

About *DEEP GIRLS*

Deep Girls tells stories that defy the conventions of young adult literature. The clichés of fictional relationships are tossed aside, and instead we read about girls whose relationships with their families are like the real relationships readers see in the world around them.

There are stories showing family members at their worst: a girl must stand up against expectations put on her by her parents and boyfriend; a sibling's assault on a parent drives a young woman to dark thoughts, and admiration for a rule-bending classmate; an ill grandmother is cruel to her daughter.

There are stories about the search for strength: a father and daughter try to survive as a family after a tragedy; a family friend who was victimized by violence returns from a mental hospital; a mother shows her daughter the heart that lies beneath a passive exterior.

And there are stories about young women adjusting to their emerging sexuality (while reluctantly caring for a neighbour's children, a teen turns her eyes to the kids' father), and that of their parents (a father and daughter take a trip to a bar, and each turns their attention elsewhere).

About LORI WEBER

Lori Weber is the author of several books for children, middle-grade readers, and young adults, including *Klepto*, *If You Live Like Me*, *My Granny Loves Hockey*, *Strange Beauty*, and *Tattoo Heaven*. A native of Montreal, Weber lives in Pointe-Claire and teaches English and Creative Writing at John Abbott College.

Curriculum

Grade 9, 10, 11, 12 English (Reading and Literature Studies)

Grade 9, 10 Social Sciences and Humanities (Family Studies)

Grade 9, 10 Health and Physical Education (Healthy Living — Human Development and Sexual Health)

Grade 11, 12 Social Sciences and Humanities (Gender Studies; Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice; Family Studies)

Student Objectives

After reading *Deep Girls*, students should be able to:

Grade 9-10:

- Describe important changes that are associated with adolescent development, and explain their influence on the behaviour and needs of young people
- Describe lifestyles in diverse families and the impact of a range of factors, including social and cultural factors, on these lifestyles
- Demonstrate their understanding, and build upon the skills needed to form what constitutes a “healthy” relationship — be that between peers, family, or in an intimate relationship

Grade 11-12:

- Demonstrate an understanding of how attitudes, behaviours, roles, and norms relating to gender are socially constructed, and of the complexity of gender as a concept and as a lived experience
- Analyse representations of women and men in media, popular culture, and the arts, and assess the effects of these representations
- Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of power relations in various social contexts
- Demonstrate an understanding of how self-concept influences an individual's interactions with others
- Demonstrate an understanding of various dynamics and challenges that can affect relationships
- Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of norms, roles, and social institutions on intimate relationships

Getting Started

1. Discuss different family constructs and the role gender plays in their dynamics.
2. Discuss social relationships and expectations placed on adolescents.

Discussion Questions

1. How do the expectations placed on Lizzie by her family and boyfriend adhere to gender norms? (“Deep Girls”)
2. What are some strategies Lizzie could use to form healthier relationships with her family? (“Deep Girls”)
3. How does Steph describe the Girl in the Purple Pants? What does the description reveal about Steph herself? (“The Girl in the Purple Pants”)
4. What factors prevent Steph from admitting she loves her sister? (“The Girl in the Purple Pants”)
5. Compare Miranda’s descriptions of her family to Mitchell’s family. What do these descriptions tell us about Miranda’s place in each family? (“Captivity”)
6. Why does Miranda release the sharks Mitchell caught back into the ocean? (“Captivity”)
7. In “Out of the Woods,” Joan suffers from agoraphobia. How do the other characters deal with her fear? How is her illness treated differently than her mother’s breast cancer? (“Out of the Woods”)
8. How does Kathy deal with the tension between her mother and grandmother? (“Out of the Woods”)
9. In what ways are things used to express love in “Out of the Woods”? (“Out of the Woods”)
10. Is Cal’s relationship with Tim healthy? (“Ice”)
11. Examine the imagery used in “Ice.” What images are repeated? What do they reveal about Cal? (“Ice”)
12. What stereotypes and gender norms inform the family dynamic in “My Cousin Jack”? Are their relationships healthy or harmful? (“My Cousin Jack”)
13. What does Dutchie’s necklace say about his character and his relationship with Jody? (“My Cousin Jack”)
14. How does Jody respond to the homophobic attack on Jack? (“My Cousin Jack”)
15. How is Amanda’s conception of Manhattan and her own sexuality influenced by popular culture? (“Pink Lady”)
16. How does Amanda describe the men in the story? In what ways do her descriptions reveal gender norms? (“Pink Lady”)

17. Why does Ruth try to make her mother hate the squirrels? (“Smart Aleck”)
18. How does Ruth’s self-concept change after the squirrel is killed? (“Smart Aleck”)
19. How does Alberta’s description of Mrs. Dwight shape your understanding of her character? Does Mr. Dwight’s description of his wife change this understanding? Why? (“Relativity”)
20. How do gender norms influence how Alberta views each family and her relationships with them? (“Relativity”)