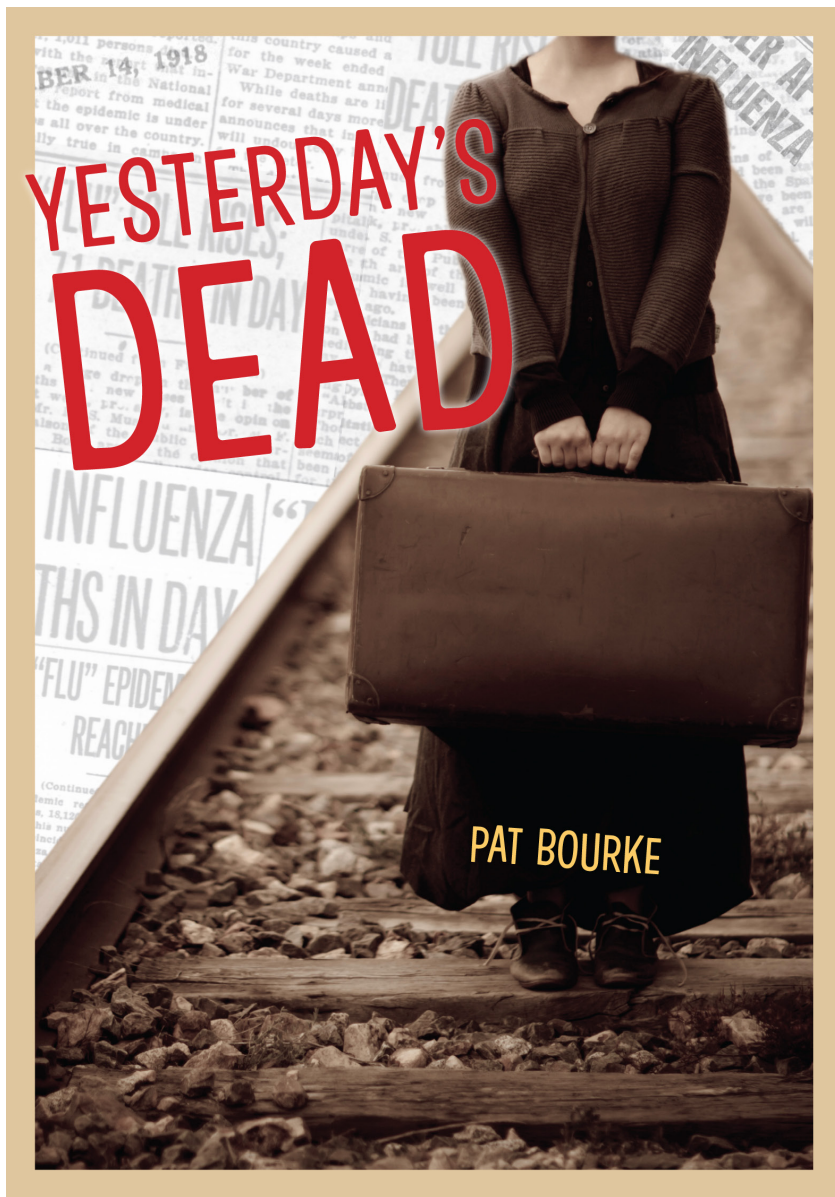


YESTERDAY'S DEAD Teacher's Guide



Contents

Internet-sourced Resources	2
Vocabulary	3
Comprehension and Discussion Questions	5
Extension Activities	8
Language Arts	8
Social Studies, History	11
Media Literacy	13
Drama	14
Art	14
About the Author	16
On Writing <i>Yesterday's Dead</i>	17

Internet-sourced Resources

Many excellent resources on the Internet can add rich background for the setting of this novel. All of these links were operational in March 2012, but you can insert the title of an article, for example, in a search engine if a particular link is not operating when you attempt to access it.

Science Watch: The 1918 Flu Epidemic: the whole world was infected. McKenna, M. A. J. The Atlanta Journal—Constitution (12 October 1997).

<http://www.mindspring.com/~mmckenna/stories.html>

CBC News In-depth: 1918 Flu Epidemic

www.cbc.ca/news/background/flu/flupepidemic.html.

1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic

<http://history1900s.about.com/od/1910s/p/spanishflu.htm>

The Influenza Pandemic of 1918

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/virus/uda>.

Influenza 1918. WGBH The American Experience. Available from

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/influenza/>

The Notebook: A Historical Backgrounder: When half the city took ill. May 2, 2009. Toronto Star.

<http://www.healthzone.ca>

More Deadly Than War Itself. Sullivan, Pat. Canadian Reflections. Legion Magazine, January/February 2001.

<http://www.legionmagazine.com/>

The 1918 Influenza Outbreak

A western Canadian perspective.

http://siamandas.com/time_machine/

History of the Base Hospital

An actual transcript of conditions at a US military base during the Spanish Flu epidemic.

http://nmhm.washingtondc.museum/collections/archives/agalleries/1918flu/camp_mills_transcript.pdf

World War I, Canadian Perspective

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/firstworldwar/>

The Toronto Daily Star

Searchable archive of past issues.

www.pagesofthepast.ca

The Boer War

www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/boer/boerwarhistory_e.shtml

Vocabulary

The chart sets out vocabulary that may need defining, depending on grade level. Words particular to the time period are in **bold** face.

