



Elizabeth and Zenobia

JESSICA MILLER

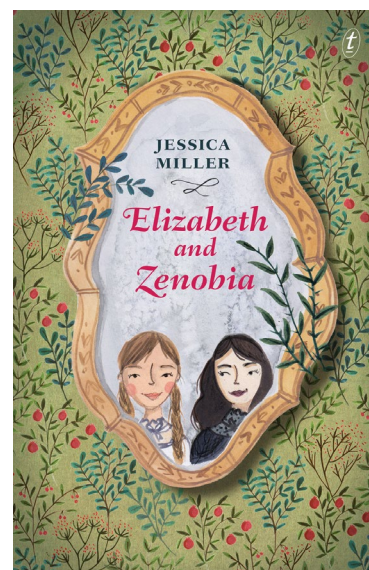
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TEXT’S TEACHING NOTES FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

- ▶ Text’s teaching notes are designed for teachers to explore the novel in line with the *Australian Curriculum: English*.
- ▶ Questions are divided into stages: from pre-reading to post-reading and include suggested tasks for assessment.
- ▶ An ACARA coding system connects each task to the *Australian Curriculum: English*. It includes links to strands, modes, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.
- ▶ Refer to the legend below and the accompanying [Australian Curriculum: English Scope and Sequence reference chart](#) to decipher these codes.
- ▶ Students can record their responses in writing through reading journals, online discussions or verbally in classroom discussions.

Strands	LA – Language LT – Literature LY – Literacy
Modes	W – Writing L – Listening R – Reading S – Speaking
General capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy Intercultural understanding Personal and social capability Information and communication technology Critical and creative thinking Numeracy Ethical behaviour
Cross-curriculum priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia

SYNOPSIS

Elizabeth is shy, lonely and heading to a new life at her father’s childhood home, Witheringe House. At least she has her best friend Zenobia. Zenobia is everything that Elizabeth is not, confident and fearless. She is also invisible. There are times Elizabeth thinks that she might be invisible too. She hopes that the move might mean that her father will pay her more attention. Zenobia, who is obsessed with the darker side of life, is in search of spirits. While Elizabeth goes along with Zenobia’s ghost hunt, she is secretly relieved that it comes to nothing, but in the process of their hunt she discovers a mystery of her own.

Why does the wallpaper in the nursery seem to be alive? What is the strange writing that appears in her father’s book each night? Who is the strange gardener in the plant nursery? And what happened to Aunt Tourmaline?

Elizabeth must face her fears, and her imagination, in order to bring Witheringe House back to life.



BEFORE READING

1. What do you fear the most? Write a story where you have to face your greatest fears or that describes a moment when you did. (ACELT1613) 🌟🌐 R LT
2. Have you ever had an imaginary friend or known someone who had one? Why do you think people create imaginary friends? Write a character profile for an imaginary friend. (ACELT1613) 🌟🌐 R LT
3. Find a story about a haunted house. You might start with a classic such as Edgar Allan Poe's 'Fall of the House of Usher'. Share it with the class and write a list of the features that make it a 'haunted house' story. (ACELT1612) 📖 W LT

WHILE READING

1. When do we first start to realise that Zenobia is not like everyone else? (ACELT1619) 🌟 R LT
2. On page 66, Miller uses personification to describe a feeling – 'Each note felt like a cold finger running down my neck.' Can you find other examples of personification in the novel? What is their intended effect? (ACELT1611) 🌟 R LT
3. "'One day, Elizabeth, you'll have to ask her how she does that. She's elevated lurking to an art.'" (page 63) How is Mrs Purswell's character used to build suspense? Find examples in the novel. (ACELT1619) 🌟 R LT
4. Elizabeth states that she has always been interested in words, but there are some, like 'seashells' that she liked and others, such as 'custard', that made her stomach flip. Make a list of words that give you pleasant thoughts and words that make your stomach flip. Why do you react differently to them? (ACELT1621) 🌟 R LT
5. What happened to Elizabeth's mother? How do you think Elizabeth feels about it? (ACELT1619) 🌟 R LT
6. What is an oxymoron? Consider "Oppressively nice" (Page 3) How does it change the meaning of the word "nice"? Create a list of oxymorons that could fit within the novel to describe characters, feelings or places? (ACELT1622) 📖 R LT
7. 'But then I saw the black hat and, underneath it, Father coming along the platform. His eyes slid over me and he walked straight by.' (page 4) Describe Elizabeth's father. How do we know how Elizabeth feels about him? (ACELT1622) 📖 R LT

