Why do they only have ‘pictographs’? (p.51) Do you know of any other societies that used pictographs to record stories?
- Describe Silvern’s and Marba’s personalities. (pp.53–56)
- What is Justa trying to show Marba? (p.55)
- What kinds of dance and music do they have? (p.60)
- What is Marba’s response to Justa? (p.62)
- Why don’t the people of Tavis wear coloured clothes? (p.63)
- Why is writing and reading frowned on? (pp.65,66)
- Where does the quote on page 65 come from? What is it about?
- What does Vima mean about the systems? Why is she comforted by Juno? (p.70)

#### Chapter 5

- What does ‘flounce’ mean? (p.73)
- What is a Hope Statement? (p.73)
- What did Juno’s ‘genetic parents’ donate to Tavis 200 years ago? (p.74)
- Why does Tavis have experts in genetic science?
- Why doesn’t Juno bother reading ‘saving the world’ statements? (p.77)
- What kind of things might have wiped out most of the world’s population? (p.77)
- What does the word ‘tomfoolery’ mean? (p.78)
- How is Hope Statement 13 a direct challenge to Tavis’ values? (p.79)

#### Chapter 6

- Evaluate the qualities chosen for Juno’s sister (p.84). Define ‘altruism’. Do you agree that these are all good qualities?
- Why does Juno choose another child? (p.85)

#### Chapter 7

- Grif tells Juno to ‘harness the fury’. What does she mean by this? (p.94)
- What was Hilto’s plan? (pp.95–99)
- What psychic ability has Juno got? (p.98)

## Chapter 8

- Why do Juno's learning stratum support her, despite the risks of going against the authorities? (p.101)
- Why does Grif say 'don't let them kill your spirit'? (p.104)
- What important information is revealed about the politics of the island? (pp.107-109)

## Chapter 9

- Explain these aspects of Tavis life: 'a promising', 'Outside stock', apprenticeship.
- Why is contraception compulsory? (p.113)
- Why is Juno angry with Marba? (p.117)
- How is the breeding being manipulated? (p.118)

## Chapter 10

- What could be up the mountain? (p.123)
- Why don't names get repeated on Tavis? (p.132)
- Why does Creen say stories aren't told on Tavis? (p.133)
- What does this chapter reveal about Juno's personality?

## Chapter 11

- Why is it important for Vima to know the history of the systems? (p.138)
- What big secret does Juno accidentally reveal? (p.142)

- How are names used on Tavis? (p.143)
- Define 'rancorous and vindictive'. (p.144)

## Chapter 12

- What is Hera's personality?
- Why do you think the Governance Companions can read? (p.155)
- What vital piece of history do they find out about on the transponder? (p.156)

## Chapter 13

- Define 'misdemeanours' (p.161).
- How are Vima and Juno supporting each other? (p.162)
- Describe the attitude that the people of Tavis have towards life (p.164). Why do you think science has remained strong on Tavis?
- Why is Vima resisting being controlled? (p.169)

## Chapter 14

- What is the effect of Vima's announcement on the others at the meeting? (p.177)
- Why do you think Silvern joins the 'resistance' when she is usually so compliant? (p.177)
- Why does Fisa say 'no discussion'? (p.178)

## Chapter 15

- What does Silvern mean by 'it curdles my inner being'? (p.187)

- Why was Vima chosen to fix the computers? (p.191)
- What are the people of Taris 'bound by'? (p.192)

#### Chapter 17

- What do you think Hilto means by 'we should never have let you breed'? (p.215)
- What 'feeling' changed Juno's mother's mind about the leaders? (p.217)
- What 'different kinds of courage' can you think of? (p.222)
- 'My childhood was over' says Juno. Why? (p.224)

#### Chapter 19

- What caused the crisis on Taris 32 years ago? (p.247)
- Why did they 'remove differences'? (p.247)
- Why do you think Juno is still worried? (p.250)

#### Chapter 20

- How did technology and possessions lead to trouble between people? (pp.256–259)
- What was Fisa's solution to the possessiveness? (p.259)
- What powerful symbol was introduced to mark the new way of living? (p.259)

#### Chapter 21

- How do the Governance Companions try to win support? (p.266)
- Do you think Silvern can be trusted? (p.273)

#### Chapter 23

- What do you think was the job of the Secret Enforcer? (p.300)
- What is happening to the attitude of the young ones and to the control of the Governance Companions?

#### Chapter 24

- What is the great legend of Taris? (p.307)
- What year is it in reality? (p.307)
- Why do you think this lie developed?

#### Chapter 25

- Who do you think has smashed up the communications centre? (p.318)

#### Chapter 26

- What is unusual about Hera? (p.325)

#### Chapter 27

- Why did they decide on a prison for Hilto rather than death? (p.340)
- Define the word 'atheist'. (p.342)
- Why do they want to punish Vima? (p.345)

#### Chapter 28

- What is a Rationalist? (p.348)

- Who is Juno's biological mother? (p.353)
- What does Hera predict will happen?

