

Text Title: ***My New Zealand Story: Here Come the Marines***
(previously *A Long Way from Home: The Diary of Lillian Glenmore, Warkworth, 1943*)

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Synopsis

Lillian Glenmore is 14 years old. She lives in Auckland with her mother, and her father is away fighting in the war. When Lillian's mother learns that her daughter has Tuberculosis she sends her to live on her father and mother-in-law's farm, near Warkworth. The country air is supposed to be good for Lillian's condition. Lillian's sister Joyce accompanies her sister to work on the farm. If she stays in Auckland she may need to go and work for an essential war industry.

It takes both Lillian and Joyce a while to get used to life in the country. But soon Lillian has settled into school and made new friends. Joyce too is busy. Joyce makes friends with a local girl called Connie and the two spend a lot of their time hanging out with the American Marines who have been stationed in Warkworth. Lillian also makes friends with two Marines, Lou and Thomas, who regularly visit the farm. The Americans are exciting and different. They also have access to all sorts of luxury items that have become extremely scarce in New Zealand during the war, where rationing is in force.

When the girls' father returns from the war, Lillian can hardly contain her excitement. However, it doesn't take her long to realise that the man who left New Zealand is vastly different from the man who returned. Suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, Lillian's father begins drinking and becomes prone to flying into rages. Eventually the stress gets too much for him and he is hospitalised. Because of Ted's failure to fit back into his old life in the city, Lillian's parents decide to move to the farm. Huge changes are afoot for Lillian and her family. It is lucky for both Lillian and Joyce that their parents are there to support them when Thomas writes from overseas with terrible news about Lou...

Text Type

My New Zealand Story: Here Come the Marines is a fascinating account of life in New Zealand during World War II. Through Lillian's diary entries we learn that the war affects not only those who are away fighting, but also those left behind. People are forced to work in essential war industries and on farms. Rationing is in force and items that we take for granted are scarce. Students will find the information contained in Lillian's diary entries and in the Historical Note at the end of the novel fascinating, as they provide a realistic portrayal of life in New Zealand during World War II.

Lillian is an interesting heroine. She is at that awkward stage where she is not a child anymore, but not quite an adult. Through her diary entries we find out her thoughts and feelings about growing up and the difficulties that she faces adapting to life on the farm. Lillian experiences a teenage crush on Thomas, the American Marine who visits the farm regularly. Lillian illustrates courage when she sticks up for Mick and befriends Caroline, a girl who is bullied by her classmates because her last name is German. Perhaps the biggest issue that Lillian faces is dealing with her father when he returns from the war. He is not the same man who went away and Lillian has trouble relating to the bitter and angry man who has returned.

Themes include the negative consequences of war on those who leave to fight and those who have been left behind, post-traumatic stress disorder, patriotism, prejudice, growing up, dealing with grief and adapting to change.

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapter 1 (pp. 5–17), Chapter 2–6 (pp. 18–78), Chapters 7–11 (pp. 79–142) and Chapters 12–14 (pp. 143–182).

Encourage students to conduct some research on World War II so that they understand the context in which the book is written. Explain clearly key words and concepts introduced in the story such as rationing, the Home Guard, patriotism and prejudice. Have students ask questions about the events that occur in the story and try and relate Lillian's experiences to their own lives. Encourage them to make predictions about what is going to happen next and to discuss how Lillian's character develops and changes throughout the story.

Introducing the Novel

Study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- Where is the story set?
- When is the story set? What important world event was happening at the time? Who are the people depicted in the photograph on the front cover of the book?
- Who is telling the story? What do you expect from a novel that is set out in diary form?
- Why is Lillian sent to live with her grandparents? Where do they live?

Read the Historical Note at the end of the novel (p. 183) and look at the photographs.

- Why was 1943 the hardest year of World War II for New Zealand?
- Why was the government putting pressure on the farmers at this time?
- How did the government ensure that essential war industries got enough workers?
- What was rationing?
- How many American troops spent time in New Zealand from 1943-mid-1944?
- Why were the troops such a "hit" with the Warkworth residents?
- Why were many of the soldiers who came home for the Ruapehu Furlough draft not forced to return overseas?

Teacher reads Chapter 1 (pp. 5–17) aloud to the class. Students follow along in their books.

Comprehension Chapter 1 (pp. 5–17)

- Who is writing the diary? How old is she? What is the date of the first entry?
- Where did Lillian use to live? Where does she live now?
- Who is Joyce? How old is she? How does Lillian feel about her?
- How does Joyce's mum convince her to move to the farm?
- Joyce asks her granddad why his car hasn't been "requisitioned". What does this mean?
- Who is Uncle Joe?
- What is Joyce expected to do on the farm? What did she use to do?
- What do Joyce and Lillian notice when they walk around the farm?
- What information does Joyce learn from the lady at the shop? How does she react to the news?
- Why was Lillian sent to the country to live?
- Who is Mick?

- What chores must Lillian do every day?
- The farmhouse has electric lighting. What doesn't it have?