Chapter	Words
1	abruptly, boarded, bustle, curb (verb form) marooned, mortifyingly, patent (as in leather), scuffed
2	lollygag , racketing, busybody, flanking, skeptical, traipsing, chafed, clamp, wavering, jaunty
3	ornate, plaque, veranda, imposing, stony, stout, hobbledehoy , intricately, newel post, range (for cooking), impeccable, ruckus , crosspatch
4	scuttle, bewildering, canister, steep (verb form), whisked, exotic, telegraphing, devastated, lurch, paring knife, specimen
5	coverlet, fret, epidemic, pathological, escapade, ferry, airship
6	curlicues, gold-rimmed, extended, amended, porcelain, churned, salt cellar , creamer, zinnia, flounced, laden
7	remedy, begrudge, inexhaustible, dilly-dally , meddling, fuss-pot , vigorous, trustee, hoity-toity , rugger
8	dank, wafting, gadding, simmering, poultice , shabby, detachment, tarnished, battalion “Aloysius” is pronounced ah-loo- <i>i</i> -shus.
9	whisked, glumly, tootling, lumbering, work-a-day , milliner, discreetly
10	bodice, taffeta, sheen, savories, inlaid, swathed, parlour, circulate, suffice, flared, gawking, sherry, sidled, stout, cronies , jostling, replenish, consommé, dormitory, vinaigrette, shards, crockery, acrid
11	angle, chit, settee , staggered, welded, modesty, trekked, taut, horsehair , Boers , discreetly The reference to “fighting the Boers” refers to the Boer War that took place from 1899 to 1902 in what we now know as South Africa, between an alliance of the Boer governments of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State on the one hand, and Great Britain on the other. The war ended with British victory. It was the first overseas war to which Canada sent troops.

12	reeked, candelabra, cut crystal, gleaming, cutlery, snippets, shuttling, maelstrom, replenished, bland, makeshift, susceptible, precautions, epidemic, upholstered, clamored, extravagant, whorls, rosette, painstakingly, marionette, procession
13	balked, flannel, gingerly, window sash, carafe, tentatively
14	pneumonia, infectious, scuttled, precariously, stately, airborne, surveying
15	trudge, dabbed A copper boiler is a tall copper pot shaped like a rectangle with rounded ends. It could fit on the back of a stove without taking up too much room and was used as a source of boiling water.
16	cobbled together , meager, bedraggled, contemplating, chloroform, hurled
17	rummaged, delirious, peeved, belly-aching , sparsely, shirker , singlet , intrusion, lolling
18	gripe, Quaker, abide, tureen, concoction, icebox , prospect (noun), conch shell, eavesdropping
19	camphor, searing, preventive, onslaught, transport, seedling, withered, tweaked, quarantine, hoisted, embarking
20	impression, jeopardy, unnerved, derided, gauze, composing, proportion, predominate, gawping , diligent
21	periodically, packet , honed, barbs, Huns , recoiling, congealed
22	lugged, flinched, phlegm, spasm, sterilized, disinfected, barge in
23	amended, minefield, scandalized
24	biplane , corded edge, balky, rank (adjective), hooked rug
25	grimacing, hoisted, conceded
26	forbidding, pocketbook , plastered
27	glinted, haphazardly, spooned, mucus, manoeuver
28	accompaniment, casualties, distended
29	jabbered, carcass, ebb, waning,
30	transport, commandeered, makeshift, convalescence, lingering, snippets, devastation, rootless, aviators , mustard gas
31	manse, rummaged, looted, kit bag, tenterhooks

Comprehension and Discussion Questions

Chapters 1 to 8: Arriving in Toronto; meeting the household staff and the family; undertaking her job; conflicting opinions about Spanish Flu; finding a friend.

1. List three things that tell you something about Meredith's life before she travelled to Toronto. (Ch 1)
2. What does Meredith mean by, "Mrs. Stinson was near to blazing already"? (Ch 2)
3. Describe the family circumstances that have driven Meredith to Toronto. (Ch 2)
4. What do you think about the choices Meredith's father made? What might he have done differently? (Ch 2)
5. What details about the Waterton's house tell you something about the family who lives there? (Ch 3)
6. Describe the relationship between Jack and his brother Harry. (Ch 3)
7. At the end of Chapter 3, how does Meredith feel about the household staff she's met so far? How does she feel about her job?
8. What characteristics would you use to describe Mrs. Butters? How did you deduce that? (Ch 4)
9. What does Meredith's bedroom tell you about her status in the household? (Ch 5)
10. Why does Meredith decide that it would be better not to think about home too much? (Ch 5) What strategies do you use when you feel overwhelmed?
11. How does Meredith's description of the members of the household as watercraft reveal what she thinks about them? (Ch 5)
12. What kind of measures are Torontonians being told to take to avoid becoming ill with Spanish Flu? (Ch 7)
13. Why is Meredith at first hesitant to talk to Jack Waterton? As they talk together, how does the author show Meredith's feelings changing? (Ch 7)
14. What does Meredith mean when she says, "They drew straws for that"? (Ch 7)
15. At the end of Chapter 8, how would Meredith describe the people in the household? What do you think motivates them to act the way they do?
16. At the end of Chapter 8, what does Meredith think about her job?
17. Discuss the level of power held by each character. What kind of power do they have? Why are they powerful? What can the people with little power do to gain power? What does this tell you about society at the time?

Chapters 9 to 14: Preparing for the party; Mrs. Butters falls ill; disaster in the kitchen during the party; Harry becomes ill; Dr. Waterton gives instructions; Parker bullies Meredith.