## Character Study

### Juno

- What are Juno's main frustrations?
- What kind of girl is she? What are her strengths and weaknesses?
- Describe her personality in four words (or phrases) using an acrostic of her name, JUNO.
- Why does Juno resist Hilo's orders? (p.19)
- What 'extra sense' has Juno got? (p.294)
- What kind of thoughts does she pick up? (p.298)
- What is Juno's attitude towards marriage and babies? (p.271)
- In what ways are Vima and Juno similar?
- What has Juno learned about herself by the end of the book?
- Do you think she's a realistic character? Why or why not?

## Themes

### Island Society

- The setting of a small, isolated 'island' community is often used in novels and films. Why do writers like this setting? What does it allow them to show about societies?
- Cut off from the world, isolated communities develop extreme values. What are the values on Taris? (p.51). Does our society have these values? What do you think of them? Evaluate them.
- How do they keep the island a 'paradise'? (p.87)
- Read one of these novels about island societies and domed cities: *The Outlanders* by Margaret Beames; *Riding Tycho* by Jan Mark; *The Islanders* by John Townsend Rowe. How are the societies in these books similar to the Taris community?
- Research the real life community on isolated Pitcairn Island. What extremes developed there?

## Authoritarian Society

- What happens when society is ruled by a dictator or by a small group of people?
- What are a leader's responsibilities and potential downfalls?
- Detail the qualities of an effective leader. Do they require strength or compassion?
- Taris leaders don't want their people to be literate. What recent societies burned books?
- In what ways is Taris similar to Nazi Germany's dictatorship? (p.156) Consider the similarity of Hilto and Hitler. What does 'indoctrination' mean? Why is 'thought before action' a popular saying with adults? (p.64) How does it control people? What are the three principles of dictatorship (p.169)? Are there dictatorships anywhere in the world today?
- Authoritarian societies arise at times of crisis — such as Germany after the depression. Why is this? Watch some of *The Triumph of the Will*, a Nazi propaganda movie, on YouTube.
- Grif says, 'Ignorance is dangerous' (p.65). In what ways?
- How does access to knowledge empower people? (p.156). Why is it vital for freedom? Why is literacy essential for free thought? How do the

Governance Companions use reading to control the people of Taris? (p.191)

- In what other ways do they control people? (e.g. pp.266,299)
- Are there really 'no secrets' on Taris?
- What personal qualities enabled Juno to stand up to the authorities? What other famous people have stood up for justice against impossible odds? Watch *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*, a DVD about a teenager who resisted the Nazi system.

## Individuality

- Names: Are the meanings of names important on Taris? (p.143)
- Why did the Tarisians change their names? (p.309)
- What does your name mean? Does it suit your personality?
- Hair: Read the hair-shaving rules in italics on page 180. Do you agree with any of them? Explain why. Do these things help a person to be a unique individual? How does hair shaving 'stop competition' according to the rulers? In what ways is the hair shaving like wearing a school uniform?
- Explain the symbolism of the hair-cutting in terms of community. How did it help them survive being 'cut-off'? (p.259) Is hairstyle important for teenagers today? Why?

- Ownership: How might private ownership and individuality lead to fights? (pp.256–258)
- Does this happen in poor countries – where the focus is on survival?
- Film: Watch one of these movies about futuristic and domed communities: *Logan's Run*; *THX 1138*; *The Truman Show*. What is their message about being a strong individual and social control?

#### The Future

- What has happened in the world Outside? (pp.308,341)
- The novel is set in Year 2067 (or 2225). Predict what New Zealand will be like 100 and 200 years from now. Will it be like a sci-fi movie?
- Climate change: The world is getting warmer. The prediction is that ice caps will melt and the sea will flood low-lying cities. What can you do to help change this? What can governments do? Do you feel hopeful about the future of the earth?

#### History

- 'The history is dead' (p.139). Do you agree that history is dead and gone? Explain your view.

- Why is history left out of stories on Tavis?
- Why are documentaries still shown on Tavis?
- What can we learn from history?
- Does history repeat itself?

#### Genetics

- Should parents be able to influence the personality of an unborn child?
- Do you have a choice about how you live, and what your personality is like?
- Debate: 'We are the product of our genes, not our environment.'
- Research: Find out how genetic engineering and cloning are carried out. What ethical issues (rights and wrongs) are involved, especially with human genes?
- Read *The Island of Dr Moreau* by HG Wells – the first novel about genetic manipulation or *The Mysterious Island* by Jules Verne
- Research the Eden Project in Britain ([www.edenproject.com](http://www.edenproject.com)) – a real life dome experiment.

## Creative Responses

- Design a poster for a movie version of *Juno of Taxis*. Make it different to the book cover.
- Draw a plan or diagram for your own domed city. Include provisions for atmosphere, farm land, water supply and housing.
- Paint a picture of the mountain in the book or the dome from the outside.
- Draw a transponder (p.76).

## Writing Activities

- Imagine your own domed city. Outline the setting, the people, the environment and the method of government. Write a short story based on your outline.
- Write a one-page essay on one of these current issues: genetic engineering; dictatorships; literacy; parental authority.
- Write a review of the book. Consider the following questions:
  - What situations had a ring of truth for you?
  - Which characters appealed to you the most? The least?
  - How did the story make you feel as it unfolded?
  - What ideas in the book awakened your interest?
  - What did you dislike, or find boring?
  - Did the ending surprise you?