

CHRISTINE
BALINT



ISBN 9781922267610 (print) ISBN 9781922598363 (digital)

Teacher resource created by Dr Kate Bricknell

Contents

Teacher Information

Key Curriculum Areas	2
Textual Requirements Met	2
Australian Curriculum Links	2
NSW Textual Concepts	2
Thematic Concerns:	2

Connecting to Text

Meet the Author

Visit: Christine Balint Writer	3
Examine the Cover	3
Investigate the context of setting	3

Connecting to Self

Reflective writing	3
--------------------	---

Chapter 1

Predicting	5
Visualising	5
Questioning	5
Connecting	5
Writing Task:	5

Chapter 2

Visualising	5
Predicting	5
Questioning	5

Chapter 3

Questioning	6
Connecting	6

Chapter 4

Connecting	6
Questioning	6
Syntax and Punctuation	6
Vocabulary	6

Chapter 5

Visualising	7
Predicting	7

Chapter 6

Questioning	7
Writing	7

Chapter 7

Focus on setting	7
------------------	---

Chapter 8

Connecting	7
------------	---

Chapter 9 and 10

Predicting	8
------------	---

Chapter 11

Questioning	8
-------------	---

Chapter 12

Summarising	8
Reflecting	8

Extended Questions and activities

Teacher Information

The questions are designed for discussion or written answers. Hyperlinks are active if you are viewing the pdf.

Questions are aligned to *Super 6 Comprehension*.

There is significant potential for a cross-curriculum study with music and/or art.

Key Curriculum Areas

English: Middle to Upper Secondary

Textual Requirements Met

Fiction

Cultural, social and gender perspectives

Texts about the past

Australian Curriculum Links

Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts ([ACELT1633](#))

- exploring and reflecting on representations of values (for example love, freedom, integrity) in literature drawn from cultures and times different from the students' own
- exploring and reflecting on personal understanding of the world and human experience, interpreted in literature drawn from cultures and times different from the students' own

Analyse texts from familiar and unfamiliar contexts, and discuss and evaluate their content and the appeal of an individual author's literary style ([ACELT1636](#))

NSW Textual Concepts

Character.....Perspective

Theme.....Code and Convention

NarrativeUnderstanding

Thematic Concerns:

Gender roles

Social class

The power of a passion

Individuality

Overcoming adversity

Finding your own pathway

Expectations – of you and by you

Importance of goals and dreams

This novel offers a powerful mentor text for developing imaginative writing. It also offers opportunity to develop analytic writing, persuasive writing, and discursive writing skills.

The questions in this Teacher's Guide are designed to be completed as the students read the novella rather than after reading the text. The reading may be as a class, individually, in groups or pairs. The length of the text makes it an ideal opportunity for students to hear the text read aloud as well as to practise their oral reading fluency.

Connecting to Text

View [‘Water Music’ Book Trailer - YouTube](#)

Meet the Author

Christine Balint’s first novel, *The Salt Letters*, was shortlisted for the *The Australian /Vogel’s Literary Award* and subsequently published by Allen & Unwin. Her second novel, *Ophelia’s Fan*, was internationally released in 2004. Christine’s work has been published to critical acclaim in Australia, The United States, Germany and Italy. She is currently developing a body of work set in eighteenth-century Venice.

Christine has a PhD in Creative Arts from The University of Melbourne and taught for seven years in RMIT’s Graduate Writing Program. She currently teaches part-time in the Creative Writing Program at The University of Melbourne. Christine lives on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria with her husband and two children.



Visit: [Christine Balint | Writer](#)

Read about the author and begin to compose a list of questions that you could ask her if you were to talk to her. Continue to develop this list as you read the novel. When you are finished the novel, prepare a shared list of questions. Can anyone answer these questions from the evidence in the text? How could you find answers to your questions?

Examine the Cover

1. Explain the quotation on the front cover. What does this quotation suggest about what themes the novel will explore?
2. What do the colours on the cover suggest? What predictions about the text does this colour palette evoke?
3. What does the font choice suggest? What predictions about the text does this font choice evoke?

Investigate the Context Of Setting

Teachers may wish to look at [Vanessa M. Tonelli’ thesis, Women and Music in the Venetian Ospedali](#).

1. Where is Venice?
2. What was 18th-century Venice like for those who were wealthy? What was it like for those who were poor?
3. What were the *Venetian ospedali*?
4. Explore the website [Life at the Ospedali – Women’s Chorus Manuscripts from the Venetian Ospedali \(rampages.us\)](#) Create a travel blog persuading people to visit and explore the Venetian Ospedali.