1. Explain “She was sorry Parker’s head hurt him—sorry in a Sunday school way, like being sorry for starving people in foreign places.” (Ch 9)
2. What does Parker mean when he says, “There’s no place in service for someone who doesn’t know her place?” What does that reveal about his attitude toward others? (Ch 9)
3. What does the author use to make Meredith’s “three worlds” vivid? (Ch 12)
4. Why do you think Meredith begins crying when she and Forrest are laughing about the potato? (Ch 12)
5. Identify details that show how Maggie feels about her brother Harry. (Ch 12)
6. What details has the author included to show how grim the situation is with Mrs. Butters? (Ch 14)
7. What does Dr. Waterton mean when he says, “Let’s not jump to conclusions”? (Ch 14)
8. What does Parker’s reaction to the situation with Mrs. Butters tell you about him? (Ch 14)

Chapters 15 to 19: Taking care of Mrs. Butters; facing off against Parker; Maggie is hateful; Tommy seeks advice about his sick family; Jack and Maggie fight about the course of action.

1. How would you describe Parker’s behaviour toward Meredith? Why do you think Parker feels justified in treating Meredith the way he does? (Ch 15)
2. How would Chapter 16 change if it was written from Maggie’s point of view? How would she describe Meredith’s behaviour toward her? What would she say about her own behaviour toward Meredith?
3. Why does Meredith say, “He’s been fine” when Forrest questions her about Parker? Why do you think she follows him upstairs? (Ch 17)
4. What do you think motivates Jack to stand up for Meredith in the face of Maggie’s rudeness? Did your opinion of Jack change as a result? (Ch 18)
5. List some measures that the medical authorities in Toronto were taking to combat Spanish Flu. (Ch 19)
6. Jack and Maggie have different ideas about the best thing to do. Who do you think is right, and why? (Ch 19)

Chapters 20 to 25: Mrs. Stinson comes to call; Parker becomes ill; Jack becomes ill; Maggie and Meredith begin to work together.

1. What does Mrs. Stinson’s reaction to Meredith’s news tell you about her attitude in general? (Ch 20)

2. Why do you think Maggie uses incorrect names to refer to Meredith? (Ch 21)
3. Discuss how the use of active verbs heightens the tension in the scene where Parker is discovered. (Ch 21)
4. In Chapter 22, identify details in the scene between Meredith and Maggie that indicate their relationship might be changing.
5. How does Meredith demonstrate her sympathy for Harry? (Ch 23)
6. Discuss how Chapters 24 and 25 reveal additional changes in the relationship between Maggie and Meredith.

Chapters 26 to 29: Discovering more about Parker; Jack is dangerously sick; Tommy's tragedy; Meredith's solution; Mrs. Butters improves; the plan to save Jack; Parker dies.

1. How do the pictures in Parker's room affect Meredith? (Ch 26)
2. Discuss the power dynamic between Maggie and Meredith at the end of Chapter 26.
3. What does Tommy mean when he says, "I didn't come for charity"? What does that tell you about him? (Ch 27)
4. In Chapter 28, Maggie's behaviour toward her brothers is very different from earlier in the novel. What has changed for her? How does she demonstrate this?
5. After Meredith discovers that Parker has died, what might Parker's bible symbolize for her? (Ch 29)
6. At the end of Chapter 29, why do you think Maggie and Meredith stand together in the hallway looking out at the moon? What thoughts might the moon be prompting for each of them?
7. In Chapter 29, what does it mean when it says, "She wished she'd known it would turn out like that"? What do you think Meredith has learned?

Chapters 30 to 31: The aftermath at Glenwaring and in Toronto; returning home for Christmas.

1. How does the scene in the library illustrate how Meredith, Jack and Tommy have changed (or not changed) their attitudes, beliefs and plans as a result of their experience with the Spanish Flu? Who has had to change the most? (Ch 30)
2. What details does the author use to convey Meredith's excitement over coming home? (Ch 31)
3. What do you think the relationship is between Maggie and Meredith at the end of the novel? (Ch 31)

Extension Activities

Language Arts

1. Strong verbs inject action into a story. Have students identify the active verbs used in Chapters 1-3 and rate them as strong or weak. This could be extended into an exercise about using a thesaurus. Challenge students to replace weak verbs in their own writing.
2. Similes enliven descriptions and action. Discuss the effectiveness of the similes used, such as the ones from Ch 2 below. Have students compile a list of similes for each chapter and challenge them to come up with effective alternatives.
 - “smartly dressed women, their hats like bright birds.”
 - “the ladies in elegant costumes with hats like swirls of icing atop fancy cakes.”
 - “the red ones [roses] with thorns like daggers.”
 - “Mrs. Stinson’s face was shut up tight like her purse.”
 - “Dull Port Stuart chafed him like a wool shirt.”
3. Metaphors help draw vivid pictures. Discuss the effectiveness of the metaphors from Chapter 3 below. Have students compile a list of metaphors found in other chapters and classify them as pertaining to description or action.
 - “Six tall white columns crowned with carved leaves stood at attention across a wide veranda.”
 - “His fingers were a clutch of bony twigs with no sign of warmth in them.”
 - “She didn’t know how she would keep that furious little hurricane in line.”
 - “Three pairs of eyes fastened on Meredith.”
4. Meredith often thinks about things her mother has said to help guide her. Many of these are expressed as a type of folk wisdom. Have students discuss the meaning of, for example:
 - Angry words are fuel to a fire. (Ch 2)
 - Busy hands heal troubled hearts. (Ch 4)
 - A whistling girl and a crowing hen always come to no good end. (Ch 8)
 - Don’t let anger be your master. (Ch 15)
 - The good in people always evens out the bad in the end. (Ch 18)

Have students collect additional folk sayings from their family or by researching their heritage. Explore how different cultures express similar ideas in different ways.

