

Glory

Author: Fifi Colston

Synopsis

Florence Bright is sick of being average. Girls like her never seem to get into the spot light or win awards. Not like Emma Harrison. Emma's parents are rich. She is good at everything and seems to have it all. When Emma wins the IT award at prize giving - an award that Flo knows she deserves, she decides enough is enough. She plots to bring Emma down a peg or two.

Flo decides to enlist her brother Jake to help her with her plan. Jake dislikes Emma because she belittled him on the high school open day . Flo tells Jake that she wants him to befriend Emma and try and convince her to invite him and his family to her annual School's Out party night , which features a spectacular fireworks display. Jake likes this idea because he has an unhealthy fascination with anything flammable. In actual fact, Flo wants Jake to be rejected by Emma, so that he will want revenge and be willing to help her with her plan to get back at her.

Things don't exactly go according to plan when Jake and Emma become friends and she invites him to her party. As a member of Jake's family, Flo is also invited and gets to see how the other half live for an evening. An unfortunate incident involving an exploding plant ends the evening on a rather sour note, with Jake getting the blame. Flo knows better however. She noticed another girl from school Andrea hanging around at the time of the explosion and thinks that maybe Andrea's jealousy of Emma and Jake's relationship may have been her motivation.

With Andrea as an unexpected ally Flo carries on with her plan. She tries to orchestrate an "accident" involving her cat Boris and an innocent fantail so that Emma won't be able to dance the lead in the performance of Swan Lake. Hopefully with Emma out of the way Flo's friend Natasha can step into the breach. She doesn't get a chance to carry out her plan however, because Emma never turns up for the performance. She simply disappears, causing her friends and family deep concern for her welfare.

Flo has been keeping a blog detailing her antics surrounding Emma. When Jake finds it he dubs her into police and suddenly Flo is a person of interest in a missing person's case. She begins to feel bad. What if it is her fault that Emma

has disappeared? The only way she can atone for her behaviour is to find Emma before it is too late.

Text Type

Glory is a fast-paced novel that is written in an easy-to-read, colloquial style. The novel is written by New Zealand author Fifi Colston and many readers will be familiar with the various settings described around Oamaru.

The story is told from first person point of view and the narrator of the story is Florence Bright, a girl described by her mother as "bog-standard average; middle of the road". Flo is an extremely likeable narrator. Her account of events is often witty and humorous. Readers will be able to relate to her belief if you are average you are often neglected or over-looked by others. Flo believes that in order for her friend Natasha and her to gain the recognition they deserve, Emma needs to be taken out of the picture. Flo's attempts to accomplish this make hilarious reading, as does the sub-plot of Flo's mother's mystery romance.

The reader is first alerted to the fact that Emma is not exactly what she seems when she befriends Jake. Maybe she is not as stuck-up and aloof as people think she is. As the story progresses Flo too learns that Emma's life may not be perfect. She is forced to participate in ballet and other activities by her parents, and doesn't actually enjoy these activities. She also suffers from diabetes, a condition that can be life-threatening if not managed properly.

Flo's experiences with Emma teach her an important lesson about herself - just because you are ordinary doesn't mean that you can't be extraordinary sometimes.

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 3- 23), Chapters 3- 7 (pp. 24- 88) and Chapters 8- Epilogue (pp. 89- 158).

During the shared sessions have students make predictions and infer information. Encourage them to ask questions to clarify their understanding of ideas and characters presented in the novel. Whenever possible have students relate Flo's situation to their own experiences and encourage them to empathise with her. Students should note how Flo's character develops and changes as the story progresses and what she learns from her experiences. Have students identify the main themes presented in the novel such as the idea that not everything is what it seems, that even "average" people can shine, and the importance of family.

They should focus particularly on the influence that parents' expectations can have on their children.