Discussion

- How have the people of Warkworth been affected by the war?
- Where is Lillian's father stationed? How would you feel if one of your family members was involved in a war overseas?
- How does Lillian's life on the farm contrast with her life in the city?
- Why is Joyce so excited when she learns that American Marines are coming to town? What type of things do the Americans have access to that is no longer readily available?

Students read Chapters 2–6 (pp. 18–78) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 2–6 (pp. 18–78)

- What jobs does Joyce have to do around the farm? Does she seem well-suited to farm work? Why/why not?
- What does Lillian mean when she says that Mr Schmidt's name "sounds German... but I suppose he must be a proper kiwi or he'd be locked away in a camp"?
- Who does Joyce make friends with at Warkworth? What do the two girls have in common?
- What information do we learn about Lillian's father from her diary?
- Where is Mick's dad fighting? What is his mother like?
- Why is Lillian dreading going to school?
- How is Warkworth High different to Lillian's other school? What does Lillian enjoy about school? What doesn't she like?
- Who is Caroline Schmidt? Why does she get teased at school?
- Who is Mr Snively? Why doesn't Lillian like him?
- What happens to Caroline during the air raid?
- What news does Lillian learn about her mum from their phone call?
- Which resources at Lillian's school are scarce as a result of the war?
- Why does Joyce buy furnishing fabric to make herself a dress?
- What does Lillian do to try and break the ice with Mick? Why does Mick have to go to school when he doesn't want to?
- Lillian's grandfather is a member of the Home Guard. What is the Home Guard?
- Why is Gran so upset about the missing tea?
- What are Hussifs? Why does Lillian have to make them?
- What happened to the rioting Japanese prisoners of war in Featherston?
- Who are the four marines who visit the farm? Which Battalion do they belong to? What are amphibian tractors?
- How do the Marines react when Joyce comes home?
- What gifts do Lou and Thomas bring with them when they come for dinner? Who does Lillian fall in love with? Who does Joyce prefer?
- What job does Mick's mum do for the soldiers?
- What is available for the Marines at the Red Cross Club?
- How does Lillian's dad describe the North African desert? Why is Mick so impressed with the letter?
- What does Lillian learn about the Marines' daily routine from Liz and Pete?
- How has Uncle Joe's death affected Grandad?
- Describe the military exercises the Marines take part in.

- Why is Joyce so upset when she learns that Connie got a volunteer job at the Red Cross Club?
- Why is Lillian allowed to go to the dance? Describe what happens at the dance.
- What does Thomas tell Lillian about his Pop's farm in Iowa?

Discussion

- Why do the kids at school tease Caroline? How does she deal with the bullying? What do you believe is the best way to deal with bullies? Have you ever been a victim of bullying?
- Why does Lillian think she is in love with Thomas? What feelings does she experience? What is it about him that appeals to her? Have you ever been in love? How did it make you feel?
- How has the war affected the people who have remained in New Zealand?
- Lillian thinks Mr Snively is prejudiced against particular students at her school. Why do you think Mr Snively treats some students differently to others? Find examples from the story that illustrate Mr Snively's prejudices.

Students read Chapters 7–11 (pp. 79–142) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 7–11 (pp. 79–142)

- What does Lillian see at the Open Day in Warkworth?
- What poet does Thomas introduce to Lillian? Why does she enjoy her work so much?
- What Marines' language does Pete Butcher teach Lillian on the bus?
- Where do Joyce and Lillian go with Mick and his little brothers? Who turns up there? What fun things does Lillian get to do?
- What special activities are organised for ANZAC day?
- Why won't there be any chocolate Easter eggs for Easter?
- Why does Lillian think Joyce is a bit "tiddly" when she gets home from the dance? What information does Joyce share with Lillian?
- What movie do Lillian, Liz and Pete go and see at Whangateau camp? Describe her experience there. Why does she feel like she doesn't belong?
- What jobs has Joyce learnt to do on the farm? Why does she hate her work so much?
- What does Gran mean when she says that Joyce would never "get into trouble"?
- Why does Lillian write to Thomas' sister Sarah?
- What big news about the war does the family receive on Friday May 14?
- What idea does Joyce come up with for Lou's 21st birthday present? How does she plan to fool the censor? How does Lou react when he learns about his gift?
- What does the article that Grandad reads in the newspaper appeal to New Zealand women not to do? How does Joyce respond to her grandad's comments to her?
- What comments does Mr Snively make about Maori people in History that upsets Lillian? How does Lillian stick up for Mick about his family? What does this suggest to us about her character?
- Why does Gran think that Lillian is just like her dad?
- What does Mick take Lillian and Joyce to see that they have never seen before? How do the girls react when they see it?
- What idea does Lillian come up with to stop the other kids from teasing Caroline? Why is her plan effective?
- What exciting news does Lillian hear on June 18?

