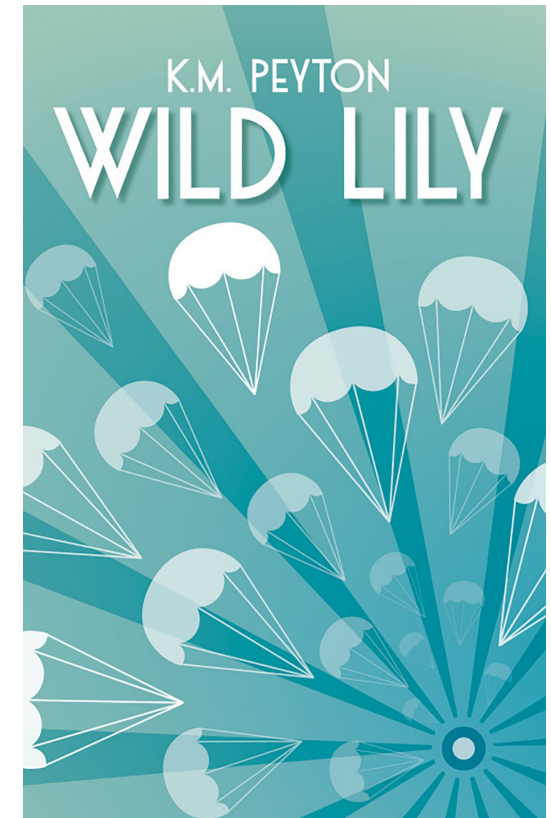


# WILD LILY

K M PEYTON

It's the 1920s and thirteen-year-old Lily may be the help, but her confidence and energy has gotten her an in with the rich, spoiled and aloof Antony and his clique. She gives more than he returns and her unconditional devotion leads her to agree to test a parachute as he flies his new aeroplane—someone has to do it, and none of the boys are willing. And when she falls, she realises just how exciting the world out there can be.

Life throws many challenges into the air for both Lily and Antony as they grow up. **Wild Lily** is a tale that shows nothing is ever certain whether you're rich or poor, man or woman, but having a wild independent spirit might just be the ticket to get you through.



**About the author:** K M Peyton is a British author of fiction for children and young adults. She has written more than fifty novels including the much loved **Flambards** series of stories about the Russell family which spanned the period before and after the First World War, for which she won both the 1969 Carnegie Medal and the 1970 Guardian Children's Fiction Prize. She was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2014 New Year Honours for services to children's literature.



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## STUDY NOTES

- Discuss some of the historical words in the novel, such as 'by Jove', 'squits' and 'trice'. Were you able to guess what they meant from context? Look up their meanings and see how close your guesses were. Do you think it is important that historical fiction keep the voice and vocabulary of its time?
- **Wild Lily** is set in a time when air travel was a new and burgeoning industry. To provide context have students research:
  - ◇ large-scale use of aircraft in World War I
  - ◇ Geoffrey de Havilland
  - ◇ Charles Lindbergh
- Consider the description of Antony's house, Lockwood Hall. Is it an inviting place? Compare and contrast this with other place descriptions in the novel. What mood does each place evoke? Identify the elements which contribute to such atmospheres.
- Antony and Lily are unlikely friends. What is the appeal of the other to each of them? Do you think that they treat each other as friends should do all the time? Why or why not?
- How does Lily's domestic life differ from Antony's in both material and immaterial ways? Who do you think seems happier?



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- 'She never called him Mr Sylvester, just Sylvester, because she ranked him as trade.' (April, 1921)  
Discuss the notion of the self-made man that was becoming more common in the 1920s.
- What does Mrs Carruthers' comments suggest about how people with old inherited wealth might feel about people like Mr Sylvester?
- Do you think that people's opinion of Mr Sylvester would be different if they knew more about the origins of his wealth?
- What else do you think motivates Antony to pursue flight aside from wanting to impress his friends?
- What literary devices does the novel use to establish a sense of foreboding before the tragic event at the party?
- How do the characters grieve Helena's death in different ways? Discuss the seven stages of grief. Can students identify any of these stages in the novel?
- 'She was only the gardener's daughter after all, and only hung in there with the gang by dint of her own persistence and rhinoceros hide.' (End August, 1921) What does this tell us about Lily's character? How does Lily both subvert and conform to gender and class norms of the 1920s milieu? Find examples.
- What might have happened if Antony did not fly the plane for his father to escape? If Antony told his father about Helena's death? Or if Helena didn't fall after her swansong? Students are to write a passage that would fit into the novel if one of these events, or another, did not happen or was different in some way.

- Why do people find the idea of the Van Gogh, Rubens et al paintings hung on Lily's living room wall ridiculous? What different value do you think Lily derives from the pictures that others may not?
- How do Lily and Antony each respond to the changed circumstances in their lives that Mr Sylvester's departure engenders? How does this affect their futures in the long term?
- Antony's parachute jump puts aspects of his life in perspective, and he does not pull the ripcord until it's too late. Discuss how difficult it might have been to have had such feelings in that time, especially given Antony's background and upbringing.
- Flowers and birds a recurring motif in the novel. Find examples and discuss how they comment on the action in the story.



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