



Elsewhere Girls

EMILY GALE & NOVA WEETMAN

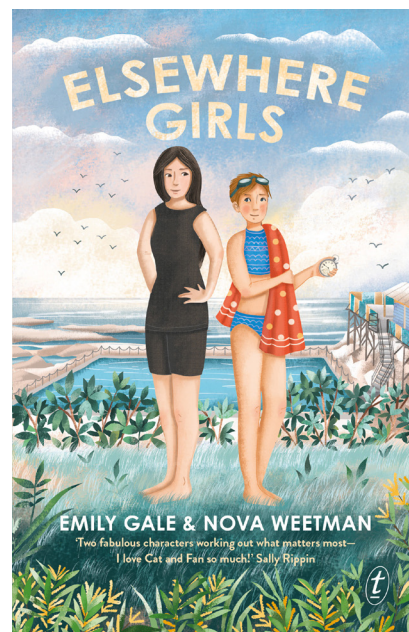
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Fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 10+

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CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning and connect it to an audience, purpose and context. They encompass a range of forms with a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they promote the integration of ICT and life skills.

SYNOPSIS

Fanny and Cat are the same in so many ways—except that they live over a century apart.

Cat is scholarship girl living in 2021. She's good enough to make the Olympics...if she wanted to. But Cat doesn't know what she wants anymore, only that it's getting harder and harder to find joy in the water.

In 1908, Fanny is one of nine children, and although she can't think of anything except swimming, she's increasingly frustrated by the double standards. There's always one set of rules for her brothers, and another for the girls—women aren't even allowed to swim in the same place as men, let alone compete in the Olympics alongside them! But when Fan and Cat discover a special stopwatch, they find themselves unexpectedly taking a walk in each other's shoes. And maybe a few days living in someone else's body is exactly what they both need to figure out what's really important to them.

Elsewhere Girls is an enchanting time-slip novel that draws on real-life figure Fanny Durack to explore themes of sexism, sport, and belonging.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Emily Gale has been involved in the children's book industry for twenty years. Her books include *Eliza Boom's Diary*, *Girl, Aloud*, *Steal My Sunshine* and *The Other Side of Summer* and its companion novel *I Am Out with Lanterns*.

Nova Weetman has written thirteen books for young adults and children. Her middle grade books include the much-loved novels *The Secrets We Keep*, *The Secrets We Share* and *Sick Bay*.

BEFORE READING

1. What is a time-slip novel? What does this tell you about what might happen in *Elsewhere Girls*?
2. Ask someone in your family to tell you about their childhood. Where did they live? How was life different then? Ask if they have any photos to show you.
3. As a class, create a list of the sports that you play. Do those sports have competitions? Are the competitions separated by gender? Discuss how you would feel if one gender was not allowed to participate or compete.

WHILE READING

1. What times do Fan and Cat come from? Make a list of five ways their lives are similar, and five ways they are different.
2. When Cat discovers that she's ended up in 1908 she feels like she's 'taken a solo trip to the moon' (p. 107). What emotion is she describing with this image? Create your own image to capture this emotion.



3. Why is swimming so important to Fanny and Maisy? Is it this important to Cat? Why/why not?
4. Why do you think Cat feels so anxious about swimming? Have you ever felt this way?
5. What words does Cat use to describe her anxiety? Make a list of words that describe the feeling of being worried or anxious.
6. Fan thinks Cat's life is much easier than her own—there are so many conveniences and opportunities. Is she right to think that life is easier for girls and women now? Are there ways that life is harder? What are they?
7. Why is Rebecca so mean to Cat? Why do you think she invites Cat to her party?
8. How do you think Cat imagines the people at her new school would describe her? How is this different from how they actually see her?
9. How would you feel if you woke up in a different time and didn't know anyone? What would you do?
10. What is Fan's secret hope? Why doesn't she share it with anyone? What else does she have to hide from her family?
11. In what ways do Cat and Fan change each other's lives?
12. How would you describe your life to someone from the past?

AFTER READING

CHARACTER

1. At the beginning of the book, Cat describes Maisy as 'perfect, salad-loving Maisy, who would never eat six potato scallops at midnight. She makes me want to be bad' (p. 3). Why do you think Cat feels this way about her sister? What do you learn about Maisy while Fan is in Cat's body?
2. What do Cat and Fan do or say after they've swapped bodies that makes their family and friends notice that something's wrong?
3. Cat doesn't want to swim, but she doesn't want to fail either. What are her reasons for feeling this way? What do you think she wants, and what is standing in her way?

