

## These notes are for:

- Ages 10+
- Middle years
- Years 5-8

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- History

## Example of:

- Fiction
- Historical narrative
- Multiple narrators

## Values:

- Care and compassion\*
- Responsibility\*
- Respect\*
- Courage
- Independence

\* From Values for Australian Schooling document

## Themes:

- History – the *Titanic*
- Family
- Emotional and physical journeys
- Sacrifice
- Romance
- Secrecy
- Independence
- Grief and bereavement

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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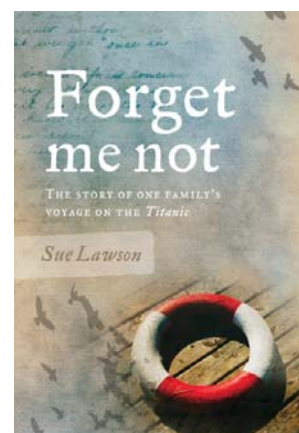
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## Forget Me Not

### Forget Me Not

Author: Sue Lawson  
ISBN: 9781742032108  
ARRP: \$16.95  
NZRRP: \$18.99  
Pages: 256  
March 2012  
Imprint: Black Dog Books



## Synopsis

*Forget Me Not* is an enthralling novel based on the real-life tragedy of the *Titanic*. The book is distinguished by Sue Lawson's characteristically deft and vivid prose, with the splendour of this "unsinkable ship" and the horror of its final hours skilfully recreated from two characters' perspectives.

Eve Gilmore and her brother, Thomas, are emigrating to America on the *Titanic* with their parents and younger sister, Bea. Thomas is immediately captivated by the wonders of the ship and the excitement of shipboard life. Eve, however, misses her friends back in England and is stifled by her mother's cold attitude towards her and her efforts to make her behave like a lady. She finds some solace in her friendship with Evelyn Marsden, an Australian nurse and stewardess, and is also distracted by her brother's new friend, the free-spirited Hugh Worthington from America. But she is unable to shake off a continual sense of unease and is haunted by visions of lifeboats on an empty sea. And when an iceberg appears one night, her worst fears are realised ...

## Author Information

**Sue Lawson** lives in country Victoria with her husband, daughter and Milly the cavoodle, who thinks she's human. Sue grew up on a farm and spent most of her time reading, writing, obsessing about football, listening to her father and grandfather's stories and avoiding working with the cattle. She has worked as a teacher, radio announcer and producer, an attendant at the MCG, swimming teacher, shop assistant, nightclub DJ and babysitter. She now spends most of her time doing what she's passionate about – writing, reading and being with young people. Sue's books include the Diva series, young adult novels *Dare You, After*, *Finding Darcy*, *Pan's Whisper* and the award-winning *Allie McGregor's True Colours*.

More information about Sue can be found at her website,  
[www.suelawson.com.au](http://www.suelawson.com.au)

## How to use these notes:

These notes provide a variety of discussion questions and activities that can be used with *Forget Me Not*. Please select according to the level, learning style and targeted outcomes of your students.

## Sue Lawson on *Forget Me Not*

*Forget Me Not* began as a conversation between then-Black Dog Books publisher Andrew Kelly, editor Melissa Keil and I. After visiting “*Titanic*, The Artefact Exhibition” at the Melbourne Museum, I popped into the Black Dog Books office to talk about the progress of my young adult novel, *Dare You*.

Andrew, Melissa and I ended up discussing the exhibition and comparing the fate of the passengers we’d been allocated. Everyone who attended was given a boarding pass with the name and details of a real *Titanic* passenger. At the end of the exhibition, you were able to search the list of passengers to see if yours lived or died. My passenger was Mrs Amin S. Jerwan (Marie Marthe Thuillard), a 23-year-old, second-class passenger returning home to her husband in New York after visiting her family in Switzerland. She survived the disaster.

During the discussion, Andrew asked if I’d like to write about the *Titanic*, which of course I did. When I left, my brain was filled with a jumble of ideas. I decided as little was written about second class, I would focus on that and would incorporate one of the Australians on board – Miss Evelyn Marsden – into the story. Thomas, Eve, Hugh and their families are a product of my imagination, but are a combination of many, many stories I read about passengers aboard RMS *Titanic*.

So much has been written about the *Titanic* – fact, fiction and “eye witness accounts” – that some details conflict others. My biggest challenge was deciding which details were true for my story and characters.

I loved the whole process of researching and writing *Forget Me Not*, though I’m sure my family and friends weren’t as impressed with the research when I offered bits of *Titanic* trivia – constantly!