Connecting to Self

Reflective Writing

Do you have a passion? Is there something that you love to do that brings you great joy or contentment? Is there something that you think about when you do not have to think about it, but your mind goes to that thing anyway? If you do not have a passion as yet, do you know someone who does?

- What is the passion?
- Why is it important to you (or the person with the passion)?
- What can you (or the person with the passion) do to pursue your passion?

As you read the novella, fill in the table below:

Purpose of the novella	Audience for the novella
Context of the novella	Values of the novella

Chapter 1

Predicting

When and where is the story set? How do you know?

What was Lucietta's life like up until the age of 16? How will this impact her values as she grows up?

Visualising

You are making a film version of the opening scenes of the novel. Describe how you would create the sense of poverty and the juxtaposition with the Convent. Use the information in the text to support your ideas. Remember to describe the camera angles, musical score, and lighting.

Questioning

1. How do you know that the bedspread is so precious? What does the bedspread symbolise? Why is Lucietta not permitted to use the bedspread? How would you feel in this situation?
2. What do you think this quotation may foreshadow?



'I slow as my new home comes into relief. The building is pure white stone with strong men draped in cloth holding up its columns. It is an orphanage, a hospital, a refuge, a music school, a church. Filled with the vulnerable, it requires the backbones of men — it seems — to hold their weight.' p.7

3. The colour white is mentioned repeatedly as Lucietta observes her new environment. Identify a list of the white items she sees. What does the white symbolise? (Extension: Explore the symbolism of white in different cultures. Why is it important to understand colour symbolism in different cultural contexts?)
4. Lucietta's Mamma is a very strong character. Describe her personal qualities, supporting your statements with quotations from the novella.

Connecting

Research the *Derehitti*. What was so unique about this place? What contribution did its community make to music?

Writing Task:



'I reach into the box to remove the bed linen. As I lift it, a golden thread catches on the side of the box. I pull, and the thread snaps. The linen is surprisingly weighty, and I place it — still neatly folded — upon the bed. The snagged thread has warped one of the flowers. As I pull at the fabric in dismay, the golden calendula begins to unravel.' p.12



Activity: Consider Balint's use of syntax and symbolism in this quotation.

Write a vivid description of a moment of realisation that change cannot be undone. Emulate (respectfully be guided by) Balint's style to create your description.

Chapter 2

Visualising

Lucietta's world is vastly different from her expectations. What are the aspects of this new world that shock her? How does Balint guide her readers to visualise the strangeness?

Predicting

Lucietta has a 'generous patron'. What does this mean? What do you predict his influence will be on Lucietta's life?

Questioning

1. Lucietta meets a number of new people in this chapter. Who are these people and what are their roles?
2. Who is a *Maestra*? What would be the qualities of someone who holds this title?

Chapter 3

Questioning

1. Who is Suora Teresa? Why is she important in the development of the reader's understanding of Lucietta's experiences?
2. Explain why Lucietta is not sleeping through the night.

Connecting

How does it feel when you have a big challenge ahead of you? How do you behave? What do you think? How is this similar or different to Lucietta?

Chapter 4

Connecting



'Wearing my uniform is a kind of disguise: I am both myself and someone else. Maestra Francesca says that the uniform draws eyes to the face. That our souls shine through our countenances, pure and unadulterated by extravagance or ornamentation. Our visages are unsullied by wealth or poverty. The uniform is supposed to free us from worldly concerns. A man can look into my eyes and see what is to be found in me alone without stopping first to consider whether my father was a merchant, money lender or craftsman. Or whether my mother was a fallen woman.' p.35

This quotation explains how Lucietta felt about her uniform. Explain why this would be important to her.

What are your beliefs about uniforms, both school and in the workplace? Write a speech with the purpose of persuading the adults in your school community to agree with your point of view. (Extension: Complete the same task offering the opposite point of view to that which you actually hold.)

Questioning

1. Explain the simile, "I am like a flower emerging from the wet earth." What is happening in the novel that has led Lucietta to feeling this way?
2. Explain the paradox, "The music must be deeply familiar yet fresh and not over-practised."
3. This chapter establishes more detail about the setting of the novel. What do you learn about this setting? How has Balint created this vivid image for her reader?
4. What does Lucietta mean when she says, on page 40, "I feel as though I have arrived in my life."?
5. What does this chapter reveal about the expectations of women in this context? Compare and contrast these attitudes with attitudes towards women's destinies today. (Remember to consider a worldview and not just your own context.)

Syntax and Punctuation

Read from the last line on page 39 to the end of the paragraph. What different types of sentences has Balint used in this paragraph? Why would she use such a range of sentences? Give examples of simple, compound, and complex sentences from this paragraph.

What punctuation marks has Balint employed in this paragraph? What is the effect of such a range of punctuation?

