

RANDOM HOUSE TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

The Boy in the Olive Grove Fleur Beale

The past lives of Bess Gray catch up with her in this passionate story . . .

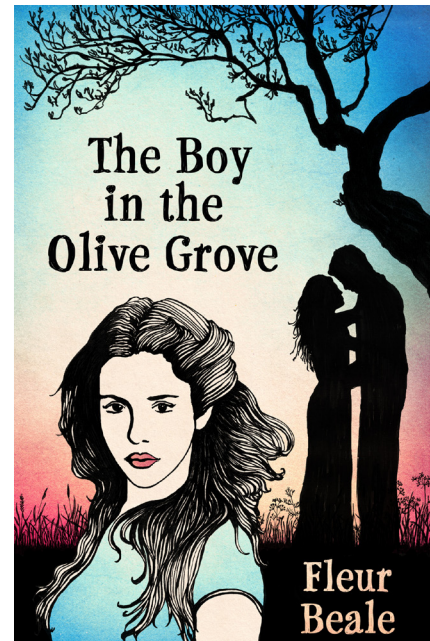
On the night of her seventeenth birthday, Bess Grey sees images of a witch-burning unfold in front of her as if in a movie. She also sees images from a different time . . . of lovers. And she's sure the girl is — was — herself.

When she meets Nick she recognises him as the boy. There's an immediate connection. However, when her father nearly dies from a heart attack, there's no time to brood, as Bess tries to save her father's business.

She falls in love with Nick, but her difficult mother interferes — forcing Bess to make the hardest decision of her life. She must decide whether to lose her mother or the boy she loves.



Fleur Beale is the author of over 30 award-winning books for young adults. *Juno of Taris* won the Esther Glen Award in the 2009 LIANZA Children's Book Awards, and *Fierce September* won the Young Adult Fiction category in the 2011 New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards.



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RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Before reading
- Language
- Characters
- Themes
- Comprehension questions
- Creative responses

Price (GST inclusive) and author details are correct at the time of writing but are subject to change without notice. Visit www.randomhouse.co.nz for up-to-date information.

Before reading

1. What does the cover picture indicate about the book's content?
2. When and where might the story be set?
3. What does the title suggest to you?

Language

1. What do you think the genre of this book is? List the aspects that are indicative of this genre.
 - Let's not count our chickens (p.136)
 - You're the best thing since sliced bread (p.157)
 - Plenty more fish in the sea (p.172)
 - She'd drop me like a hot brick (p.176)
 - Take the foot out of the mouth (p.213)
2. The story is told in the first person. Why do you think the author chose to do this? Was it effective? Choose a passage in the book and rewrite it in third person narrative.
3. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that might otherwise be difficult to express. Two examples of figurative language are metaphors and similes. Examples of these are, 'tears were rivers down my face' (p.13) and 'looking like a lump of old granite' (p.16). Find more examples of each type of figurative language from the book.
4. What is the origin of the phrases below? How has the author altered some of the original phrases? Find five more examples from the book.
 - The world was my oyster (p.7)
 - That was a different kettle of rotten fish (p.7)
 - He has a lot on his plate (p.14)
 - You'll look like lamb dressed as mutton (p.82)
 - I let him have it, both barrels (p.123)
 - He'll get on with Bernie like a house on fire (p.130)
 - Stranger pigs have flown the skies (p.133)
5. A.k.a. (p.46) and a.s.a.p. (p.136) are examples of what figure of speech? Think of ten more examples.
6. The author uses animal, food and nature imagery in similes. For example, 'he'll be happy as a pig in clover' (p.103) and '... more like a sodding great tsunami of pain, loneliness and betrayal ...' (p.209). Find other examples from the book. Then think of ten other animals, types of food and forces of nature and create a simile for each.
7. The author uses a lot of imagery to do with ice and cold when describing Clarissa. For example, 'she ignored me with glacial splendour' (p.139). What force of nature would you choose for another character from the novel, for yourself or one of your own family members? List the reasons why you chose these.
8. 'Wisecracks' (p.14) is an example of a blend or portmanteau word. What does this mean? Who invented the figure of speech portmanteau? Find some more examples of blend words from the novel.