## In the Classroom

### Style and Structure

- Sue Lawson tells her story using a parallel narrative structure, shifting between the perspective of Eve Gilmore and her brother, Thomas. How does this structure help absorb the reader in the novel? Consider the way the two narrative voices provide a broader perspective of events and characters.
- Lawson uses the first-person narrative voice when writing from Eve’s perspective, and the third person when writing from Thomas’s. How does this influence your ability to connect with each character? Why might Lawson have used these different narrative styles? Consider in particular the fate of each character at the end of the novel. What other differences do you notice in the voices of the two protagonists? Think about sentence structure, descriptive language, vocabulary, etc.
- Each chapter narrated by Eve opens with an entry from her autograph book. Discuss the role of these entries in highlighting key themes in the book and helping to bring a range of characters to life for the reader. What eventually happens to many of the people who signed Eve’s book? Does this make the entries seem more poignant, giving a personal face to many of the people who drowned when the ship sunk?
- Look at the entry by Thomas at the start of chapter 48. When you read this, what expectations did you have about the last chapters of the book? How does his entry relate to the title of the novel? What important message does it emphasise to the reader?
- A “string of unsettling images from my dreams flashed through my head – black seas, tiny boats, cries in the night, panic, so much panic.” (32) “Foreshadowing” is a literary device where an author hints at an event that will occur later in the text. What examples of foreshadowing can you find in the novel?
- Think especially about how Eve’s premonitions of disaster are reinforced by her use of language relating to water and drowning. For instance, “The words hit me like a wave of icy water, and were just as chilling” (94). How does this technique help increase tension for the reader? Would this technique have been as effective if the reader were not already familiar with the outcome of the *Titanic* voyage?
- Analyse the way Lawson uses language techniques to create atmosphere and bring scenes to life for the reader. Techniques to discuss include:
  - visual imagery, e.g. “Before me the ocean was smooth and the sky still black and covered with stars.” (160)
  - auditory imagery (imagery that evokes sound), e.g. “The noise around him was sickening – moans, screams, gasps and sobs. More screams. So much screaming.” (209-10)
  - tactile imagery (imagery that relates to feeling), e.g. “Icy hands seemed to drag him to the bottom of the ocean once again.” (214)
  - strong verbs, e.g. “The *Titanic* groaned and creaked, as though in pain. It slipped and lurched beneath our feet, wrenching my hand from Hugh’s.” (189)
  - similes, e.g. “my heart felt like a lump of ice.” (180)
  - metaphor, e.g. “What stood before me was a grey and white monster waiting to take me far from home.” (14)
  - personification, e.g. “Water stabbed his skin, eyes and ears with sharp fingers.” (210)
  - dialogue, e.g. “I’m sorry, madam. My orders are women and children first.” (178)
  - short sentences, e.g. “Two words became clear./ Move./ Swim.” (209)
- Did you expect the book to end the way it did? Why or why not? Did you feel the ending was satisfying?

## History

- What information do we learn about the *Titanic* from the novel? Consider the structure and operations of the ship, its route, reputation, the facilities onboard, the passengers and what happened on its final days.
- While *Forget Me Not* explores an actual historical event – the sinking of the *Titanic* – the book is primarily a work of fiction. Identify the elements of the text which can be viewed as historically accurate and those where the author has used creative licence to invent or embellish. How reliable do you think this novel is in presenting a realistic portrait of the voyage of the *Titanic*?
- Listen to accounts from actual *Titanic* survivors at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/titanic/>. What similarities and differences are there between the experiences of the real-life survivors and the characters in the book? Which has given you a stronger understanding of the tragedy overall: the novel or the survivor's testimonies? Why do you think this is?
- Read the factual information at the end of the book about Australian passengers onboard the *Titanic*. Choose one passenger and research their life on the internet. Write a monologue based on their life and perform it for the class. You may like to add interest to your performance by wearing period costume or incorporating a prop.
- Research the *Titanic* on the internet. Some useful websites include:
  - <http://www.historyonthenet.com/Titanic/titanicmain.htm>
  - <http://www.titanicstory.com/>
  - <http://www.squidoo.com/Harland-and-Wolffs-Titanic#module10413899>
  - <http://www.discovery.com/guides/history/titanic/Titanic/titanic.html>
- On a map of the world, chart the *Titanic*'s journey from Belfast to its final resting place.
- Write a news article about the sinking of the *Titanic*. Make sure you include the main information in the opening paragraph (who, what, where, when and why) and use language which is a mixture of persuasive and informative. You may like to include quotes from "survivors" in your article. For instance, Mrs Gilmore, Eve or Evelyn.
- Create a poster or brochure advertising the maiden voyage of the *Titanic*. Make sure you use persuasive language techniques which make the trip sound appealing to the audience and encourage them to book a ticket. For instance, positive descriptive language, imperatives, rhetorical questions, cliches, inclusive language and direct appeals.
- A heated debate surrounds the question of whether the wreck of the *Titanic* should be salvaged. Many people claim that taking artefacts from the wreck is akin to robbing a grave and it should be left alone out of respect for the dead, but others disagree, claiming it is an important part of history and should be preserved. Discuss this issue in small groups, then after you have formulated an opinion, have a class debate over whether or not the *Titanic* should be raised.

