

FARAWAY GIRL

Fleur Beale

Teacher Notes

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BEFORE READING

1. Cover art and design can give us clues about the book inside. Why are there flowers in the girl's hair? How would you describe the stylistic choice of the drawing/image? Name two other visual or verbal features that you think give us clues about the story. What do you think they might mean?
2. The title of a book gives us information, too. From just looking at the cover, who do you think the 'Faraway Girl' is?
3. Now turn to the back of the book and read the synopsis. Now what do you think the book might be about? Explain to a partner in your class using your own words.
4. Fleur Beale is a very experienced New Zealand writer. Open the book to the first page and look at the author's biography. Now turn to the last page for more information. Make a list of the books she has written. Have you read any of them?



DURING READING

Close Reading Questions

Chapter:

1. What is 'the haunting'?
2. Who appears at breakfast time?
3. What year has this visitor come from?
4. What day of term is it and what is Etta doing (at school)?
5. What colloquial term does Etta use for Constance in these first chapters?
6. What does Constance think of 21st Century schooling?
7. What shocking event happens at the end of chapter 7?
8. Why does Smeaton call Etta a hussy?
9. What does Etta describe in great detail to Constance in this chapter?
10. Who does Constance appoint as her new maid?
11. Who is Mr Bartel?
12. What do the girls learn in this chapter?
13. What happens at the end of chapter 13?
14. What does Geoff want to do in this chapter?
15. Why does Constance have to marry Smeaton?
16. Why are the girls interviewed?
17. What does Constance bravely decide to do?
18. Where does Etta think that Constance got her diplomacy from?
19. Where are Constance and Etta in this chapter?
20. What does Constance start to suspect in this chapter?
21. Whom do the girls visit?
22. What does Etta want to do to pay the maid her arrears?
23. What did Etta tell Smeaton to do to improve conditions at the Mill?
24. What does Constance's father use when he is angered?
25. Why does Etta want to find the letters?
26. What is Aggie's plan to help the girls get to Manchester?
27. Who are Etta and Constance going to meet in Manchester?
28. What is the truth of why Smeaton wants to marry Constance?
29. What is the price of the land being presented to Smeaton?
30. Where does Etta go at the end of this chapter?
31. Where does Etta think the answer lies in the painting?
32. What happens to Jamie in this chapter?
33. What does Etta decide?
34. Where is the painting exhibited?
35. What is the name of the genealogist the teens hire?
36. Jamie's ancestor is finally revealed in this chapter. Who was it?
37. Who has some family items for Etta?
38. Who is in the photo?
39. What is revealed about the relationship between Etta and Constance?

DURING READING

Characters

Etta and Constance

Etta and Constance are the main characters in this book.

What are some of their qualities? Name five each. Use examples from the novel to back up what you are saying. We've provided you with the first one:

Etta:

<i>Quality</i>	<i>Quote/evidence</i>	<i>Page number</i>
Vicious	"Being scared wasn't something she did well, and it made her vicious"	22

Constance:

<i>Quality</i>	<i>Quote/evidence</i>	<i>Page number</i>
Empathetic	"Constance's heart squeezed with pity. That boy wasn't long for this world."	25

How does Etta change throughout the novel? How does Constance change throughout the novel?

Divide two pages into three columns titled 'Beginning', 'Middle' and 'End' for each (see below). Fill in the columns with your understanding of them throughout the text.

Etta:

<i>Beginning</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>End</i>

Constance:

<i>Beginning</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>End</i>

Find quotes from the book to support your opinion. Add the quotes to these character development pages for Etta and Constance.

1. Do you think Etta is a good friend to Constance? Why or why not?
2. Describe the friendship between Etta and Constance throughout the book. Does it change? If so, in what way?



Other characters

Write down everything you learn reading about:

- a. Aggie
- b. Mr Smeaton
- c. Mr Williston
- d. Mr Collier
- e. Write a brief character summary of one of these characters.
- f. Which character did you particularly like or dislike? Why?
- g. Which character did you most identify with? Why?

Themes

Books have many themes, or ideas, that the writer is thinking about and wants you as the reader to think about, too. We have listed some of these below. The list is not exhaustive.

In groups, discuss the following themes and questions in relation to the novel.

1. Friendships can make your life better.

It made such a difference having Etta there, treating her as a real person, a person whose opinions and wishes mattered. (81)

If only this unusual girl could be her friend forever, but whose time would they live in? (104)

2. A strong sense of responsibility can be simultaneously empowering and crippling.

'He will live!' Etta thumped her hand against the wall.

