



Bonjour Lucy Bee

by Anne Ingram

About the author:

Anne Ingram began writing stories when she was 10 years old and still likes to write for the 9-14 year old reader. She has worked as a journalist, librarian, editor, teacher and even had her own children's bookstore - all jobs involving books, writing and reading. Her short stories have been broadcast on National Radio and Access Radio and published in the School Journal.

Anne has always been interested in other cultures and has travelled widely. Her first novel, *Sea Robbers*, written in Singapore, has a NZ boy and his Malaysian friend caught up in an adventure with modern day pirates off the coast of Borneo. While living in Asia, Anne was commissioned by Heinemann to write 3 collections of traditional legends - one on Korea, one on the Philippines and one on Vietnam. Her second novel, *Lucy Bee & the Secret Gene*, is set closer to home in Kapiti where she lives. Inspired by young readers in her book store, it has themes of identity, bullying, friendship, family, genealogy, and school life. *Bonjour Lucy Bee* was written following annual holidays spent on her canal boat in France where she became increasingly aware of the plight of refugees, witnessing both positive and negative reactions to their presence.

Synopsis of Novel:

When Lucy goes to France she is looking forward to a wonderful holiday and to meeting her French relatives. Almost immediately, she gets offside with cousin Celeste who is anti-refugee. Then Gamma has a stroke which puts in doubt the family reunion planned for her 90th birthday at Tante's hotel, La Maison du Port.

A burglary at the local chateau coincides with the recent sighting of refugees and they are the obvious suspects. But Lucy becomes increasingly sure her cousin's boss, Raoul the antique dealer, is involved with the theft, and begins to wonder if Jean-Luc is caught up in it too.

On a walk along the canal, she discovers a very ill young refugee, Qasim, and hides him in the 'blind' house not realizing that what she is doing may be illegal. She does what she can to take care of him until overbooking at La Maison results in Lucy and two of her cousins being sent off to join Uncle on his barge, the Elisabet.

She eventually finds a way to get Qasim on board and they travel along the canal through idyllic French countryside with danger stalking close behind. Lucy is tested to the extreme. She has the adventure of a lifetime while playing a major role in helping Qasim find a home and eventually discovering the truth about Jean-Luc and the art theft. She also finds a way for Gamma to be present at the reunion.



Themes - Issues

- Identity and the importance of belonging in a family.
- Self-belief and the courage to do what feels right.
- Resilience in the face of tragedy and terror; the capacity for survival.
- Empathy, understanding and compassion for those in trouble.
- Acceptance and celebration of cultural differences.
- The joys of learning a new language.

Writing Style:

Narration is in the first person, told through Lucy's eyes. The present tense gives the text immediacy. The story progresses chronologically with occasional flashbacks and use of back story. Much of the action happens through dialogue. Lucy's interior monologues give the reader access to her feelings and concerns as she works through problems and sorts out what she should do. Some of the dialogue is in French, the meaning made clear from following text, but there is also a glossary of French words and phrases students can refer to if necessary.

Year Level Suitability:

The target audience is Year 6-10 readers. Younger readers will relate to the personal challenge/discovery and identity aspects as Lucy faces each problem that arises. The canal adventure and the mystery attached to Jean-Luc should also appeal. Older readers will find depth in the themes and relationship aspects. And, especially following the Christchurch terrorist attack, the refugee issue will have resonance with all levels. The French experience should engage all readers.

Curriculum Links:

Health syllabus: personal identity, self-worth, safety and risk management, personal growth through planning, executing and reflecting on a serious challenge.

Social Studies: social interaction with other cultures, societal attitudes and beliefs.

Geography: Middle East and Burgundy region of France.

Learning Languages: communicating in French/English with another culture.

Before reading, setting the scene:

Students work in pairs, examining the front cover of the novel, looking for verbal and visual clues as to what the novel is about and where it is set.

Students then read the blurb on the back cover and speculate on (a) what problems Lucy may have with the challenge she's signed up for, and (b) what the outcome might be.

Prior knowledge discussion/activities:

Ask the students to share any experiences they have had about either:

- Living in or holidaying in a country where the language and culture is different from their own. What challenges did they face with speaking and understanding the language?
- The negative or positive encounters or events a refugee or migrant might face in their new country. (Any first-hand accounts will require great sensitivity and respect on the part of the listening students).
- Personal interactions with someone from another country or culture and things they might have talked about in an effort to find common ground.
- The reaction they, and New Zealanders in general, had to the Christchurch terrorist attack. (This will need to be handled with sensitivity).
- Definitions of the terms 'refugee' and 'illegal immigrant', and discussion about the differences between them, would be helpful before reading.

During Reading - Understanding the content: Answers may be written or oral.

Chapter 1

1. What annoys Lucy about Celeste? Give two examples.
2. Write one sentence describing each family member Lucy meets.
3. What settles over Lucy and the others like a dark cloud?

Chapter 2

1. What is Lucy's reaction to the skipper of the Avila? What does this tell you about Lucy?
2. When does Lucy's French family take their main meal of the day?

Chapter 3

1. Why do you think Raoul, the antique shop owner is in such a sweat?
2. Who attempts to calm down the argument at dinner? Is the attempt successful?

3. What does Jean-Luc's job as Capitaine involve?

Chapter 4

1. Does Lucy's breaking the window surprise you? What were her other options?
2. What do you think was in the plastic bags?

Chapter 5

1. What is your opinion of Lucy's decision to hide Qasim?
2. What would you have done and why?

Chapter 6

1. Give two examples of how Tante tries to make herself understood when she doesn't know the words she needs in English.
2. Give three examples of how Lucy amuses herself in the hospital waiting room.

