

# Lily's Dream

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Judi Curtin

## Teaching Guide

By Nicola Heaney

### RATIONALE AND THEMES

This guide has been designed to complement a class reading of the book in a way that brings the text alive whilst also enriching the students' critical abilities. The activities aim to inspire young readers by encouraging them to question the characters' motivations and think about the overall themes. The guide aims to develop empathy, stimulate discussion and encourage readers to dissect literary techniques in fresh and engaging ways. There are also activities included that are designed to hone communication, presentation and literacy skills. This novel explores the impact of war on those left behind and its key themes include:

- Courage
- Family
- Community
- Ambitions and Dreams
- Equality
- Civic Pride and Duty.

### SUMMARY

Set in summer 1914, *Lily's Dream* opens with Lily and Maeve at the seaside. Main character Lily is a young housemaid at Lissadell House. Her friend Maeve is the daughter of Countess Markevicz and the niece of Lily's employers. Unaware of the trouble looming in Europe, they spend a fun afternoon together – but their differences in social status are never far from the surface. As the novel progresses, unrest in Europe grows and it's not long before war is declared and things at Lissadell begin to change. Although Lily is able to distract herself with a blouse she's making for the Home Industries Show, she finds herself overwhelmed with her many tasks and responsibilities. Romance blossoms in the house, but before long, war comes to Lissadell as Harry and many of the other young men leave for the army.

Once the young men have left, Lissadell feels empty and those left behind are filled with

worry and sadness. They try to keep their spirits up by keeping themselves busy and making warm clothing to send to the men at the front. Thanks to Harry's frequent letters, they get an insight into the preparations and everyday life of the soldiers. Refugees begin to arrive in Ireland and Lady Mary asks Lily for her assistance in getting refugee families settled in to the local area. While this is a tragic situation, it opens up some exciting new opportunities for Lily – but things quickly sour when she has a very serious argument with Maeve. Despite Nellie's best advice, Lily and Maeve are unable to put things aside and they stop speaking to one another, which makes them both miserable.

Christmas arrives, with stories of strange goings-on at the front. It's the prompt Lily and Maeve needed and they're soon firm friends again. However, things don't stay happy for long when some terrible news arrives at Lissadell. Will things ever be the same again?

### APPROACH

This is a very enjoyable and entertaining read. There are lots of interesting characters and a lot of drama and action to keep readers entertained. There are also many opportunities for discussion and learning about World War I, class systems and equality. This guide has divided the story into three sections and the activities offer suggestions on developing the themes and examining the writer's craft in building characters and plot.

## Part One: The Calm Before the War Pages 5 - 92

### SUMMARY

The novel opens with two girls enjoying a day at the seaside. Lily is a housemaid at

Lissadell House and her friend Maeve is the niece of Lily's employers. While usually their different social status isn't an issue between them, sometimes Lily can get a little irritated at Maeve's lack of understanding – but tries not to let it affect their friendship as she knows Maeve means no harm – like her casual remarks about Lily not owning a bathing suit.

The occasional uneasiness between the two friends isn't the only tension. It's summer 1914 and war is brewing in Europe – a key topic of conversation both up and downstairs. However, Lily is too busy to really pay attention – both with her work and with the blouse she is making to enter in the local Home Industries Show. Maeve doesn't understand why it's so important to Lily – not just the cash prize, but also the honour of winning. Meanwhile, romance is in the air at Lissadell as Johanna becomes closer to Harry.

Tension between the girls grows as Lily is introduced to Stella, one of Maeve's friends and contemporaries. Lily focuses instead on her blouse and finally manages to get it completed just in time for the show. It's a fantastic day, full of excitement and wonderful sights and Lily is thrilled to win – especially when she spots some familiar faces in the crowd. After the highs must come a fall and as war is declared, its effects stretch to Lissadell as the young men begin to leave to fight.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read p.5.** Why is the date summer 1914 significant? Why do you think the writer has told us this right at the beginning? Do you know what 'pathetic fallacy' is? Why do you think writers use it?
- Read p.10.** What are your thoughts about Nellie? Would you be as understanding of your friend's friendship with the lady of the house or would you be jealous

that she gets to go off and have fun while you're at work? What does this tell us about Nellie's personality? Why do you think this?