Introducing the Novel

Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- Who is the narrator of the story?
- Why doesn't she win awards?
- What does she plan to do to rectify this situation? Who do you think the "accident" Flo is trying to arrange might happen to?
- Have you ever won an award at a school prize giving? How did you feel getting up on stage in front of your family, teachers and peers?
- Have you ever missed out on an award that you think you deserved to win? How did this make you feel?
- Do "average" people often get hard done by? Why/why not?

Teacher reads Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 3- 23) aloud to the class. Students follow along in their books.

Comprehension Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 3- 23)

- How old is Flo? Who does she live with?
- Who are Emma and Thomas Harrison? How does Flo feel about them?
- Why does Flo think that "it's not always easy being me"?
- Which prize does Natasha think that Flo will win? What prize is Natasha hoping for?
- Why doesn't Flo's mum attend the ceremony? Where is her dad?
- Why don't Flo and Natasha want to win the Cunningham Cup?
- Describe Flo's feelings as she waits to hear who has won the IT cup. How does she feel when Emma Harrison is announced as the winner?
- What does Ms Clarke tell Flo about why Emma was awarded the prize?
- Who does Flo find in the toilets? Why is she so upset?
- What part is Emma playing in the ballet recital? Why does Natasha resent her?
- Why does Flo decide not to tell Natasha about the plan she is formulating?

Discussion

- What do we learn about Flo and her family in the first two chapters?
- What is the Bright motto of resignation? How do you think Flo feels when her mother says that she doesn't have a chance of winning a prize?
- Should Flo have won the IT prize? Why/why not?
- How do you think Flo plans to "murder Emma's chances"?

Students read Chapters 3- 7 (pp. 24- 88) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 3- 7 (pp. 24- 88)

- How does Ms Clarke exact her revenge on Flo?
- Why is Flo's nickname "Chip"?
- How does Flo convince Jake to help her with her plan? Why doesn't Jake like Emma?
- Why is Jake so keen to be invited to Emma's party?
- Why does Flo believe that Emma won't pay any attention to Jake's attempts to befriend her?
- Who does Flo bump into on the way to the fish and chip shop? Why doesn't she like Thomas Harrison? What information does she give Flo about him?
- Why does Flo decide to set up a blog about her plan?
- What does Flo find in her mother's wardrobe?
- What does Flo see at the dairy that could seriously disrupt her plan?
- Why do Flo and her mum need to take Boris to the vet? Describe what happens when they get there.
- Why is Flo surprised when she learns that Emma has invited the whole family to her party?
- Describe the Harrison's house. How do Emma's dad and Flo's mum know each other? Describe Emma's mother. How does she make it clear that she doesn't want Flo's family at the party?
- Who invited Andrea to the party?
- What happens to Mrs Harrison's Topiary bush? Who does she blame for the explosion? Who does Flo think caused the explosion?
- What conclusion does Flo come to about her mother's boyfriend?
- Why is Natasha so upset with Flo when she rings her up? Why does Natasha hang up on her?
- What is Flo's new plan for ensuring that Emma can't dance the lead in the play? What are the possible flaws in her plan?
- How does Natasha act when Flo meets her backstage at the ballet? Why is Flo so pleased to hear that Emma has her own dressing room? What happens when Flo lets the bird go? Why is Paora Douglas upset when he sees the fantail inside?
- What shocking news does Belinda announce to the crowd?

Discussion

- Flo justifies her plan by saying that it is "all for the greater good". Do you agree with her? Why/why not?
- What do you think Emma likes about Jake?
- Why do you think Andrea is so interested in Jake's relationship with Emma? What motivation does she have for blowing up the plant?
- Do you believe in superstitions? Why/why not? Maori believe that a fantail inside is an omen of death. What other superstitions have you heard of?
- What do you think has happened to Emma?