9. What figure of speech are the following words examples of: 'squeak' (p.48) and 'humph' (p.156). Find three more examples from the book. Write a poem or descriptive paragraph which includes the words.
10. Describe in a paragraph how the tension builds and falls as the story progresses. Find a passage in the novel that is of high intensity, and another of low intensity. Copy both out and compare the language used (choice of words, length of sentences, the pace at which details are revealed). How is language used to create intensity?
11. Find definitions for the following words from the novel and write one sentence for each:
 - inveigle (p.16)
 - absconded (p.34)
 - benign (p.36)
 - duress (p.55)
 - enigma (p.69)
 - antipathy (p.73)
 - tacitly (p.85)
 - serendipity (p.116)
 - arcane (p.131)
 - lugubrious (p.161)
 - astringent (p.225)
 - minion (p.257)
 - wrath (p.277)

Characters

1. Think of three adjectives to describe Bess, Clodagh, Hadleigh, Clarissa, Charlie, Iris, Nick, Clint and Beverly.
2. List what you think are the qualities of Bess' personality and find examples of when she displays each of these qualities.
3. Choose an important event from the novel and describe Bess' reaction to it.
4. What do you think Bess learns in this book? How do you think she has changed by the end of the book? How do you think her view of herself has changed?
5. How does the relationship between Bess and Iris or Bess and Clarissa develop though the book? What are the main events which contribute to the development?
6. How does Bess relate to the different male characters in the book? Does she differ in her approach when dealing with each character? For example, her relationships with Charlie, Hadleigh, Jason, Eddy, Clint, Solomon and Nick.
7. What are the different pressures on Bess throughout the novel? What factors lead to the decisions she makes and how does she cope with the situations she finds herself in?
8. What does the novel say about family and its importance during difficult times? List examples of episodes when family are either a help or a hindrance to Bess.
9. Do you think Bess is a realistic character? Why or why not?
10. Draw a picture of one of the characters based on their physical description. For example, Bess (p.13), Hadleigh (p.13), Nick (p.103), Solomon (p.138), Gwennie (p.140) or Su Lin (p.258).
11. Write a character summary of one of the following characters: Bess, Hadleigh, Clarissa, Charlie, Iris, Nick or Clint.
12. Which character did you particularly like or dislike? Why?
13. Which character did you most identify with? Why?

Themes

Discuss the following themes and find examples from the book which illustrate each.

- bullying and abuse
- bigotry
- family relationships
- loyalty and betrayal
- love and attraction
- human psychology
- transgression

Comprehension questions

1. What is Miss Wilding's reaction to Bess asking to leave school? (p.13). What does it tell us about Bess and her history at St Anselm?
2. What does Hadleigh's explanation of Bess' images tell the reader about their family situation (p.21)?
3. Why do you think the author capitalises the words 'That Man' (pp. 30)? Is it effective? Why?
4. Why doesn't Bess need any persuading to run errands at the factory (p.42)? Do you feel sympathetic to Bess as a character at this stage in the book? Why/why not?
5. Why does Bess agree to go to the lawyer with her dad (p.54), and what are the immediate and far-reaching repercussions of this decision?
6. What effect does Iris' revelation about their shared past lives have on Bess — both emotionally and physically (pp. 62–65)?
7. How does Clarissa react to Bess' hug (p.66)? Do you think this reaction is justified? What more does this tell us about their relationship?
8. Why does Beverley advise Bess to send out someone older to be a company rep (p.82)? How does Bess react to her advice? Which other characters give advice on this topic?
9. What does Iris mean when she calls Bess 'a chip off the old block' (p.97)? Do you agree/disagree? Find examples from the book to support your opinion.
10. Why does Bess feel she should enlighten Iris about Charlie's deal with the bank (p.99)? Do you think she has good reason to or should? Why/why not?
11. How does Bess cope with the men's reaction to her brainstorming idea (pp. 112–113)? How do you think this affects her relationship with them and consequently the success of the business?
12. What does the author imply when she writes Bess was '... opting for the deep blue sea' (p.125)?
13. What are the reasons Ms Kendrick lists for Jason being the right person for the job (p.130)? Can you find any incidents from later in the book to support her reasoning?
14. What realisation makes Bess feel 'winded, and wounded' in her session with Gwennie (p.145)?