- A useful Canadian source is *Canadian Sayings 3: 1,000 Folk Sayings Used by Canadians*, Bill Casselman, McArthur and Co., 2004.
 - Online sources include www.wiseoldsayings.com; <http://socyberty.com/folklore/a-jack-pot-of-old-folk-sayings/>.
 - Use the terms “folk sayings” and “Gaelic,” for example, in a search engine to locate folk sayings from a specific culture.
5. Discuss examples of how physical details in the text tell you how Meredith is feeling. Some examples (from Ch 3):
 - She wiped her suddenly sweaty hands on her coat.
 - Her stomach felt squeezed into a too-small space.
 - Meredith let out a breath she didn’t know she’d been holding.
 - The knot in her stomach loosened for the first time.
 6. Meredith has been named for her grandfather (Ch 4). “Meredith” is a traditional Welsh name for men meaning “Guardian of the Sea,” although now it is commonly used as a woman’s name. Have students research the meaning and origin of their name, and determine whether there is a special story around how their name was chosen. A useful resource for names from different cultures is www.meaning-of-names.com.
 7. Although the telephone was in common use in 1918, letters were how most people communicated at length. Have students write letters from different characters’ perspectives. Some suggestions:
 - A letter from Meredith to her mother describing the people she’s met and her thoughts about her job (end of Ch 4).
 - A letter from Parker to Lydia describing his thoughts on Spanish Flu, both before Mrs. Butters becomes ill and afterward.
 - A reference letter from Mrs. Butters stating her assessment of Meredith as an employee.
 8. We never meet Alice, but from everything that’s said about her we get a good idea of what she must be like! Have students write a scene featuring Alice that shows her relationship with the rest of the household staff.
 9. *The Boy’s Own Annual* (Ch 13) began as the 16-page *Boy’s Own Paper*, first published in 1879 by the Religious Tract Society. Each very large, thick, heavy book offered one year of issues featuring adventure stories, nature study, sports and games, puzzles, essay competitions, and many illustrations.

A counterpart *Girl’s Own Paper* was started in 1880 featuring stories, educational and

“improving” articles, a question and answer column, poetry, music and occasional coloured illustrations. In 1908, it began providing information on careers for girls and advice on fashion.

Have students create a **Boy's Own** and **Girl's Own** for your classroom based on what would have interested them in 1918, or have them create one set in the present day.

10. In Chapter 31, Meredith has been given Lucy Maud Montgomery's 1916 book, ***The Watchmen and Other Poems***. You can access an online or pdf version at http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7029939M/The_watchman_and_other_poems.

Poems that are reasonably straightforward include

- The Seeker – page 126.
- Fancies – page 109.
- At Nightfall – page 87.
- The Wind – page 53.

Have students identify the characteristics of the flowery style of the day and contrast it with modern poetry. A fun activity may be to challenge students to come up with their own flowery verses to describe something modern-day. (Not such a far cry from rap music!)

11. Other books set in this time period that students may enjoy include

- ***I am Canada: Shot at Dawn: World War I***, Allan McBride, France, 1917 by John Wilson. Scholastic Canada, 2011. The third novel in the I Am Canada series is told from the point of view of First World War soldier Allan McBride on the eve of his execution for desertion. (Ages 9 to 12)
- ***Charlie Wilcox*** by Sharon E. McKay. Penguin Group Canada, 2003. Newfoundlander Charlie Wilcox becomes an under-age medic in France during World War I. (Ages 11-15)
- ***Fever Season*** by Eric Zweig. Dundurn Press, 2009. Thirteen-year-old David Saifert, orphaned in Montreal after the Spanish Flu epidemic, uses his job with the Montreal Canadiens to search for his Uncle Danny during the (ultimately cancelled) Stanley Cup series against the Seattle Metropolitans in 1919. (Ages 9 to 12)
- ***Dear Canada: If I Die Before I Wake: The Flu Epidemic Diary of Fiona Macgregor***, Toronto, Ontario, 1918 by Jean Little. Scholastic Canada, 2007. Fiona's loving family is torn apart as Fiona's sisters fall ill. (Ages 9 to 12)
- ***Dear America: Like the Willow Tree: The Diary of Lydia Amelia Pierce***, Portland, Maine, 1918 by Lois Lowry. Scholastic Press, 2011. (Ages 9 to 12)
- ***A Time of Angels*** by Karen Hesse. Hyperion, 1997. Separated from her two sisters, a young Jewish girl struggles to survive the 1918 Spanish Flu outbreak in Boston, Massachusetts and reunite with her family. (Ages 10 and up)

Social Studies, History

1. Mail order catalogues from the era provide a fascinating glimpse of economics and family life. Meredith would have been very familiar with what was on offer in the catalogues from the T. Eaton Company Ltd. The **Eaton's Fall and Winter Catalogue for 1918-1919** is available online at <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/mailorder/index-e.html>.

To access specific items, choose "Search" and enter your search term—such as "dolls"—in the "Search for" box and select "Eaton's Fall and Winter 1918-19" in the "in" box.

You can print pages to help students appreciate the economics of the time through, for example, fashions, household goods and toys. Just about everything could be ordered from the Eaton's catalogue! As a mathematical exercise, students could compare the cost of items then and now.