Students read Chapters 8- Epilogue (pp. 89- 158) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 8- Epilogue (pp. 89- 158)

- Who plays the lead in the performance?
- Why does Flo feel responsible for Emma's disappearance?
- Why is Flo so surprised at the message that pops up on her blog? What does she choose to do about the message?
- Where does Natasha invite Flo to go the next day? What does Flo find tucked under the phone?
- Why is Jake worried about Emma?
- What does Flo find on the beach? What does Pippa find out when she rings the Harrisons?
- Why does Pippa think that Emma may have run away? What do you think she means when she says that "things aren't always what they seem"?
- Why is Jake so angry with Flo when she gets home from the beach? Why does he call the police? Who told Jake about the blog? What do you think her motivation was?
- Why do you think Flo's mum has watery eyes after Flo explains Project Glory?
- What do you think the significance of the rat dropping on Flo's shoe might be?
- How does Flo's mum react when she learns that Flo thought she was having an affair with Mr Harrison?
- Why do the police take Jake's phone?
- What interesting information does Jake give Flo about Emma's mum?
- What does Jake tell Flo about Billy Wilkinson's car? What is Flo's theory about how the rat droppings got to the beach? Why doesn't Natasha agree with her?

- Why was Natasha asked to be in the Christmas parade? Why does Flo think she is being underhanded by accepting? Why do the friends argue?
- What does Flo find out about Emma from Billy? Where did Billy get the costume from?
- What does Flo say to Andrea that upsets her?
- Why does Jake feel responsible for Emma's disappearance?
- Where do Flo, Jake and Andrea search for Emma?
- Why does Flo agree to go to the Christmas parade?
- Who does Jake suggest that the reporter speak to?
- How does Flo figure out that Emma is hiding in the reserve? Why doesn't Jake go with her to look?
- What does Thomas tell the reporter about Jake?
- How does Emma let Flo know that she is there? Where does Flo find her? What is wrong with her? Who does Flo summon to help? Why is Flo so impressed with her entrance?
- How does Natasha handle the situation?
- Describe the reaction of the townspeople when Flo and Natasha return to town. Who is waiting for Flo in town? Why is she so surprised to see him?
- What caused Emma to get hurt?
- What does Flo believe Andrea's motivation for getting involved in her plan was? Why doesn't she tell her brother?
- What present does Flo's dad give her? How does Flo react to the gift? Who is her mother's boyfriend?
- How do Flo and Natasha get recognised for their brave efforts? What announcement does Mr Harrison make during the ceremony? How does Natasha get rewarded by Mr Harrison? What suggestion does Councillor Ryan put to Flo?

Discussion

- What lessons do you think that Flo has learnt from her experiences?
- In what ways does the novel develop the theme that things aren't always what they seem? What presumptions or judgements does Flo make about Emma that turn out not to be true?
- How do you think things will be different for Emma and her family from now on?
- What do you think the author's message might be?

Activities

Writing - Write a letter to a friend explaining what you liked about the novel and why you would recommend them to read it.

Writing - Rewrite a chapter of the novel from Emma Harrison's point of view.

Agony Aunt - Imagine that you are Emma and write a letter to an agony aunt. Your letter should detail the difficulties you are having dealing with your illness and your parents' expectations, and how you feel about them. Next adopt the role of agony aunt. Write a reply to Emma's letter offering her advice on her problems.

Static Image - Design a poster advertising Glory that could be displayed in your school library.

Writing - Write an alternative ending for the novel.

Performance - Choose a section from the story to develop into a script. Remember to include names of characters and stage directions. Practice your play and present it to the class.

Character Analysis - On a large piece of paper draw a picture of Florence Bright. On one side of the picture list all of Flo's positive characteristics and attributes, on the other list her negative characteristics.

Plot - Design a story board that shows 15 important events in the story in the order that they occur. For each event include an illustration and a brief summary about what happens.

Theme - Identify an important theme in the story and design a static image that depicts it. Include quotes and images from the story to back up your ideas.

Monologue - Create a monologue for Flo in an important part of the novel. What is she thinking and feeling in that moment? Why?

Epilogue - Write an epilogue for the story. What is Flo doing now? How is Emma's relationship with her parents?

Notes written by Vicki Ladd