

Classroom Resources



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The Girls Who Changed the World: Ming and Flo Fight for the Future

Jackie French

BOOK SUMMARY

An empowering and exhilarating look at the girls who went before us, and the way they shaped the world.

Twelve-year-old Ming Qong is convinced that girls must have changed the world, even if they are rarely mentioned in history books.

So when Ming gets the chance to go back in time, she imagines herself changing destinies from a glittering palace or an explorer's ship. Instead, she ends up in Australia in 1898, living a tough life as Flo Watson on a drought-stricken farm.

Luckily, Ming is rescued by Flo's Aunt McTavish. Wealthy Aunt McTavish belongs to Louisa Lawson's Suffragist Society, who are desperately and courageously fighting for women's rights. And Ming is determined to get involved, to make a difference.

But change is never easy, so how can one girl change the world?

From one of Australia's favourite writers comes an inspiring new series for all the young people who will, one day, change the world.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ACELT1608
- ACELT1613
- ACHASSK108
- ACHASSK135

THEMES

- Gender
- Power
- Resilience
- Discrimination

Recommended Reading Ages: 10+

Resources Created For: Upper Primary

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Classroom Resources

Before Reading

1. Discuss the cover art and use the various images to predict some events of the story.
 - a) Why is the woman carrying a purple/green/white flag?
 - b) Why is the central figure depicted with two 'halves'?
 - c) Can students make a guess as to the setting?
2. Jackie French's historical books are often inspired by her own family history. As a class discuss what students know of their own family history.
 - a) Are there any events or people that would make an interesting story?
 - b) Why do writers often use their own experiences or familial history as the basis of their work?
3. Establish a class Learning Wall to record reflections, questions and answers, relevant information, quotes, examples of writing techniques and speculations.
 - a) Start with students' responses and speculation about the novel based on the cover.
 - b) Encourage students to put up any questions they may have both before and during reading, and to contribute responses to those questions as they read *Ming and Flo Fight for the Future* and learn more about context and events of the novel.

During Reading

Narrative structure and technique

1. This is the type of historical fiction described as 'time slip'. Often there is a talisman or portal to facilitate the character's time travel. Jackie French chooses a different method. Write a paragraph that describes how she shifts Ming from one time into another.
2. French is highly skilled with the 'show, don't tell' technique to provide her readers with a sense of time and place. As you read, make note of various examples of this for the Learning Wall. There are many that relate to food, clothing, architecture, transport, social expectations etc. Discuss and explain how these evoke the setting. You may like to use these examples as a starting point:
 - c) "young ladies wait until food is offered," p. 94
 - d) "helped her into lace-edged white bloomers that hung down to her knees, a camisole, which was like an embroidered silk singlet, black silk stockings held up with buttons above the knee and a strange garment of bone and lace", p. 130
 - e) "The buildings along the Quay were grimy yellow sandstone and red-brick wool stores, Goldsbrough Mort & Co's Warehouse, then Pitt, Son & Badgery. The peninsula to Ming's left held a low-walled fort with a small square tower topped by the British flag instead of the Opera House." p. 204

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3. Creative writing exercise: use stimulus pictures of nineteenth-century Australia to prompt students' composing a piece that demonstrates 'show, don't tell' to establish setting. Suggested sites for stimulus material:
 - a) [National Archives: Victorian Food and Drink](#)
 - b) [State Library of New South Wales: The Dictionary of Sydney](#)
4. Find an authentic recipe for a dish that might be served in Aunt McTavish's home, write it out and illustrate OR create a menu for a whole formal meal and illustrate.
5. Choose one of these topics to research and present your findings to the class:
 - a) The Sydney Lending Library
 - b) The Raggedy Schools
 - c) Dust Storms
 - d) The Dawn Magazine
 - e) Referendums
 - f) Child labour

Themes

Suffrage and the Suffragettes

While Emmeline Pankhurst from England is possibly the best-known suffragette, we also had many strong women advocating in Australia. [This National Museum of Australia short video](#) is an excellent introduction to women's suffrage in Australia and also has useful classroom resources.

While Louisa Lawson, who figures in this narrative, was an accomplished writer, poet, publisher, suffragist and feminist, she has almost been entirely eclipsed by her son, Henry, in our history. Yet she made huge contributions to Australian society. [Read through this article from the Australian Dictionary of Biography](#) and other sources to identify significant facts from her life. Create a fact file on Louisa Lawson on the Learning Wall.