- **Read p.12** Do you think there is a way Lily could tell Lady Mary that she doesn't have the time? What advice would you give her? Why do you think she is so worried about telling her employer the truth?
- **Read p.18.** What sort of man is Harry? Why do you think this? Why do you think he is blushing?
- **Read p.22.** Johanna states that it is right that Harry explains what is happening in the wider world. Do you agree with her? Why do you think this? Have you ever heard the saying "ignorance is bliss!?" What do you think it means? If you were in Lily's position would you rather know or not know about the potential war?
- **Read p.42.** Harry explains that young men will join up to fight for many different reasons. What reasons does he give? Do you think these are the only reasons? What do you think of the reasons he gives – are they sensible? Would any of these persuade you to join up? Why do you think this?
- **Read p.44.** Sir Josslyn reads how a German butcher's shop was attacked in London. Why do you think this happened? What would you say to the people responsible? Do you think it's important to recognise people as individuals rather than by their background? Why do you think this? Can you think of any examples in Ireland where someone was judged by their background rather than their actions? What happened? How does it make you feel?
- **Read p.52.** Lily says that "it's funny how you can forget big important things like war, when your mind is on small things like the next stitch, and the next stitch and the one after that." Do you agree with her? Why do you think this? Have you ever heard of mindfulness? Can you explain what it is and why some people find it useful? Have you got a hobby? Do you find it easy to get lost in your hobby?
- **Read p.89.** What do you think about Lily's comment "Can you mind someone on a battlefield? Can you tell the enemy not to shoot someone because you love them?" Do you think she's right? Why do you think this? Why doesn't she say this to Johanna?

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. TRIP TO THE SEASIDE

The book opens with Lily and Maeve at the beach. "It was a gorgeous sunny day. A gentle breeze tossed my hair, and a flock of seagulls screeched and squawked over our heads while Maeve and I chatted." Write your own description of a beach. The best descriptive work includes sensory details – don't just write about what can be seen, but describe the sounds and smells as well. Think about the weather too – a beach isn't always bathed in sunshine – especially in Ireland!

### 2. WAR IS BREWING

World War I was one of the most significant events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. But how accurate is Harry's explanation of how things began to happen? In small groups, research and prepare a presentation on the events leading up to the outbreak of WW1 and how they led to one of the world's worst conflicts.

Suggested resources:

[theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2014/jul/23/a-global-guide-to-the-first-world-war-interactive-documentary](http://theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2014/jul/23/a-global-guide-to-the-first-world-war-interactive-documentary)

[scoi.net.ie/uploads/resources/15073/14713.pptx](http://scoi.net.ie/uploads/resources/15073/14713.pptx)

### 3. DEAR MAEVE

For Lily, the Home Industries show is a chance to show off her skills as a seamstress – and also the opportunity to win some money to share with her family. For Maeve, these things are not important – but should she be so dismissive of her friend's ambitions? Imagine you are Lily. How can you explain to Maeve how important the show is to you without insulting Maeve or hurting her feelings? Write a letter or speech that gently explains to Maeve why the show is important to you and how sometimes Maeve's comments can be a bit hurtful.

### 4. KEEPING A DIARY

When she returns home, Lily finds an old story and it reminds her of the young girl she used to be. Why do you think diaries are a good way to record our lives? Do you have a diary? How long have you been writing in it? Ask the adults at home if they've ever kept a diary and if so, if they've ever read back through it – how did they feel? Write a letter to your future self to be opened in ten years' time. In it, include details about your life right now – who your friends are, what your worries are, what your hopes are for the future and anything else you think is

important or interesting.

### 5. SOCIALISING WITH THE STAFF

At the show, Lily meets Maeve's friend Stella, who seems surprised that Maeve is friends with a servant. Was this a common view at the time? Imagine you are Stella. How would you explain Maeve's friendship to your other wealthy friends? What sort of reasons might you give that it's a bad idea? Why do you think Maeve would disagree with her? Take it in turns to ask Stella your questions.

