



ISBN: 9780008332358

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Date of Publication: October 2020

The Forever Horse

By Stacy Gregg

Summary

An enchanting and inspiring stand-alone novel from the author of *The Princess and the Foal*.

Maisie has always loved horses. She is also a talented artist. When the opportunity arises for her to study in Paris, her two worlds collide. There, in the heart of the city, Maisie finds the childhood diary of famous horse artist, Rose Bonifait, and meets the beautiful black stallion, Claude.

As the two girls' stories emerge, tragedies unfold – both past and present – and Maisie realises that she can't begin to imagine life without her forever horse...

Key Learning Outcomes

ACELA1550, ACELA1553, ACELT1635, ACELT1771, ACELY1746

Themes

Art, Expression, Identity, Discovery, Friendship

Recommended Ages: 9+

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Before Reading

Genre

Bildungsroman or 'coming of age' texts are stories that describe an adolescent's movement toward adulthood, and their corresponding awakening to a new understanding of themselves and the world around them.

- Can you think of an example of a coming of age text (film, book, TV show, etc) that had an impact on you?
- Discuss as a class some of the issues that arise as young people move into adulthood. What are some of the common experiences, realisations, tensions and awakenings?
 - How does finding a passion come into conflict with the desires of parents, teachers or wider society?
 - What is challenging when confronting the adult world?
 - What are the moral challenges?
 - What can be the disappointments?
 - Why is it important to have an awareness of self, needs and external pressures?
- Write a 400-word story from the perspective of a teenager who has found a deep passion and love for art, music, craft, work or sport that causes a conflict with friends, teachers or a family member. Use verbs to create strong images. Include a symbol or metaphor.
- Write a 400-word reflection on why authors write about this period in the life of young people. What are some effective devices that authors use to engage a teenage audience?

Passions and Mentors

To realise our dreams and passions, we all need assistance. A mentor teaches and allows us to discover what is inside us all along. Mentors help us to bring our dreams to life.

- When you are reading the novel, think about all the different people that help Maisie bring her passions for horses and art to life. Think about the important role her father, Augustin, and Oscar and Nicole Bonifat play in helping her achieve her dreams.
- Do you have a brother, sister or parental figure who leads, supervises, encourages and warns you of dangers you may be unaware of? Think about what this person has given you in life.
 - Write a twenty-line poem about this person and what you have learned from them, and what you would miss if they were not in your life.

During Reading

The Importance of Setting

Setting is very important in novels, poetry and films. Authors choose settings very carefully because they add an extra dimension to a story. Think about the settings in the novel and how they add to the story.

- Why do you think the author set the book in Paris?
- Why are the Camargue and the Louvre significant?
- Think about how the characters and the different settings interact. What do we learn about the characters through their interaction with the various settings?
- Choose a character from a book, game or film that you've always wanted to know more about. Create a short comic imagining their life beyond the story you know them from.
- Think about your bedroom. Write a description of your room and use sensory details to build an emotionally engaging picture of it for a reader.
 - Describe what you can see, hear, taste, touch and smell. Be as specific as possible.
 - What are the details that are important to you?
 - What makes the room special?
 - Are there some things you don't like? Why not?
 - Inject a point of view, an opinion of how your room makes you feel. What does your room represent to you?
 - Is it a place in which you feel safe?
 - Think about what your reader will see in their mind's eye.
- Would you set a novel in your bedroom? Why or why not?
 - What would be the limitations?
 - What other elements would you need to make your novel interesting if you did set a story in your bedroom?

After Reading

Narrative Voice

The Forever Horse is told from two distinctive perspectives - Maisie and Rose. Why has the author chosen to use two first person perspectives to tell the story?

- Compare the narrative voices of Maisie in Chapter Three and Rose in Chapter Four. How do they differ and why?
- How do you know they are writing from different time periods? What are the clues?

Imagine you are a teenager in Paris, in the year 1852. Write the first paragraph of a diary entry. Write about something you are upset about. Select a sentence starter from below and add details so the reader knows the story is set in 1852.

1. Start with an adverb:
 - Hopefully ...
 - Fortunately ...
 - Unfortunately ...
 - Luckily ...
 - Unluckily ...

2. Or with a conversational tone – as if you were talking to a friend:
By the way ...
To tell you the truth ...
You will never believe it, but ...
To be honest ...
I don't care ...
I do care ...
 3. Or with a speculation or thought:
Perhaps I should have ...
I wonder if ...
Maybe ...
If only I had ...
- Is this novel more appealing to teenagers because the narrator is also a young person? What are the limitations of this device to tell the story?
 - Choose an event from your own life and write it as a diary entry and as a short story, using first or third person. Which one has the greatest emotional impact on the audience and why?

Descriptive Language

Beautiful descriptive writing creates vivid pictures in the minds of readers and provokes an emotional response. It is the foundation of engaging story telling.

Examine this descriptive passage from the novel:

He was a beautiful horse – deep chestnut with a flaxen mane and a thick honey-blond tail that flowed almost to the ground. There was one perfect white sock on his near hind leg and his haunches were muscled, but his limbs were delicate and his neck set perfectly into his elegant shoulders. As he reared up on his hind legs, he turned to look at me. His dark liquid-brown eye had such a soulful expression. (p. 13)

- What language devices does the author use to create a vivid picture?
- Using this passage as a model, write a description of an animal or person you dearly love. Use a simile and personification. Communicate what you love about the animal or person to your reader.

Essay/Short Answer Questions

1. Discuss why this is a coming of age novel.
2. What are Rose and Maisie's passions? Why does the pursuit of those passions create problems?
3. How does the author use setting and animals to convey the central themes of the novel?
4. What is a community and why is it important? How do Rose and Maisie build a sense of belonging and community?
5. Why does setting the story in France create numerous storytelling opportunities?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stacy Gregg began writing fictional novels about horses for children with *Mystic and the Midnight Ride* (2007), the first in her Pony Club Secrets series. Stacy has since written a number of books in the successful Pony Club Secrets and Pony Club Rivals series. She is a three-time winner of the Children's Choice Junior Fiction category of the New Zealand Post Book Awards for Children and Young Adults for her novels: *The Princess and the Foal* (2014), *The Island of Lost Horses* (2015) and *The Girl Who Rode the Wind* (2016).