15. What are the differences between Charlotte and Clodagh's reaction to Bess' visit to the psychologist (pp. 150–151)? Which reaction do you think you would most likely share? Why?
16. Iris refers to Charlie as a 'stubborn, pig-headed man' (p.156). Find any examples from the book that could support her opinion.
17. Bess feels that 'hostility was turning out to be the lesson of the year' (p.163). Do you think this is true? List examples of any hostility that Bess encounters in the book. Write a paragraph to describe how she deals with each episode.
18. Why does Bess envy Clodagh after she reads her latest email (p.176)?
19. Bess states that 'Jason stood taller than I'd ever seen him' (p.185). Why is this? How has Bess and Jason's relationship changed at this stage of the book?
20. Gwennie guesses that Clarissa has a 'narcissistic personality disorder' (p.196). What is this? At this point in the book do you agree/disagree with Gwennie's guess? Why/why not?
21. Bess feels her brother escaped and left her in 'Alcatraz' (p.209). What does this refer to? And what does it imply about her home life?
22. Bess notes that Nick has told her and not Lulu the story about conversing with the old man (p.219). Why is this significant? How does Bess feel about this?
23. Which part of Hadleigh's email indicates that he has forgiven Bess (pp. 227–228)?
24. Sol refers to Bess as a 'glass half full kind of girl' (p.233). What do you think has made him come to this conclusion? Do you agree/disagree? Give examples from throughout the book to support your opinion.
25. Being back at school eases Bess' distress (p.241). List the ways it does this.
26. Why does Bess christen her new tablet Irony (p.246)?
27. Why does Bess find the fact that Hadleigh has an Asian girlfriend amusing (p.257)? Do Hadleigh and Su Lin feel the same way?
28. What is Nick's reaction to the past life story about the olive grove boy (p.265)?
29. Bess asks Clodagh not to tell their other friends about Nick (p.270). What is her reasoning behind this request? Do you think at this stage in the book these precautions are necessary?
30. Nick asks Bess why she wants to stay with her mother (p.281). List the reasons she has to support her decision to do so. Do you think they are good reasons to stay?
31. What does Clarissa do to punish Bess for not cleaning the house (p.289)?
32. What does Nick mean when he tells Bess that Clarissa 'had me over a barrel' (p.302). What do you think his actions say about his character?

Creative responses

1. Bess almost died after skulling a bottle of vodka (p.9). Are there any campaigns currently being screened on television to warn against binge drinking? Do you think they're successful? Why/why not? Discuss as a class. Create your own anti-binge drinking marketing campaign.
2. Bess' father has Samoan heritage (p.13). Investigate your family history and heritage. Write up your findings.
3. Hadleigh thinks Bess has had '... a dream. Just your ordinary old nightmare' (p.22).

Write a descriptive story about an unusual dream or event that's happened in your life.

4. Bess drives down the Bombay hills and stops in Ngaruawahia and Hamilton (pp. 28–29). Locate these and any other New Zealand places that are mentioned in the book on a map. Choose one of the places mentioned and research its name, economy, population size, industry, etc.
5. Bess describes feeling 'surreal' (p.59). What is the literary definition of 'surrealism'? Choose a sequence from the novel and rewrite it as a surreal episode.
6. Bess imagines which character she would cast Clint as if she were a movie director (p.48). Choose three of your classmates to write a description of. Then decide which character type you would cast them as if you were a movie director and why you made this choice.
7. Eddy shows Bess a newspaper cutting of an article about Bernie working in the factory (p.50). Imagine you are the local journalist and write an article based on the quotes mentioned in the cutting.
8. The nurse gives Bess some sugar for the shock (p.57). Design an instructional pamphlet on the symptoms of shock and how to treat them.
9. Iris encourages Bess to go to talk to Gwennie because she is a psychologist (p.74–78). What does this job entail? What job do you want to do? Where would you like to work? What qualifications will you need? What would the work entail? See if you can arrange to be an intern or shadow a worker at the company of your choice. Write a report of your experience and present it to your class.
10. Bess' memories involve burning a witch to death (p.76). In groups, research periods in history when people were sentenced to death by burning. Who was chosen for this punishment and why? Was it deserved? Present your findings to your class.
11. Beverley Meketawa has a moko (p.80). What is this? Find out the cultural significance of the moko. Research and design your own.
12. *Jane Eyre* is Bess' 'go-to book' (p.86). Write a book study on either this book or your own 'go-to book'.
13. After some research Bess notes that most past life experiences seem to have been from the French Resistance or the American Civil War (p.102). Choose an historical figure from one of these periods. Write an obituary for the figure you have chosen.
14. Bess feels that she is 'swinging between a whole collection of different personas' (p.118). Pick one of the personas she mentions — as well as a major event from the novel. Write a diary entry as how that persona reacted to the event you chose.
15. Bess says the factory was becoming her '... haven. A place of retreat' (p.126). Write an extended description of a place you consider a haven and/or place of retreat.
16. Solomon views himself as a Byronic character (p.138). Do an author study on Byron. Then write a poem in a Byronic style and/or choose a poem by Byron. Recite to your class.
17. Bess might hire Jason as Bernie's apprentice (p.139). Choose a vocation of interest to you and find out what an apprenticeship in this vocation involves. Write a report of your findings for someone who may be interested in an apprenticeship.
18. The author includes a description of the exterior of Gwennie's house (p.140). Find another description of an exterior space from the book. Draw this space based on the description, then describe and draw an exterior space of your choice.
19. The husband in Bess' regression tries to forbid his wife from using herbs for healing (p.142). Research the use of plants for natural remedies.