Drawing from items mentioned in the book and depending on your class, pages you might like to explore are:

- Dolls: pages 516-517
 - Toys: pages 516-523
 - Women's shoes: pages 311, 314, 319
 - Women's hats: pages 219-232
 - Men's hats: pages 202-203
 - Medicines: pages 284-287
 - Candies: pages 424-427.
2. Annual wages of domestic workers averaged \$356 in 1921. [Eric W. Sagar, *The Transformation of the Canadian Domestic Servant, 1871–1931*. <http://ssh.dukejournals.org/content/31/4/509.full.pdf>]

Adjusting for inflation, and for the fact that Meredith worked at the lowest skilled domestic job and received room and board, she was likely paid around \$15 a month. Students can use the catalogue to examine the purchasing power of that wage.

3. In 1918, modern pharmaceutical remedies such as penicillin and antibiotics hadn't yet been developed. A number of folk remedies are mentioned in the novel such as
 - using a hot bran poultice or drinking onion tea for a cold.
 - wearing a bag around the neck filled with camphor to ward off germs.
 - sprinkling sulphur and brown sugar over hot coals and breathing in the smoke.
 - using a poultice of goose grease.

- drinking hot, sweet tea for shock.

Student activities could include

- researching additional folk remedies online (www.oldcure.com) or from published sources.
 - examining the ingredients in patent medicines, using the Eaton's catalogue.
 - analyzing newspaper advertisements for remedies in the Toronto Daily Star during October and November 1918 (www.pagesofthepast.ca).
- Spanish Influenza is only one of many devastating illnesses that have threatened or continue to threaten human lives. One useful resource is www.nationalgeographic.com, (Health and Human Body). Have students research and prepare a presentation on the symptoms, treatments, historical and global significance, and population effects of illnesses such as
 - influenza
 - scarlet fever
 - measles
 - small pox
 - bubonic plague
 - malaria
 - typhoid
 - cholera.
 - The characters in the story inhabit different levels in society with varying degrees of power. Students could create a diagram of the main characters illustrating their respective social standing and degree of power. Who is the most powerful? Who is the least powerful? Where does power come from in this society? What does this tell us about the times? Where does power come from now?
 - Airplanes were a new and exciting development in World War I. Find extensive (and thrilling) information about
 - Billy Bishop, the famous Canadian ace, at www.billybishop.org.
 - the Red Baron at <http://history1900s.about.com/od/1910s/a/redbaron.htm>.
 - A sung version of Alexander's Ragtime Band played on a portable 1927 Victrola can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFbtwoDxhQM> (Ch 30). Have students research other songs popular during World War I (1914-1918) and identify insights into the times from the subjects and lyrics of the songs.
 - The use of mustard gas during World War I introduced chemical warfare as a means of

attack. (Ch 31) Information on how mustard gas works can be found at <http://science.howstuffworks.com/mustard-gas.htm>.

Students could discuss the ethics of chemical warfare and the long-term effects of such tactics on the soldiers and populace where the fighting occurred.

9. Have students research customs from the time period around death and funerals. Those mentioned in the novel include
 - black, grey and lavender hats for mourning.
 - black plumes on the head plates of a horses drawing a hearse.
 - white casket for a child, grey for an adult.
 - black sashes hung on a door.

Media Literacy

The media of the day—newspapers—provided a wide range of conflicting information and opinion surrounding the Spanish Flu epidemic.

1. Examine news stories from the period to identify the messages being sent to the population and the measures being taken to address Spanish Flu. Compare this to news stories during the SARS crisis in Toronto in February 2003, or to the H5N1 influenza (bird flu) scare in 2011.
 - For overall information on the SARS crisis or H5N1, go to the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.publichealth.gc.ca
 - A good summary of the SARS crisis in Toronto can be found at the website of the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5223a4.htm>
2. Have students plan and execute an information campaign (posters, information pamphlets, newspaper advertisements) to warn the population about Spanish Flu, its symptoms and effective infection control.
 - Contrast an information campaign in 1918 with how one might be conducted today.

Drama

1. Have groups of students choose a chapter or scene and stage it as a play. There are many scenes throughout the novel featuring only two or three characters that are suitable for small groups.

Scenes that offer four or more roles are

- Chapter 3: Scene 1: Arriving at Glenwaring (Meredith, Mrs. Stinson, Forrest, Jack, Harry, Parker). Scene 2: Meeting the staff. (Meredith, Parker, Mrs. Stinson, Mrs. Butters, Jack, Harry).
- Chapter 4: Scene around the kitchen table on Meredith's first morning (Meredith, Mrs. Butters, Forrest, Parker, Harry).
- Chapter 5: Clearing the dining room table. (Meredith, Dr. Waterton, Jack, Maggie)
- Chapter 8: Tommy brings news that his sister is ill. (Meredith, Tommy, Forrest, Mrs. Butters, Mrs. O'Hagan).
- Chapter 10: Scene 2: In the drawing room (Meredith, Parker, Dr. Waterton, Jack, Maggie, Harry, assorted guests).
- Chapter 14: Scene 2: In the kitchen (Meredith, Dr. Waterton, Forrest, Parker, Mrs. Butters.)
- Chapter 19: Forrest gives the assembled household the doctor's instructions. (Forrest, Parker, Meredith, Jack, Maggie, Harry).
- Chapter 21: Discovering Parker (Meredith, Jack, Maggie, Parker, Harry).

Art

1. Have students design a set of storyboards to illustrate the events in a chapter. This could form the basis of a graphic-novel-type retelling of the story.
2. Have students create a set of posters to inform the population about protecting themselves from Spanish Influenza.
3. Have students create a collage of images to illustrate the characters in the novel and the things that are important to them.