Vocabulary

Consider the use of *minutiae*, *aloft* and *din* on page 44. What do these words mean? What is the effect of using such precise language? How could you emulate this style of vocabulary in your own writing?

Chapter 5

Visualising

If you were directing a film based on this novel, how would you present the scene with Don Leonardi? How would you depict Don Leonardi? How would you depict Lucietta's feelings about this meeting?

Predicting

What do you predict that this sentence will mean for Lucietta?



'A life where I might not understand the rules.' p.59

Chapter 6

Questioning

1. How does this quotation illuminate (shine a light on) the themes of the novel?



'There are moments when you cannot forget that you were raised by a woman who is not your mother. To be loved is not the same as to belong. I have spent my life searching for a place of belonging.' p.61

3. How can an education take away a person's sense of belonging? What challenges did Lucietta's education create for her?



'Mamma had spared me so much daily work, it would be difficult for me to live comfortably within the class I had been raised. My education held me apart from the other girls I shared shellfish broth within the neighbourhood.' p.64

4. What do we know about Lucietta's birth parents?
5. Explain this simile:



'Life was like broth: in it, we would find rich nourishing food along with the dried herbs and shrivelled carrots from the bottom of the cupboard — as well as the stale bread that had lost its flavour and goodness but helped to fill the void.' p.68

Writing

Life is like...

Complete the simile in an imaginative and insightful way.

Chapter 7

Focus on Setting

How does the setting in the chapter develop the sense that Lucietta is finding her belonging place? What features of language are used to create this growing sense of belonging?

Chapter 8

Connecting

1. Lucietta starts to teach in this chapter. She discovers some important things about herself. Write a short narrative about finding out something important about either yourself or an imaginary character making a discovery about themselves

2. Consider the quotation:



'As I walk back up the staircase to the dormitory, I realise I have never before considered where the copies of our music come from. So many silent tasks are involved in the creation of rapturous sound.' p.83



Activity: Think about the 'silent tasks' undertaken in your own world. Write a thank you letter to someone who does some of those 'silent tasks'.

Chapter 9 and 10

Predicting

In these brief chapters Lucietta makes important discoveries. What are these discoveries? Predict how these discoveries may influence her future. Justify your prediction.

Chapter 11

Questioning

1. Explain why choice is so important for Lucietta.



'Did he say where he wanted you to play? In his house, perhaps? How long until you marry him?'

'Marry him?'

'Isn't that why you came here, to find a husband?'

'I- I came here to finish my training. He's not so interesting.'

'Interesting? Isn't he Golden Book?' Regina's eyes grow wide. *'You're not going to reject him?'*

'Regina!' Agata says. 'Lucietta can make her own decision.' p.98

2. How significant is the following quotation in guiding the reader to understand Lucietta's sense of belonging?



'Unwanted, unmarriageable girls through centuries. Here in this vast echoing building. Creating sublime music, their souls lost to time. Their music remaining.' p.102

3. What is a legacy? How important is being part of this legacy to Lucietta? Justify your answer.

Chapter 12

Summarising

1. Lucietta makes a significant decision to conclude her story. What were the 10 main steps that led her to this decision?
2. Now that you know the whole story, return to each chapter and give it a suitable title that will foreshadow the conclusion and yet not give away the ending.
3. Summarise the use of symbolism in the novel.
4. Did you predict the ending of the novel? What led you to your predictions- either correct or not correct? Did you like the way the novel ended? Explain your answer.

Reflecting

1. Was the novella what you expected when you first picked up the book? Explain your answer.
2. Why would your teacher have selected this novella for you to read? Would you recommend the novella for next year's reading list?

3. What did you learn about the writing process from exploring this novella?
4. How could you use your learning from this study in your own writing?
5. Will you look for other novellas to read? Explain your answer.
6. What did you learn about the lives of women from reading this novel?
7. What did you learn about yourself as a reader during this study?
8. How can you continue to develop your reading and analysing skills?

Extended Questions and activities

1. *Understanding the lives of women from other times and places, helps us to understand the lives of women today.*
2. Discuss the accuracy of this statement with close reference to the novel.
3. *Water Music* is a novella about passion and love, but not romance.
4. Is this an accurate way to describe the novella? Write a blog post for a teen magazine reviewing the novella.
5. Imagine that you are joining Lucietta in the *coro*. Write a narrative that shares your first day. Remember that a narrative must have a complication (a problem).
6. Create a visual representation of the themes of the novella. Use an appropriate colour palette and symbolic images.
7. You are the director of the movie, *Water Music*. You have an unlimited budget. Who will you cast in each role of the movie and why?
8. Create a glossary for the novella.
9. Select three secondary characters and explain why they were significant in developing the reader's understanding of the themes of the novella.