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

1. Time-slip stories often use places as an anchor to highlight the differences between the present and the past. Where are the places that Cat and Fan's lives overlap? How do they describe the differences when they search for familiar landmarks? See if you can find pictures of Wylie's Baths in 1908 and images of it now. How would you describe the differences?
2. *Elsewhere Girls* is written by two authors working together. What might some of the challenges be of writing a book with someone else? How do you

think these writers navigated these challenges? Pair up with someone else and write a short story together—you might write it as alternating chapters as Emily Gale and Nova Weetman do, or perhaps letters back and forth. Think about how your characters are similar and different, and what connects them.

3. Research Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie. What are some of the historical facts that the authors of *Elsewhere Girls* have used in their novel? Based on your research, write a fictional story about Fanny's life after the events of *Elsewhere Girls*.

THEMES

Belonging

1. Why does Cat describe her new life as 'terrible'? How is it different to her life in Orange? What does she miss? Why does Maisy feel more at home in the new house than the old one?
2. Fan might have more opportunities if she stayed in the future, but despite this she is desperate to return home to her own time. Why do you think this is?
3. When Cat and Fan first swap bodies they both feel afraid and uncertain—everything is unfamiliar, and they don't know if they'll ever get back to their own time. Name something that helps each of them find a way to belong in a strange time.

Girls in sport

1. Fan is frustrated because many of the baths will only let her train if it's a women's swimming morning. What is the reason for this? What other factors prevented women from training as much as men? What impact do you think this had on their careers and opportunities?
2. The challenges that Fan faces in her time are mirrored in the present when Lucy misses out on a spot in the special science program. How does Fan use her experience to help Lucy? Why are role models so important?
3. Is there any such thing as friendly competition? Discuss the differences between Fan and Mina's relationship and Cat and Rebecca's. What challenges might women face in sport that heighten their sense of jealousy or competitiveness?
4. Do women and girls have more freedoms now than in 1908? How have these been achieved?

Freedom

1. Cat wags training because she needs a break, but when she's at home she just feels guilty. Why doesn't she feel free? What does it take for her to be free?
2. When Cat imagines swimming in the ocean, she describes it as freedom (p. 18). Why does she think this? What does this tell you about how she's feeling? Describe a place where you feel free.



3. For Fan, winning a competition will help her to prove herself to her family, and to push the boundaries of their expectations. For Cat, winning a competition is the opposite because it will tie her to a life she doesn't want. How do family expectations shape what freedom looks like for each girl?

RESPONDING

1. Cat and Fan slip through time when they encounter the special stopwatch. How does it appear in each of their lives?
Time-slip novels often have an object or place that acts as a portal between two times. Think of an object or place that you're familiar with that would make a good portal for a time-slip story. Write a description of it as it is now. Write another description of how you imagine it in either the past or the future. Who is looking at it? What do they see? Does it still look/feel/sound the same? Describe the feeling of being transported by your object from one time to another.
2. Fan is based on real-life Olympic swimmer, Fanny Durack. You can find out more about her [here](https://www.nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-6/themes/fanny-durack) (<https://www.nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-6/themes/fanny-durack>) and in the back of the book. Why is Fanny's contribution to swimming so significant? What else can you learn by researching Fanny and Mina? Make a list of facts you discover that also appear in the story. Present your research to the class—think about what you might share about Fanny or Mina's life that isn't shown in the story.
3. How do you think Cat's life will change after the story finishes? Write a conversation between Cat and either Maisy, Lucy, or Rebecca that takes place several weeks after the story finishes.
4. If you could swap lives with someone from the past, who would it be and why? How do you think their life would be different from yours? Choose a particular time period from the past that you're curious about. Research what life was like during this time, and write a day in the life of someone living then.
5. Imagine that Fan and Cat meet. What would they say to each other? Where/when would they meet?
6. How does spending a day in someone else's shoes help us to see our own life differently, and to understand those around us a little better? Swap stories about yourself with someone in your class that you don't know very well. What do you learn about each other that is surprising? How are your lives similar and different?