Chapter 7

1. Why doesn't Lucy tell Sylvie about Qasim?
2. Describe the ways in which Jean-Luc establishes a rapport with Qasim.

Chapter 8

1. How does Lucy rationalize taking things from La Maison?
2. Why does Qasim's face drop when Lucy says she hopes he will find a safe place when he continues his journey?

Chapter 9

1. How are the physical environments of the schools in Semur different to Lucy's school at home?
2. Make a list of French words that are almost the same in English.
3. Describe the mood of the adults at the refugee centre.

Chapter 10

1. Why might it be difficult for Qasim to get refugee status?
2. List the countries Qasim travelled through to get to France. Jean-Luc left one out. What was it?

Chapter 11

1. What does Lucy admire about Sylvie?
2. Give two reasons why Qasim wants to stay in France rather than England.

Chapter 12

1. When thinking about Adele, why does Lucy suddenly feel selfish?
2. Why does Jean-Luc keep working for Raoul?

Chapter 13

1. In what ways does Celeste make Lucy feel inadequate?
2. What is the difference between a moped and a motor-cycle.

Chapter 14

1. Why is Lucy not excited about going on Oncle's canal boat?
2. How does Lucy try to convince herself that Qasim will be okay without her?

Chapter 15

1. What is your first impression of Oncle René? Is there another side to him?
2. List some of the ways incoming refugees from WW2 enriched NZ and Australian culture.

Chapter 16

1. Why doesn't Oncle offer Sylvie a turn at steering the boat?
2. What happens when you 'raft up'?

Chapter 17

1. What are 'coats of arms'?
2. Why is Jean-Luc so cagey after their visit to Chateauneuf. What might he be hiding?

Chapter 18

1. Lucy uses two metaphors: 'light at the end of the tunnel' and 'a light bulb moment'. What is revealed to her in each?
2. Grand-pere and Oncle are in bad moods. Why?

Chapter 19

1. What, and when, is France's National Day?
2. Why does Oncle think Qasim has a chance of getting refugee status?

Chapter 20

1. What helps to explain Celeste's anti-refugee behaviour?
2. Describe the emotions you felt while reading Qasim's story.
3. Look at the family tree in the front of the book and trace Lucy's line back to her great-great-great-grandmother Marguerite.

Chapter 21

1. Who was Vercingetorix?
2. Why does Qasim believe that Afghanistan needs a Vercingetorix?

Chapter 22

1. How does Qasim share some of the customs of his homeland?
2. Do you think it is just the slow progress caused by the weed that is making Jean-Luc so restless? What else could it be?

Chapter 23

1. Are Lucy's suspicions about Jean-Luc justified? If so, why?
2. Describe the ways Sylvie and Lucy work together to save the Elisabet.

Chapter 24

1. Why doesn't Qasim drink alcohol?
2. Why was Oncle angry with Jean-Luc?

Chapter 25

1. How is Celeste's change in attitude to Lucy demonstrated?
2. What do you think has caused this change in attitude?

Chapter 26

1. Name the four members of the family known to have the same hair gene.
2. There are two surprise announcements in this chapter. What are they?
3. How did you feel when you came to the end of the story?

Post Reading - Taking it further

Oral group discussion:

1. Get the students in pairs to establish how important Frou Frou and Beau are to the plot, i.e., what part they play. One from each pair reports back to the class.
2. Choose two of the themes listed earlier and have the students discuss how these are revealed in the text and which character(s) best epitomize them.

Individual written work:

1. Describe what challenges a particular character had to overcome and what effect this had on their personal growth and understanding.
2. Write a book review for a magazine, the audience being the same age group. Briefly outline the plot (without giving too much away), the setting and some of the characters and themes. Give your opinion of the book, backed up by examples from the text.

Speaking and listening - role play activities:

1. Monologue: Either, take the role of Jean-Luc and explain your relationship with Raoul - how it began, how it evolved and how it ended. Or, adopt the role of Oncle René and explain what led to your decision to adopt Jean-Luc.
2. In groups of 3 - one the presenter and two the interviewees, act out a radio or TV interview where Lucy and Sylvie are asked how they saved the Elisabet.
3. Monologue: Looking ahead a year and speaking as either Qasim in France or Lucy back in NZ, reflect on the events of a year ago and how they have made you the person you are now.

Practical Group activity:

You will need a map that includes the Middle East and Europe. Trace Qasim's journey from Afghanistan to France. (See Chapter 10, question 2). On your map, write or draw in the events Qasim told Lucy about

Beyond text activities:

1. Make a 2-circle Venn diagram, the two circles overlapping to leave a generous space in the centre. On the left of the left-hand circle, list the factual details of the Christchurch terrorist attack, .e.g., place, date, number of people killed and injured. On the right of the right-hand circle, list some of the factual effects nationally, e.g., mosques closing raised terror level threat, new gun laws etc. In the middle, where the circles intersect, list some of the ways NZers came together in support of the Moslem and refugee community, e.g., PM's statements, flowers, food, fund-raising for victims' families, marches against religious intolerance, etc.

Finish with a class discussion about whether, out of this tragedy, NZ might become a better place, and provide a positive example to the rest of the world.

2. Research some of the many pre- and post- WW2 refugees to NZ who have enriched our country, e.g. Ernst Reizenstein (Vogel bread), Ans Westra (photographer), Mirek Smisek (potter), and write a sentence about each, describing how their contribution has made a difference. Then, list some members of your own community, who have settled here from another country, and write about the ways they contribute locally.

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