



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Displaced

by Christina Sanders
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

Eloise and her family must leave Cornwall on a treacherous sea journey to start a new life in 1870s colonial New Zealand. On the ship across, Eloise meets Lars, a Norwegian labourer travelling below decks, and their lives begin to intertwine. When her brother disappears, her father leaves and the family are left to fend for themselves in their new home, Eloise must find the strength to stand up for what she believes in and the people she loves.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Cristina Sanders is an historical fiction writer from Wellington, now living in Hawke's Bay. She began her career in the book trade in her parents' children's bookshop and spent some years with Collins Publishers in NZ, Hodder & Stoughton in London and back home to Booksellers New Zealand. This was followed by three children and a business career. In 2018 she completed the Graduate Diploma in Creative Writing at Whitireia. She works with a forest regeneration project, and spends her downtime up the mast of the Spirit of New Zealand. In 2020 she won the Storylines Tessa Duder award for the manuscript of *Displaced*, a novel about an immigrant family in the 1870s. Her debut novel, *Jerningham*, about the recklessness of colonial New Zealand, was published in June 2020.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Secondary years 7-9
- Ages 12+

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Fiction

Themes/Ideas:

- Family
- Loss
- Immigration
- Love



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Discussion Questions and Activities:

What are some of the themes in this novel? As a class or in small groups identify and list the themes. Individually write a statement of belief about each theme.

Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? How does Eloise feel 'displaced'?

"Everything Eloise had ever known had sunk below the horizon while her eyes were closed. Gone so fast. The farm, her friends, the countryside. Everything that made up the blood in her body. There was nothing now but an ocean of water, and she was the centre of the visible world," (page 21). How does Eloise shape and define her identity and sense of self? How does she change as a character as a result of the events of the novel?

"Were these Norwegians pushed or pulled? Eloise decided it must take both for people to leave their homes. No one would make such a trip without being both dragged and shoved," (page 23). What reasons may people have had for immigrating to New Zealand? Was it voluntary or involuntary?

Do you believe Eloise did the right thing by telling her father her theory about Matthew and Rose? What repercussions did her choice have?

Do you think moving to New Zealand improved Eloise's family's lives? Why or why not? Have a class debate on the topic.

What expectations did Eloise have about her life in New Zealand? How was the reality similar or different?

How does *Displaced* shine a light on the immigrant experience? Did you learn anything that surprised you?

"I think maybe you do not understand what it is to be poor," (page 143). How might the family's journey on the Balmoral have been different if they were 'below deck' like Lars? How does the novel further explore this class divide?

Have a class discussion on traditional family roles, including the characteristics of each role and what relationship you would expect each role to have with the other. Consider questions such as:

- What are the responsibilities of a parent?
- How would you expect a parent to behave around their child when they're upset?
- What role does trust play in a family?

How does this apply to Eloise's parents in *Displaced*? In what ways does Eloise have to step into a new role in the family after the loss of her brothers?

How does the character of Martha grow and change in the book? How would the novel be different if we heard from her perspective directly?

"Her family was entirely broken, with all the things they didn't tell one another," (page 224). How are the family truthful or untruthful with each-other? Discuss how this quote plays out through the events of the novel, and how the theme of family is explored in *Displaced*.

Mr Duffy brings starlings to New Zealand, in an attempt to save crops from caterpillars. What other animals were introduced to Australia and/or New Zealand? Have they helped or harmed the local flora and fauna?

"You'll have to watch out for the Māori men. They're so dark you can't see them. Perhaps their eyes, sometimes. Little beady eyes, like berries on a bush. They watch you and watch you and then – poof! They disappear," (page 126). How does *Displaced* explore racism? You could consider the butcher's conversation with Eloise, her initial attitudes towards Hemi, or the reactions Martha faces with baby Winnie.

How are faith and religion presented in the novel through the character of Serenity? What role did religion play in day-to-day life in the 1800's?

When Lars and Eloise first meet, Eloise believes he can't speak any English. How does this affect their first meeting? Why might Eloise have been more open and honest when she thinks he can't understand her? How do they get past their language barrier?

"Sadness hung like weights in her dresses, lumps in her body, heavy black patches in her soul. Lethargy claimed her and she didn't resist," (page 83). There are many moments of sadness and loss in the book – including the family leaving their home, Clem's death and Matthew's disappearance. How do Eloise and other characters in the novel work through their grief? Is there a right or wrong way to process it?

Why does Eloise have complicated feelings about potentially marrying Cornelius? How might Eloise's life had been different if she had?

"You are a woman. You will always be in debt to somebody," (page 268). Discuss this quote in relation to the events of *Displaced*. How have gender norms changed since 1872? Are there any ways in which you believe they have stayed the same?

What do you think about the ending of the novel? What do you believe the future looks like for Eloise, and for Lars?