### 6. HOME INDUSTRIES SHOW

Lily is enchanted by everything she sees at the show – and causes quite a drama when she wins. Imagine you are a reporter covering the show. Include a description of what's going on and include a report on what happened when Lily won. Try to use some quotes from eye witnesses – maybe the organisers of the show explaining the benefits to the local community, other participants and someone who saw what happened when Lily won. This can either be a drama piece or a written news article.

### 7. CLASS DEBATE

Maeve's mother and Uncle Josslyn have very different views about war – one believes Ireland should remain neutral as it's not Ireland's fight and the other believes it's one country's duty to help other countries when they've been attacked. Who do you think is right? Do you think neutrality is a good idea in a global conflict? Why do you think this? In groups, draw up three or four arguments in support of or against the idea of neutrality in warfare. Debate in groups or as a whole class.

## Part Two: Playing the Waiting Game Pages 93 - 187

### SUMMARY

With many of Lissadell's young men off preparing for war, the house feels empty and sad. In the emptiness, Lily begins to grow frustrated with her position and determines to continue pursuing her dream of becoming a teacher. Maeve's return to Lissadell should keep Lily entertained and in good spirits, but Lily becomes irritated by Maeve's lack of tact and understanding. As usual, Nellie is a sympathetic and sensible ear for Lily and gives her some good advice – but have things gone too far?

Regular letters from Harry keep them up-

to-date on what's going on in the war preparations. The household becomes more involved in the war effort and Lily is given the opportunity to travel with Lady Mary to meet some refugees and help them settle in to their new home. This experience opens up a surprising and exciting new opportunity for Lily and despite the shadow of war, she is moving closer to her dreams. However, things with Maeve take a turn for the worst when cruel words ruin Lily's birthday and things between the two friends are very difficult. Lily is delighted to bump into an old friend who helps her set her mind to pursuing her dreams.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read p.102.** Lily decides to put her sadness aside and enjoy herself, saying "We were young and we couldn't be sad all the time." Do you agree with her? Why do you think this? Do you think this advice applies to other situations? Why?
- **Read p.109.** Do you think Maeve means to be mean? Why doesn't she understand? Is there a way that it could be explained to her? Do you think Lily is over-reacting? What would you say if you were Lily?
- **Read p.110.** What do you think of Nellie's explanation? Why is it always important to try to use empathy? What is empathy? Why is it important?
- **Read p.117.** Lily offers up the chance of a lifetime for Nellie – how does this affect your view of Lily? Do you think this is the sign of a good friend? Why do you think this? Can you think of any little acts of kindness you could adopt in your everyday life to make others' lives better?
- **Read p.145.** Lily's mam advises her to "be careful". What do you think she means by this? Do you agree with her warning? Why do you think this?
- **Read p.149.** It's Lily's birthday and she treasures the shawl her mam has made. Why do you think it's so special for her? What's the best birthday present you've ever given? Why do you think this?
- **Read p.153.** Maeve's reaction to Lily's new shawl is unkind. Why do you think Maeve has reacted in this way? What do you think is going on? Why do you think she boasts about all her presents?
- **Read p.173.** Why do you think Lily is so nervous about visiting a restaurant? Have you ever ordered food in a restaurant? Were you nervous? What advice would you give to Lily? (Remember, she is a housemaid so her social status is a little different to yours!)
- **Read p.187.** Lily has an opportunity to make friends with Maeve again, but

instead she is very formal with her friend. Why do you think she acts like this? Does it surprise you? Do you think it was the right way to behave? Why do you think this?

### ACTIVITIES

#### 1. HARRY PROFILE

We begin to learn more about Harry through his letters. What sort of man is he? Choose three or four adjectives to describe him. Why have you chosen these adjectives? Which parts of the text have given you these impressions? Choose an example from the text for each adjective and write a character profile. Each paragraph should say what adjective you think describes Harry and explain how the chosen quote explains your point.