Feminism

Closely tied to the Suffrage movement, there are numerous aspects of feminism explored in *Ming and Flo Fight for the Future*. Students can choose one to investigate further and present their findings to the class, and/or add them to the Learning Wall:

- a) Nineteenth-century bicycling and women
- b) Rational Clothing movement
- c) Social reform/equality rights for women: work, marriage, divorce and custody of children, property ownership,
- d) Education
- e) Electoral rights
- f) International Women's Day and Women's History Month

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Federation

There were many different reasons why people proposed the colonies of Australia should federate and unite as one country, some of them very practical like the need for a consistent rail gauge and some more idealised like the need to forge a sense of national identity. The process of federation took many years and required many different things to happen, including Constitutional Conventions and referendums in each state.

1. What are the reasons presented in favour of Federation in the novel?
2. Why was Louisa Lawson, a passionate feminist, particularly in favour of Federation?
3. Using [this section of the National Museum of Australia](#) website as a starting point, create a timeline of the process of Federation in Australia for the Learning Wall.

Life in Nineteenth-Century Rural Australia

1. Flo's farm is a 'selection'. What does this mean?
 - a) What were some of the dangers and difficulties faced by selectors?
 - b) What were the implications for health and mortality rates for the selectors?
2. Research the rabbit problem in Australia. How did it happen?
 - a) What were the consequences?
 - b) How was it addressed?
 - c) Has the problem been solved?
3. Investigate the camel traders of remote areas. Who were they?
 - a) What was their contribution to Australian rural life?
 - b) What happened to end their business?
 - c) What did that mean for the camels?

Language and literacy

1. Use the Learning Wall to explore and record the use of noun groups/phrases and adjectival groups/phrases used in *Ming and Flo Fight for the Future* to describe more fully a person, place, thing or idea.
2. On the Learning Wall make connections between the fiction narrative and non-fiction information e.g., food, clothing or transport using quotes from the novel.
3. Identify the literary devices used in the examples on the table below:

<u>Word or Phrase</u>	<u>Page #</u>	<u>Literary device</u>
back of the black stump	99	
[he had accumulated] a tidy amount	180	
[Cook says] I burn water	193	

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worked in a puddle of light	194	
moving like a vast colony of ants from the ferries	205	
[turning the sky] a sifted grey colour	205	
seagulls swooped	207	
waves swoosh	207	
A rose for a rose	210	
buildin' castles in the sky	219	

After Reading

Discussion questions

1. Did Federation achieve what those who engineered it, and the women in this novel, hoped it would?
2. How have social conditions improved for women and girls between the time in which Flo lived and today?
3. What do you think would be the best – and the worst – thing about living in nineteenth-century Australia? Use evidence from the novel to explain your answer
4. What is the 'Butterfly Effect'? How does this relate to Herstory's explanation to Ming about giving away the cow?
5. What do you think the author's intention is with this novel?
 - a) What does Jackie French invite the reader to consider?
 - b) What one question would you like to ask the author about the book?

Activities

1. Create a one-page summary of *Ming and Flo Fight for the Future* and put these together for a gallery walk.
 - a) Basic guidelines for the one-page summary: the summary is limited to one page (usually A4 but could be larger) with little to no white space. Students are encouraged to fill their spaces with their knowledge and reflections, use colour and creativity. Title and author are always included.
2. Compose a literary interview. Students work in pairs to write questions and answers for an important character in the novel and then present to the rest of the class.

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3. Perform the novel.
 - a) Allocate sections of *Ming and Flo Fight for the Future* to pairs or small groups so that the whole novel (or key scenes) is covered.
 - b) In their groups students script their section of the novel for performance.
 - c) Allow students time to rehearse.
 - d) Ask students to perform the novel for another class or the school.

About the Author

Jackie French AM is an award-winning writer, wombat negotiator, the 2014–2015 Australian Children's Laureate and the 2015 Senior Australian of the Year. In 2016 Jackie became a Member of the Order of Australia for her contribution to children's literature and her advocacy for youth literacy. She is regarded as one of Australia's most popular children's authors and writes across all genres — from picture books, history, fantasy, ecology and sci-fi to her much loved historical fiction for a variety of age groups. 'A book can change a child's life. A book can change the world' was the primary philosophy behind Jackie's two-year term as Laureate.

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