About the Author

Although I loved creating stories, poems and plays, I studied mathematics and physics at the University of Western Ontario and became a high school math and sciences teacher, and then an actuarial analyst for a life insurance company in Toronto. After completing a Masters in Business Administration at the University of Toronto, I worked as a management consultant before becoming a freelance business writer and editor. Although that might seem like a strange metamorphosis, mathematics and writing are more alike than you might think in that they both require determined dedication to problem-solving.

It was only when my own children were born that I rediscovered the thrill of reading books written for children. Trips to the library yielded a dozen new books each week to keep our small children entertained, and the depth and breadth of children's literature in Canada inspired me. I wondered whether I could write a story someone would want to read. I enrolled in writing courses and entered writing competitions as a way to improve my skills. *Yesterday's Dead* is my first novel—or, as I often say, my book to figure out how to write a book.

A long-time lover of historical fiction, I enjoy the challenge of bringing Toronto's colourful past to life as a setting in which to explore questions important to young people.

—Pat Bourke

On Writing Yesterday's Dead

Meredith's story actually began as a writing exercise in an introductory course on writing for children. The assignment was to write a passage using techniques to advance the story while not moving the action ahead—essentially pausing to appreciate the texture of the moment. These techniques include

- freeze frame: stopping the action completely at an appropriate moment and looking at what is important to the character.
- slow motion: slowing down the action and savouring each detail, which can be used for comic effect or to explore the circumstances.
- list: creating space from the action by accumulating its effects.

When I sat down at my computer to begin the assignment, the first sentence of this novel—*Meredith half-walked, half-ran along the wide hallway of Union Station*—popped into my head, complete with the character's name. I knew Meredith was thirteen, I knew she had just arrived in Toronto to take a job, and I knew that the story was set sometime in Toronto's history, but I didn't know when.

To satisfy the requirements of the assignment, I sent Meredith's suitcase tumbling down the stairs (slow motion), scattered all of her belongings (list) and focused on the reactions of bystanders (freeze frame) in this excerpt from what became Chapter 1:

Halfway up the staircase, Meredith set the bag down to rest her arm, but Mrs. Stinson had already reached the top and disappeared from view. Meredith heaved the bag off the step, but the handle slipped out of her sweaty fingers.

"Look out!" she cried. Two startled soldiers jumped aside as the battered bag bounced past. It hit the center railing, then tumbled end-over-end down the stairs, narrowly missing a small dog being coaxed up by an elegantly dressed woman and flying past an elderly porter who nearly lost his footing.

The twine snapped as the bag thumped onto the floor and popped open. Out spewed Meredith's possessions into the trampling paths of travelers—her nightgown, everyday dresses, blouses and skirts, the two sweaters Mama had knit, her Bible, three pairs of woolen stockings, writing paper, the pencils from Aunt Jane, a washcloth and towel and precious bar of soap, and, mortifyingly, all her underthings.

One stocking lay marooned against a shoeshine stand. The shoeshine boy was grinning. The little dog was barking. The soldiers were laughing.

When I enrolled in the advanced course, I decided I wanted to find out more about Meredith so I began looking for a period in Toronto's history in which to place her story. A series of books entitled *Toronto Sketches: "The Way We Were"* by Toronto historian Mike Filey provided succinct snapshots of many important events in Toronto's history. As soon as I read about the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918-1919, I knew I'd found an historical event filled with dramatic possibilities.