AFTER READING

CHARACTER

1. Create a mind map of characters in the novel, placing Elizabeth in the centre. Consider the different ways that you can link characters – Friend or foe? Real or imagined? (ACELA1524) 🌟 R LT
2. What do Elizabeth and Zenobia have in common? (ACELT1619) 🌟 R LT

3. How do characters and their moods link to their environment? For example, when Zenobia is annoyed, the room turns cold. (ACELT1622) 🌟 R LT

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

1. There are two storylines in the novel - Elizabeth's story and the story in the Plant Kingdom that unfolds in her father's book at night. Create a timelines for each story and link them. Be creative and illustrate key moments in each story. (ACELT1622) 🌟 R LT
2. What does it mean to foreshadow something in a story? What does Miller do to foreshadow events in *Elizabeth and Zenobia*? Consider Elizabeth's memory of her father telling her stories on page 48. On page 83, the appearance of the gardener grafting plants is also an example of foreshadowing. (ACELT1622) 🌟 R LT

THEMES

Loneliness

1. Is it possible to feel lonely when you are not alone? Are there characters in the novel who feel this way? (ACELT1807) 📖 R LT
2. "'You're afraid of being ignored. Of being alone.'" (page 43) Do you think Zenobia is correct? Does Zenobia have similar fears? (ACELT1807) 📖 R LT
3. Elizabeth's father says that he understands that she is lonely and might feel the need to imagine herself 'less lonely' (page 94), but is Elizabeth the only lonely character in the novel? (ACELT1807) 📖 R LT

Fear & Courage

1. Zenobia faces things that Elizabeth fears. What does Zenobia do that helps Elizabeth face her fears? (ACELT1807) 📖 R LT
2. Make a list of the things that Elizabeth fears. Do you think these are things she should fear? (ACELT1807) 📖 R LT
3. Why is it so important to Elizabeth that she investigates the nursery wallpaper alone? (ACELT1807) 📖 R LT
4. "'Do you know what's brave, Elizabeth? When you're scared to do something, but you find the courage to do it anyway.'" (page 128) What does it take to be courageous? Find some examples of bravery and courage in the novel?

Loss

1. Elizabeth has already experienced her mother leaving. What other losses has she experienced in the novel? (ACELT1807) 📖 R LT
2. What is the effect of Tourmaline's disappearance on Withering House and the people who live there? (ACELT1807) 📖 R LT
3. How does loss change people in the novel? For example, consider Elizabeth's father or the Plant King and Queen who lost a child. (ACELT1807) 📖 R LT



Imagination

1. How does Miller create different worlds in the novel? Describe each world, such as the real world, the plant world, the fantasy plant Kingdom, Elizabeth's world. (ACELT1807) R LT
2. Why is our imagination important? What events occur as a result of Elizabeth imagination? What is the impact of these events? (ACELT1807) R LT
3. What should Elizabeth fear the most, reality or her imagination? (ACELT1807) R LT

RESPONDING

1. Everyone fears something. How is this shown in the novel? (ACELT1635) R W LT
2. Imagine you are Tourmaline, entering the Plant Kingdom for the first time. Describe her experience. (ACELT1632) R W LT
3. How do we determine what is imagination and what is real in Elizabeth's world? Hold a debate that argues that everything in the novel is a figment of Elizabeth's imagination. Find examples from the novel to support your arguments. (ACELT1635) R W LT
4. Write a newspaper report about the disappearance of Tourmaline Murrumbidgee. Hint at the strange events that occur in the novel. (ACELT1632) R W LT
5. Elizabeth needs Zenobia as much as Zenobia needs Elizabeth. Discuss this topic using examples from the novel. (ACELT1635) R W LT
6. Imagine you are making the novel into a film. Explain some of the creative challenges you might have in doing this. Choose a moment from the story and create a story board. (ACELT1632) R W LT