- 2012 marks the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the *Titanic*. As a class, discuss why you think people continue to be fascinated by this great tragedy. What important lessons or messages can we take from this event?

## Context

- "Ladies should occupy themselves with genteel pursuits, like sewing, reading and taking tea with friends ... But this was 1912 and I wanted to be more than genteel!" (73) In what way was the experience of being female different in 1912 to what it is today? Think particularly about freedoms and expectations. What would you have found challenging if you were a girl living at this time?
- What impact did gender play in the outcome of the novel? Think in particular about the expectation that "women and children" would enter the lifeboats first.
- How else does Eve and Thomas's world both resemble and differ from our world today? Some ideas to consider include work, fashion and style, transport, attitude towards social class, manners and etiquette. Draw a Venn diagram showing these similarities and differences.

## Exploring Character and Theme

- In small groups, create a character chart for a character from the novel. (Ensure that the groups focus on a range of characters so that all major characters are explored.) In the centre of the page, draw a picture of the character, then around it write:
  - factual information about them such as their age, family background, job, hobbies, interests, ambitions, etc.
  - how they change over the course of the novel
  - their relationships with other characters
  - adjectives to describe their personality
  - quotes which give insight into their character (try to include both things they say and things other characters say about them).

Present your work to the rest of the class, then, when other groups are presenting, take notes to ensure you have information on all characters in the book.

- Develop symbols to represent each of the main characters in the book. Write an explanation of how these symbols reflect your understanding of each character.
- Choose a key event in the book and rewrite it from the perspective of another character. Some possibilities might include Bea, Hugh, Mr Gilmore or Mrs Gilmore. Focus particularly on their thoughts and feelings, rather than simply recounting events.
- As a class, analyse a series of historical obituaries from the National Library of Australia Trove database (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>). Identify their purpose, structure and the language register used. Afterwards, write an obituary for one of the

- In chapter 12, Eve meets Miss Evelyn Marsden, a first-class stewardess and nurse. What is the significance of them having similar names? What role does Evelyn play in Eve's development as a character and on her fate in the novel? Evelyn was an actual passenger on the *Titanic*. Why do you think Lawson has chosen to include her in the novel? What other characters in the novel could be based on real people? (You may like to use Google to confirm your guesses.)
- "It was as though jumbled pieces of a puzzle had slipped into place. Mother's sadness, her fussing over Bea". (102) What is your initial response to Mrs Gilmore in the novel? Does her behaviour towards Eve and Bea at first seem harsh or overly controlling? Do you become more sympathetic towards her when you learn about her secret? How do you think her attitude towards Eve and Bea will change in the future? Explain your answer.
- Eve's father counsels her, "There is nothing wrong with feeling fearful, Eve. Just don't let fear overtake you." (35) In what way does Eve display courage in the book, in spite of her apprehensions? How do other characters in the book show heroism?
- Why do you think the novel is called *Forget Me Not*? In your opinion is this a good title for the novel? Why or why not? Imagine that the publishers were unhappy with the title of the book and had asked you to come up with an alternative. What would you choose? Use a design program such as Publisher or InDesign to create a new cover for the book featuring this title. Consider how you can use visual techniques such as font, colour, composition, framing and symbolism to communicate the key themes and setting of the book. Present your work to the class.
- The final words of the book are, "As long as you help me." (232) What does this suggest about Eve and Hugh's future? What do you think will happen to Eve a year after the end of the novel? Five years? Ten years? Write an epilogue to the book which takes place when Eve is an adult.

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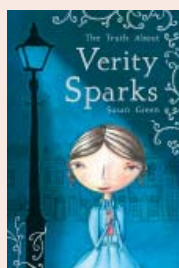


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# Sue Lawson

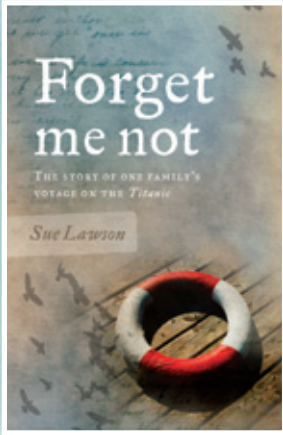
# Forget me not

## CHARACTER PROFILE

Choose a main character from *Forget Me Not*.

Draw a picture of them in the centre of the life ring then fill out key information about them under the relevant heading.

Cut the life ring out and glue it into your workbook.



**Character's name**

**Factual Information** (e.g. age, family background, interests, ambitions)

**Adjectives to describe their personality**

**How they change throughout the novel**

**Relationships with other characters**

**Key quotes illustrating their character**