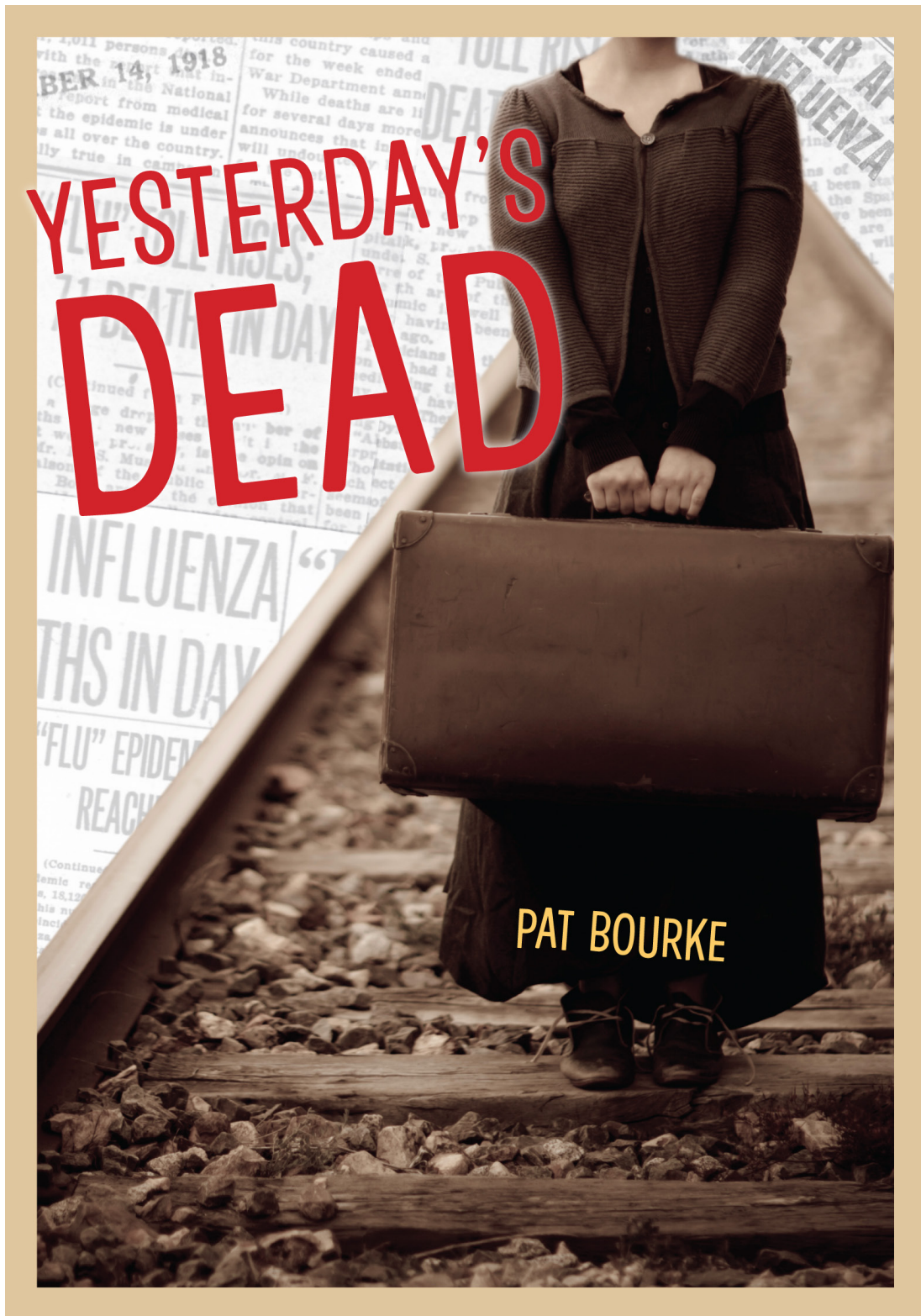
Online and published sources provided rich background detail about the illness and the period in history. Setting the story in 1918 posed all sorts of questions that I then had to find answers to: Were thermometers used to take a patient's temperature? (Yes, they've been used for that purpose since 1612.) Was Aspirin available in pill form? (Pills were a recent development; many people still preferred Aspirin powder mixed with water.) Would the Watertons have had a telephone? (Yes, Toronto's first telephone directory was printed in 1878! I found that surprising.) How much did a newspaper cost? (Two cents.) Although it felt like a great big jigsaw puzzle, the more I learned, the more I wanted to learn. (Historical fiction can do that to you.)

Today, in 2012, the number of Canadians who lived through the Spanish Influenza epidemic and can recall its effects on themselves or their families, either through their own experience or through family stories, is rapidly dwindling. Archived editions of the Toronto Daily Star, available online at www.pagesofthepast.ca, helped me appreciate the real-life reactions of the people of Toronto, the municipal government and medical authorities to the deadly epidemic, and its real-life consequences. Meredith's story centres around finding strength within oneself to do what's right in difficult circumstances. I hope that your classes enjoy her story and its historical setting.

—Pat Bourke
www.patbourke.com
pat@patbourke.com

YESTERDAY'S DEAD

Historical Note



Historical Note on *Yesterday's Dead*

In the late summer of 1918, the five hundred thousand inhabitants of Toronto, Ontario, were tired from four long years of war. Many young servicemen and women had died overseas. Canadians hoped that the peace talks in Europe would end the war at last.

At the same time, newspapers reported on a new illness that struck healthy young adults suddenly and killed many rapidly. Few people in Toronto suspected that they would soon be fighting this fearsome enemy at home.

The new illness was named the “Spanish Flu” because it was thought to have started in Spain. Historians now believe this form of influenza first appeared in the midwestern United States in the spring of 1918. It quieted over the summer, but in August a new, more deadly form appeared on a military base near Boston, Massachusetts. It spread to Europe as troopships delivered soldiers to the war. It rapidly infected the tired, undernourished soldiers fighting in the trenches, and then spread around the world.

Before it died out in 1919, the Spanish Flu killed an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 people across Canada, and 50 million to 100 million people worldwide. Historians estimate that one in every 40 people who caught the Spanish Flu died from it. If a similar outbreak occurred now, it's estimated that between 110,000 and 190,000 Canadians would die.

Influenza viruses are crafty survivors. They mutate easily into new forms and find new ways to infect people. Influenza causes aches and severe tiredness, and the mucus that builds up in the lungs can cause pneumonia. Before antibiotics were invented, severe pneumonia generally killed its sufferers. Even today, influenza kills between 4,000 and 8,000 Canadians each year.

The Spanish Flu was different from “regular” seasonal influenza. Once infected with the virus, people became sick very rapidly, and the resulting pneumonia was particularly dangerous. Some accounts tell of people who died within 24 hours of showing the first symptom.

Toronto newspapers reported on the high numbers of sick and dying in cities such as Boston and Montreal, but medical personnel and city officials couldn't agree about whether the Spanish Flu would reach Toronto. When it did arrive, it was at first confined to the army camps nearby and to the military hospital on Gerrard Street. But once it entered the city population, it spread rapidly. On October 2, 1918, the Toronto Daily Star reported a second death from the Spanish Flu. By October 8, two Toronto hospitals were full and city workers were readying two abandoned hotels to serve as hospitals. Seventy-two deaths on Friday, October 11 alone were caused by the Spanish Flu or its associated pneumonia. By Friday, October 18, the total number of confirmed deaths in Toronto had reached 392; one week later, it had climbed to 1,023.