#### 2. CLOTHING AS POLITICAL

When she meets Maeve at the stables, Lily is amazed to see her wearing trousers. Why was this such a shock to Lily? In small groups, research the history of women and trousers. Why were trousers not acceptable clothing for women? Was this fair? How did things change? Create a timeline of events and how things have changed. Why do you think clothing can be political? Can you think of any examples in modern life where people can or cannot wear particular clothing because of their gender? What do you think about this?

*Extension: What is your school uniform policy – is there anything in the policy that you disagree with? Write a persuasive letter to the headteacher giving three or four reasons for change.*

#### 3. REFUGEE CAMPAIGN

The Lissadell household and surrounding areas are trying to help refugees fleeing their homes because of the war. Do you know what a refugee is? In small groups, research refugees and charities set up to help refugees in Ireland such as [irishrefugeecouncil.ie](http://irishrefugeecouncil.ie). Is there anything you can do to help? In your groups, organise a charity event at school – this could be to raise money, or to encourage people to donate clothes, books, video games etc. Don't forget you'll need to advertise it using posters, the school newsletter, assemblies etc.

#### 4. DIARY ENTRY

Lily is very moved by the arrival of the refugees and Lady Mary tries to explain how they must be feeling. How do you think they might be feeling? Imagine you are one of the

family Lily meets. Write a diary entry about how you feel having arrived in Ireland.

#### 5. FRIENDSHIP LETTER

Despite their social differences, Lily and Maeve have always been good friends, so it's sad to see them arguing. Perhaps if Lily was a little honest with Maeve about how upsetting it can be when Maeve seems to dismiss her concerns this awful tension wouldn't exist. Imagine you are Lily. Write a letter to Maeve after your birthday that explains how you feel and how much the friendship means to you.

#### 6. SPECIAL LADY MARY

The more we meet Lady Mary, the more it is clear that she is a special person who acts against what's expected of her to help other people. Find three examples where Lady Mary ignores social expectations to help other people. Write a short essay on how Lady Mary is an interesting character of her time. Explain how a lady was 'supposed' to act then explain how your chosen examples show what sort of person she was (use a quote per paragraph).

#### 7. LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

In his last letter, Harry describes a bit about what life was like for the soldiers at the front. Using the information in Harry's letter and your own research, create a diary explaining the conditions of life in the trenches. Imagine you are a soldier at war and you've been asked to do a video diary explaining your experience. Think about what the conditions are like, what the atmosphere is like, what you're thinking and feeling and how you think things are going.

## Part Three Christmas in Wartime Pages 188 – end

### SUMMARY

It's Christmas time at Lissadell and the war is still going on – both in Europe and between Lily and Maeve. Letters from Harry give lots of detail about conditions at the front and a particularly moving letter prompts Lily to call a truce between herself and Maeve. After a difficult and honest conversation, things between them are restored.

Meanwhile, the war continues and Lissadell is becoming more involved. Terrible news comes to the house that leaves everyone devastated. While they wait for more information, life goes on and Lily continues working with the children of the house until

she receives some disappointing news. Even a visit home can't make her feel better – until she bumps into an old acquaintance. An unexpected visitor arrives at the house, delighting everyone.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read p.194.** Lily is still upset about her argument with Maeve. Do you think they should try to become friends again? Why? What do you think she should do? Why do you think this? What advice would you give her?
- **Read p.200.** Nellie is shocked that the men were able to play football with one another one day then go back to fighting. Do you agree with her? How do you feel about the Christmas Truce? What do you think it tells us about war? Why do you think this?
- **Read p.204.** Lily stops herself from saying everything's ok because "How could we be friends if we didn't tell the truth?" Do you agree with her? Does true friendship always need to be honest and truthful? Why do you think this?
- **Read p.208.** The chapter ends with Lily and Maeve friends again. As Lily says: "Life was good", why do you think the chapter ends on "for a few days"? What is the writer trying to achieve? How does this make you feel? What do you think is going to happen?
- **Read p.210.** When they find out that Sir Josslyn will be helping to make munitions for the war, Nellie is uncomfortable that the weapons that will kill men will be made in Lissadell. Why do you think she thinks this? Do you agree with her? Why do you think this?
- **Read p.218.** Nellie and Lily find it difficult to give comfort to Johanna. What would you say to her if you were them? Why?
- **Read p.226.** After days of being very upset, Johanna determines to have hope. What do you think of this? What do you think of her explanation? What sort of a

person is she? What makes you think this?