'I'll make sure of it. We need to get thinking.' (43)

That gown, she well knew, signalled the beginning of a life-long entrapment. (105)

3. Despite our differences, we have more in common than that which separates us.

The men and the moaning mother were momentarily forgotten as the girls grinned at each other. (49)

4. We can change our lives with the right support and environment.

'Parents are meant to love you. They're meant to care for you.' (74)

It wasn't what she was used to - having people care about how she felt. (96)

Constance had been very young when her grandmother had died, and with her had gone warmth, love and colour. (106)

Questions

- a. What do you think is the most important theme? The least? Why?
- b. Use evidence from the book to support your ideas.
- c. Write an essay explaining why you think your chosen theme is the most important in the book. Make sure you've got an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion.

Writing Style and Language Activities

Vocabulary: Find the definitions of the following words and use them in a new sentence:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Shimmering (12) | n. Ablutions (91) |
| b. Materialised (13) | o. Sumptuous (98) |
| c. Daintily (17) | p. Cumbersome (101) |
| d. Insubstantial (23) | q. Impromptu (113) |
| e. Incessant (29) | r. Purveyor (114) |
| f. Barrage (29) | s. Immorality (129) |
| g. Incomprehensible (37) | t. Demeanour (132) |
| h. Blaspheming (44) | u. Incalculable (144) |
| i. Misogynistic (48) | v. Lurid (151) |
| j. Penury (50) | w. Conniving (173) |
| k. Insouciance (55) | x. Filial (176) |
| l. Etiquette (64) | y. Cudgel (178) |
| m. Odious (72) | z. Visage (214) |

Alliteration: “... weirdness in her world was worse” (7) is an example of alliteration, which is when the same letter occurs at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. Look for and note other examples of alliteration in the book. List them.

Italics: “Young ladies do not gossip with the servants.” (7) How are italics used in this book? What purpose do they serve? Would your understanding of the story and its characters change if the text in italics was not included? Explain.

Colloquial language is when language used is casual rather than formal; it could be described as ‘street’ language. Three examples at the beginning of the book are: “..woo woo weird stuff ...”, ‘fecking weirdo shit’ and ‘Nah.’ (9). Why does Fleur Beale use colloquial language? What effect does this have on the reader? Can you find other examples later in the book?

Metaphors and similes are interesting ways of describing things using comparison. A simile is a comparison using like or as; a metaphor compares directly. On page 9 Fleur Beale writes about Etta’s

‘sense of undertow in the world’ and ‘the tear in its fabric’. On page 20 she writes ‘Constance jerked as if she’d been shocked by an electrical current.’ Are these metaphors or similes? How do you know? What are they comparing? What is the effect on you as the reader when Beale uses figurative language in this way? Which of these two figurative tools do you prefer? Why?

Tense and narrative style: this book is written in third person past tense narrative style, alternating between the perspectives of Etta and Constance. What does this mean? Explain. Choose two paragraphs from throughout the book that you think are well-written in past tense. Write each paragraph in present tense, then in future tense. What are the similarities when you change the tense? What are the differences? Which do you prefer? Why? Now change the perspective from third person to first person. Again, what are the similarities? What are the differences? Which do you prefer? Why?

AFTER READING

Further Research and Creative Activities

1. What do you know about time travel? Do you find it feasible? Research theories beyond fiction and present them as a powerpoint to your class.
2. Choose a part of the book you enjoyed and write it from a different point of view. For example, you could write about Grace Stubbs' experience after being fired, or Mr Collier's experience meeting Constance and Etta for the first time. Aim for at least one page.
3. Visit your local museum and look for any exhibitions on what New Zealand was like in the late 1860's and early 1870's, when Grace and Constance/Kitty emigrated. You may like to focus on a particular aspect of society, like fashion. Toitū (Otago Early Settlers Museum) has examples online, such as this <https://collections.toituosm.com/objects/28865> and this <https://collections.toituosm.com/objects/29586>
4. Write a short play of the scene when Etta and Constance first meet. Present to your class, or film and present to your class.
5. Choose another book written by Fleur Beale. Read and compare. Are there any similarities? Are there differences?
6. Draw your own picture of Constance, as you imagine her, in her wedding gown. Use the descriptions throughout the text to direct your drawing.
7. What was emigration to New Zealand like in the mid 1800's? Choose one of your own relatives and see if you can follow their ancestry back to this time. Can you discover which boat they arrived on? Do you know where they settled? You could use the excellent National Library site at Papers Past <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/> to do this.