- How long has Lillian’s dad been away fighting?
- What does Lillian overhear when she listens at Joyce’s door? How did Connie’s American boyfriend trick her? What does Lillian learn about Connie’s situation from Caroline?
- How does Lillian learn that some of the camps have been vacated? Why do you think the soldiers aren’t supposed to give anything to the locals?
- Describe Lillian’s first conversation with her father after he arrives home. What does Lillian notice about her father during the conversation?
- Why do Lou and Thomas have to leave the Whangateau camp? How do Lillian and Joyce react to the news that the boys are leaving? What does Lou give Joyce?
- What does Lillian learn about where Thomas and Lou have been stationed from Thomas’ letter?
- Why does Lillian go to meet Jacob at the library? How does the meeting go? What do the pair organise to do on their first real date? What does Lillian learn about Jacob when she meets them again?
- How does Lillian know that the Allies are making advances everywhere?
- What does Lillian notice about her father’s appearance when she arrives in Auckland? Why does her dad have tears in his eyes when he looks at Lillian?
- Why is Lillian’s dad thinking of refusing orders? Why does Lillian have so much trouble understanding her father’s position?
- Why doesn’t Lillian enjoy her holiday at home very much?
- How do the New Zealand returned soldiers feel about the American soldiers? Why do they feel this way? Why doesn’t Joyce tell her dad about Lou?
- Why doesn’t Lillian enjoy her visit with Claire and Yvonne? Why does Lillian feel as though she is on the outer with them?
- Why does Lillian feel as though Glenmore Farm is her home now? What doesn’t she like about the city?
- What good news does Lillian receive after her X-ray?

Discussion

- Describe Mick. Why does Lillian want to be friends with him? How has having a father who is away at war affected him?
- What evidence is there in the story to suggest that Lillian wishes she was older than she is? What does Joyce get to do that Lillian doesn’t?
- Why do Lillian and her family enjoy the company of the “Yanks” so much? Why is it exciting meeting people from different countries and cultures? What aspects of New Zealand do the young men enjoy the most? What luxuries do they have readily available to them that people in New Zealand missed out on?
- Connie finds herself pregnant by her American boyfriend. Why does Gran think that her parents will send her away? Describe the attitudes of society towards unwed mothers during the time that the story is set. How have attitudes changed today?

Students read Chapters 12–14 (pp. 143–182) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 12–14 (pp. 143–182)

- Why does Lillian burst into tears when she sees Gran? What does Gran tell her about her father?
- Why is Gran concerned about Grandad?
- Why does Lillian think Joyce might not be in love with Lou any longer?

- Who won the election?
- What exciting news does the Government announce about the furlough soldiers?
- What does Lillian do on her 15th birthday to make herself look older? What presents does she receive?
- Why is Lillian's dad still continuing with his campaign? How do they generate publicity for their cause? Why is Lillian's mum upset with his commitment to the cause?
- Why does Lillian's dad end up in hospital?
- What terrible news does Thomas give Lillian on November 3?
- Why does Gran clear out Uncle Joe's room?
- Describe Lillian's disturbing dream.
- Why is Mick's family moving? Why is Mick so happy about this?
- What big changes are in store for Lillian and her family? Why does Ted want to work on the farm? How does Joyce feel about her parents' decision?
- How did Thomas get wounded? What happened to Lou? How does Joyce react to the bad news? What details does Lillian learn about the tragedy from Thomas' letter?
- Who does Lillian bump into in town? Why does she agree to go out with him?
- What do Lillian and her family notice about Whangateau now that the Marines have gone?

Discussion

- In what ways is Ted beginning to return to his old self? How do you think his experiences during the war will affect the rest of his life?
- How does Lillian develop and change during her year living on the farm? What issues has she dealt with? What qualities and characteristics does she display?
- What issues did people living during the war have to deal with that we don't have to deal with today?

Activities

Research – Choose an interesting aspect of World War II to conduct a research assignment on. You may want to research The Home Guard, the riots that occurred among the prisoners of war in Featherston, the changes that occurred at home while the war was going on – particularly the changing role of women etc. Formulate focussing questions, come up with possible sources of information and record the research process. Present your information as a poster, in an essay or in a speech.

Letter – Imagine that you are Lillian. Write a letter to Thomas as he recuperates in hospital after his injury.

Plot – Choose 10 important events that occur in the story. Draw a flow diagram that lists the events in the order that they occur.

Character – Draw a picture of Lillian on a large piece of paper. On one side of the paper list all of her positive characteristics and qualities. On the other side list her negative characteristics. Include quotes and evidence from the story to back up your ideas.

News Report – Imagine that you are a news reporter. Write a feature article about the American Marines who have moved into Whangateau. Include quotes from locals and the Marines themselves. Try and capture the feeling of excitement that surrounded this event.

Character – Like many returned servicemen Lillian’s father came back from war a changed man. Explain the ways that Ted has changed and how these changes affected his family.

Theme – Many important themes and ideas are raised in this novel. Choose one theme and design a collage that depicts this theme. Include a quote from the story that helps reveal your theme.

Letter – Write a letter to a friend explaining why this is an important novel to read.