- **Read pp.245-246.** Johanna is wasting away waiting for news of Harry. Do you think this is healthy? What advice would you give Lily and Nellie on how to help Johanna?
- **Read pp.250-252.** What do you think of Harry's reasoning for not seeing Johanna? Do you think he's doing the right thing? How do you think Johanna will feel? What do you think Lily should say to him?
- **Read pp.260-261.** Johanna gives a passionate speech about how much Harry means to her that leaves the others crying. Why do you think they find it so emotional? What do you think of Johanna's speech?

### ACTIVITIES

#### 1. LETTER TO THE FRONT

Johanna and the others are upset at the thought of Harry being in such danger. Do you think there's anything else they can do for Harry and the other young men? Imagine you are Johanna – write a letter to Harry. Think about how she wants him to feel – do you think she'd mention how upset and worried she is? Why not? In the letter make some suggestions about things they could do to help the men at the front and ask Harry's opinion.

#### 2. CHRISTMAS IN THE TRENCHES

Harry's letter describes an incredible Christmas in the trenches – which really did happen. In small groups, research a little more about Christmas 1914 at the Front (there's more information on pages 268-271). What other things did the men do? In your groups, freeze frame the events. Aim for about five frames – think about how the men must have felt before going over the top and how they must have felt when the order came to start firing again and reflect this in

the body language and facial expressions.

### 3. MAEVE AND HER MOTHER

In pages 205-7, Maeve admits to Lily that she is jealous of Lily's relationship with her mother because she feels her mother neglects her. Imagine you are Maeve. How would you try and explain to your mother that you need her to be more attentive? Remember that she is your mother and you love her and are very proud of her. Write a speech that explains how you feel.

### 4. FOLLOWING HER DREAMS

An encounter with her old teacher opens the door for a future teaching and Lily is over the moon. But how will her friends at Lissadell take the news? Do you think the other servants will be happy for her? Create a drama script for Lily arriving back at Lissadell and telling everyone the news that she could become a teacher after all.

### 5. LOVERS REUNITED

Harry and Johanna reuniting is a wonderful moment in the book. Work in small groups to create four freeze frames from Harry entering the house to them being fully reunited. What is each character thinking/feeling in each frame? Be prepared to explain your thoughts.

### 6. SOLDIERS SHUNNED

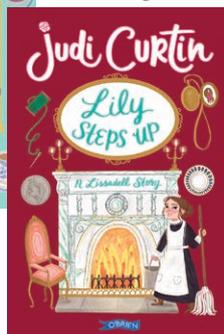
Read the historical notes on pages 266–268. What do you think about the fact that many Irishmen who fought in World War I were shunned when they returned to Ireland. In small groups, research what happened. Do you think this was fair? In your groups, create a persuasive speech arguing that the Irishmen who fought in World War I should be properly commemorated.



Judi Curtin is the best-selling author of the 'Alice and Megan' series, the 'Eva' series and the 'Time After Time' series, about Beth and Molly, accidental time-travelling best friends. Judi won the Children's Book of the Year (Senior) at the Irish Book Awards in 2017 for *Stand By Me*.



When Lily is a young teenager, the time comes for her and her friends to leave school and find work; some are emigrating to America, some going to work in shops. Lily is going into service in the Big House – Lissadell. A warm and engaging story about friendship, life in the early 20th century and how the political world affects everyone.



Lily and Nellie work hard as housemaids in Lissadell. And yet their days are full of friendship, fun, and even madcap bicycle rides with Maeve, daughter of the famous Republican, Countess Markievicz. But Nellie is all alone in the world; she grew up in the workhouse, where she was separated from her sisters. Lily longs to help her, but how can she?