Which plants that are accessible in your local area could be useful for medicinal purposes? Present your findings in illustrated chart form.

20. Nick lists some of the countries he's travelled to for his modelling work (p.215). Choose one of the places he mentions. Create and design an entry for a travel book for your chosen place. Include information such as population size, geography, history, weather, etc.
21. Choose and research one of the items from the list below that have been mentioned in the book. Then write a short story based on your findings:
 - Reiki (p.41)
 - Karma (p.145)
 - Reincarnation (p.151)
 - Banshee (p.155)
 - Eros (p.225)
 - Henry the Eighth and his six wives (p.235)
 - Machiavellian (p.257)
 - Clash of the Titans (p.259)
22. For Christmas Bess is given a figurine in order to start a collection (p.235). Do you or your family have any collections? Given the choice, what would you choose to collect? Why?
23. Nick says to Bess 'Our love is written in the stars' (p.294). Use this as a title to write a love poem.
24. The book is full of dramatic, highly emotive sequences, such as the many arguments between Clarissa and Bess. Look at the language the author uses in one of these arguments. Write a dramatic scene about a highly emotive time in your life.
25. Throughout the book the way Clarissa treats Bess is manipulative, bullying and abusive. Find out about others who have suffered as victims of bullying or abuse in your local area. How are they being helped? What agencies have been set up? How can you help? Set up and design a charity campaign to help. Think about marketing techniques, etc.
26. Bess and Nick's relationship appears to have been pre-ordained. Do you believe in destiny? How much control do you think people have and/or should have over their own destinies? How much should family members have? (Or school/society/social/government/groups?) Discuss as a class.
27. Bess' past lives are presented as a series of images, such as the burning of the witch (pp. 19–21) or the death of the olive grove boy (pp. 292–293). Find and choose one of these images from her past life and present them in a storyboard for a movie format.
28. In groups, create a business plan for one of the businesses from the book listed below. Think about the company's structure, staffing, physical presence, as well as focusing on marketing techniques such as company logo, rep materials, website, etc. Present your plan to your class as a powerpoint presentation.
 - Charlie Grey and Daughter's new furniture line (p.100)
 - Lisette and Ken Brand's coffee-cart (p.159)
 - Maurice's toys, such as the nativity scene (p.161)
29. Write a letter from Bess to Clarissa and then Clarissa's reply about the role Clarissa played in the attempted break-up with Nick.
30. Write a dramatic monologue from either Bess' or Nick's point of view, retelling the experiences they have had in the novel. Perform it for the class.
31. Do you think the novel would make a dramatic film? Write a letter in support of the film for possible investors. Look at some movie posters. Notice the pictures and the words. Design a movie poster to advertise the film.
32. Do you think a sequel to this book is possible? What do you think could or should happen in it? Write a one page outline of the plot for the sequel you would write. Choose a title.

33. Think of other books which explore the theme of young adult characters in love having to deal with difficult/blackmailing/disapproving parents. Write a comparative review where you compare and contrast *The Boy in the Olive Grove* with at least one other novel dealing with this theme.
34. In groups, create a timeline that shows the main events of the novel.
35. Imagine that books can be divided into comedies or tragedies, with comedy defined as a celebration of life, and tragedy as a recognition of our flaws and mortality. Which of the two modes would this book fit into most comfortably? Argue your case with examples from the book.
36. Rewrite one of the climactic scenes as a video script. (If your school has filming equipment, produce your scene.)
37. Design your own cover for the novel, including the blurb.
38. Write a review of the book, aiming it at the readership of your favourite magazine, newspaper or website. 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?