Confusion over whether an illness was a cold, seasonal flu or the Spanish Influenza contributed to the high number of deaths, since many people who were sick did not seek medical attention. Historians believe that many deaths from the Spanish Flu went unconfirmed.

Symptoms varied, too. The Spanish Flu generally began with sudden weakness, pain, chills, headache and fever. Delirium was common. Sufferers coughed up quantities of bloodstained mucus. The tongue could become dry and brown. A bloody froth could come from the nose and mouth. The pneumonia could turn faces and fingers blue, a sign that the lungs were not getting enough oxygen.

For about six weeks, the Spanish Flu affected every aspect of life in Toronto. Schools and churches were closed. Bowling alleys, billiard rooms, dance halls, and theaters were shut. Library books were not circulated. The telephone company asked people to only use the telephone in emergencies because so many operators were ill or absent because they were nursing family members at home.

Wage earners in Toronto faced a difficult choice: go to work and risk catching the Spanish Flu, or stay home and lose wages? Those caring for the sick faced an agonizing one: help the sick and possibly bring the sickness home to their own family, or keep away? Retired doctors were asked to help and women were urged to take basic nursing courses. Churches and community groups asked for volunteers to prepare food in soup kitchens set up to help feed families stricken by the Spanish Flu.

It wasn't clear how you could avoid getting sick. Doctors didn't know whether people who had the Spanish Flu could infect others before they showed any symptoms. They advised staying away from infected persons and crowded places where you might be exposed to the airborne germs thought to cause the Spanish Flu.

People were advised to wear a mask and wash their hands if caring for someone who was ill. Aspirin powder, the only modern remedy available at the time, was helpful to bring down fever. (The pill form had been introduced during the war, but many people preferred to stir the powder into water.)

"Folk" remedies abounded. Poultices were made by mashing together items such as mustard, onions and hot lard, and wrapping the mixture in a cloth. These could be applied to the throat or chest. Preventives included drinking coffee mixed with mustard, or warm milk mixed with ginger, sugar, salt and pepper, to kill any germs! Goose grease, garlic, oil of cinnamon, and toxic ingredients such as camphor, sulfur, turpentine, carbolic acid and creosote (a black, tarry substance) were all suggested as helpful.

Makers of patent medicines—medicines sold in drugstores without a doctor's prescription—claimed that their products could prevent or treat the Spanish Flu. Many of these medicines contained toxic ingredients like those listed above. They were often sold door to door or advertised in the newspaper, sometimes on the same pages where public health authorities warned readers against using them.

A typical ad from the *Toronto Daily Star* in October 1918 for Dr. Chase's Menthol Bag, manufactured by Edmanson, Bates and Company Ltd. in Toronto, reads:

These bags are pinned on the chest outside of the underwear, and the heat from the body causes the menthol fumes to rise and mingle with the air you breathe, thereby killing the germs and protecting you against Spanish Influenza and all infectious diseases.

Imagine being surrounded by people who stank of menthol (a mixture made from peppermint or other mint oils), mothballs, turpentine, garlic, onions and tar!

The Spanish Flu generally struck adults between the ages of 18 and 45. However, the epidemic drastically affected many children in Toronto. In families where one or both parents were sick, children could go hungry because there was no one to prepare food, or no money to buy more. Coal deliveries were suspended because the drivers were ill, so many houses went unheated as winter approached. More children became orphans. Many children needed care because their mother had died from the Spanish Flu and their father was serving overseas. The Children's Aid Society and Toronto's Public Health nurses worked hard to meet the needs of these children.

The Spanish Flu continued well into 1919 in Canada and other parts of the world. In fact, the epidemic halted the 1919 Stanley Cup series at two wins each for the Montreal Canadians and Seattle Mariners, making 1919 the only year that the Stanley Cup was not awarded.

Mourning customs at the time called for a black sash to be hung on the door of a house where someone had recently died. Black sashes across Toronto served as grim evidence of the power of the Spanish Flu. In all, over 1,700 Torontonians would die from the Spanish Influenza.

Author's Note

Meredith's story is made up of many different threads of life in Toronto in 1918. The Waterton family was lucky to have a household staff. The occupations open to young women were growing—nurses, clerks, telephone operators, sales staff and, of course, teachers. As a result, jobs as domestic servants in Canada declined steadily after World War I.

The seriousness of the Spanish Flu outbreak as it affected Toronto has been speeded up for this story.

The A.J. Clarkson Leather Company was an actual business in Toronto. I borrowed its name to give Meredith's father an occupation.

Shea's Palace was a popular vaudeville theatre on Yonge Street.

I invented Galligan's, the grocery store on Yonge Street that Meredith and Tommy visit. It would have been similar to Higgins and Burke, a successful store at the time.

In 1918, *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* was a respected source of information on cooking and housekeeping even though it was written in 1861! A cook like Mrs. Butters could well have had it in her kitchen. It's available online.

The airplane industry was just beginning during World War I. The war offered an opportunity to use this new technology. The book on airplanes that Jack browsed was written by John B. Rathburn and published in 1918.

The 1916 book of poetry by Lucy Maud Montgomery that Tommy gave to Meredith was a wonderful find.

Air Marshall William Avery Bishop—Billy Bishop—was Canada's number one air hero from World War I. He flew patrols with his squadron of planes and conducted solo flights behind enemy lines, winning 72 "dog fights"—battles in the air—in 1917 and 1918. For an entertaining look at his extraordinary life, you can visit www.billybishop.net.