

Dare Truth or Promise

Paula Boock

Winner, Book of the Year
1998 NZ Post Children's Book Awards

Paula Boock's mastery with words ensures that moments are captured memorably... All the elements fit together into a seamless whole; setting, characterisation, narration and storyline combining in a novel that has vitality and verity.

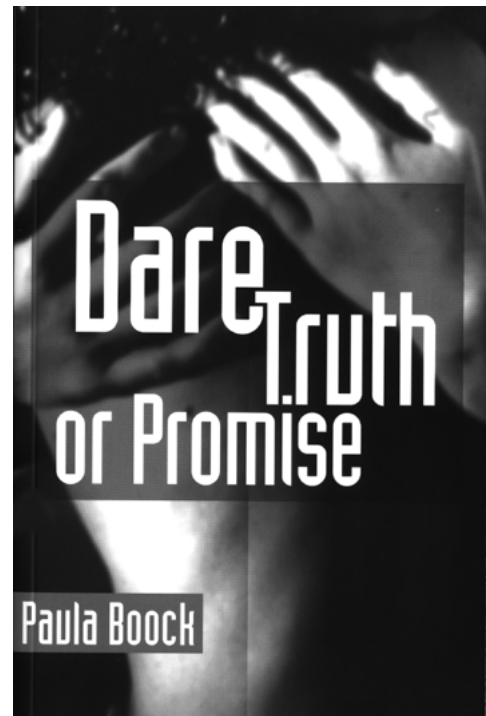
Judges' Report, 1998 NZ Post Children's Book Awards

What a pleasure to read a book that considers philosophical and moral dilemmas rather than merely issues. This is a bold, truthful and provocative book as well as a deeply engaging one.

Agnes Nieuwenhuizen, Australia

A very important novel... an essential addition for all secondary school and public libraries... *Dare Truth or Promise* should become part of the literature discussed in years 11 to 13 English programmes.

*Dr Elody Rathgen, Senior Lecturer in Education,
University of Canterbury*



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In this Resource Kit:

- a personal statement by Paula Boock
- chapter by chapter approach
- discussion points
- activities
- extensions
- individual, paired and group work
- linked to English curriculum strands
- resource list

Other novels by Paula Boock

Out Walked Mel
1991, Winner, AIM Best First
Book Award

Sasscat to Win
1993, Winner, Esther Glen Medal

Home Run
1995, Finalist, AIM Children's
Book Awards

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Notes on this Resource Kit

Paula Boock's *Sasscat to Win* has featured in our Junior English Programme for several years now. It's so popular that we constantly have to replace 'lost' copies of the book. At senior level however, it's harder to find challenging, well-written, contemporary novels which are popular and accessible to the students. *Dare Truth or Promise* is the answer to this difficulty. It's powerful and it's real,

and in spite of the controversies surrounding its publication, it's safe to teach.

This resource kit of activities for English teachers is designed to be used at Year 12 level and provides a starting point for creating a detailed unit. At least one idea for the during-reading process is outlined for each chapter of the book, frequently more than one. These ideas connect directly to the strands of the curriculum.

C. Fountain, Queen's High School, Dunedin

Author Comment

In 1994 I found myself with two successful published books on the shelves, another with the publisher, and a six month fellowship at the Dunedin College of Education. It was the opportunity I had been waiting for, and I knew the book I wanted to write.

I'm always looking for a story that involves strong emotion, things that matter and are real, and conflict, dilemmas that will involve a process to resolve. A good book to my mind also involves personal transformation of some kind. I knew that falling in love with the 'wrong' person, and the ensuing (re)discovery of self, offered up a story with all those wonderful elements – and it was something that I knew about. Although this story (the plot, the characters, the setting etc) is not autobiographical, I could draw upon my own emotional memory of how that internal process *felt*.

A lot of people say this book is about homosexuality, about equality, issues of equity and civil rights. To me, this is a book about love. It is about a different kind of love, but I hope that when people read it, they'll find that in fact, the experience of love is universal – whether it crosses race, cultural, age, class or gender boundaries, or not. It is the oldest story in the world – from *Romeo and Juliet*, to *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* and millions of stories in between.

But of course, everything is political – we can't avoid that either. There is as much politics in a book about a nuclear family in which the Dad works and Mum stays at home and they all go to church on Sunday, as there is in *Dare Truth or*

Promise – just different political messages. Everyone, including me, has their own opinion on the issues arising from this story. But it seemed to me that very few people who hold views on these things have had much first hand experience of gay love, and that is why I wrote *Dare Truth or Promise* – not to tell you what to think, but to share with you how it feels.

RESOURCE LIST

Interviews

North & South, 'Face to Face with Paula Boock', July 1998

Otago Daily Times 'Boock's Honest Book', 28 April 1998

Magpies New Zealand, 'Know the Author – Paula Boock' No 1 March 1998

Sunday Star Times, 'Daring to Tell the Truth...', 21 December 1997

Bookmarks, Radio NZ, Interview broadcast December 1997

The Write Stuff, Pinnacle Producing (TVNZ on screen 9 November 1997)

Reviews

Evening Post, 26 December 1997

Dominion, December 1997

Otago Daily Times, 10 February 1998

Express Newspaper, 19 February 1998

Reading Time (Children's Book Council of Australia), Vol. 42, February 1998

Viewpoint (On Books for Young Adults, University of Melbourne), Vol. 6, Autumn 1998

Magpies NZ, No 1 March 1998

Tearaway, April 1998

New Zealand Books, June 1998

Louie (pp. 7-15)

- SPEAKING** 1. Before reading the chapter, divide the class into pairs to talk about their first day at High School, their first impressions of their classmates and the things that attracted them to some people and not to others.
- PRESENTING** 2. Find a magazine face and a quote for each of the employees at Burger Giant.
- READING** 3. Skim through the chapter after an initial reading of it. Search for Willa's actions and record these down one side of a page. On the other side, note the way Louie reacts to each of these.

Willa (pp. 16-22)

- WRITING** 4. Using these quotes as clues, come up with some possible reasons why Willa has had to change schools and how this might be connected with the letter and her reaction to the Comedy Club performance.
- p. 18 "Willa's letter had disappeared"
". . . hope everything's good at the new school, what a business"
- p. 20 "Die, bitch"
- p. 26 "She screwed it up violently and fired it into a rubbish bin"
- LISTENING** 5. Read the Comedy Club scene as a broken reading, the students putting themselves in the auditorium and responding in journalling form.

Willa (pp. 23-29)

- READING** 6. Build up a picture of Willa, gleaned from the first 3 chapters. In paragraph form, write a profile of this character.

Louie (pp. 30-43)

- PRESENTING** 7. Make a newspaper word collage to show the differences between Willa's home and family and Louie's.
- SPEAKING** 8. Play "Dare, truth or promise", focusing on the truth option. Make up truth questions and put them on cards. Put the students in small groups to discuss them.

Willa (pp. 44-49)

- READING** 9. Before reading the chapter, have students read aloud the reasons they came up with for Willa's change of school.
- WRITING** 10. Do a piece of journal writing beginning with "I'm Willa and I feel..."

Willa (pp. 50-53)

- SPEAKING** 11. Discussion question: Why do you think Willa is so sensitive about Louie's attitude to religion? (refer to pages 41, 51, 52)

Louie (pp. 54-57)

- WRITING** 12. Do a piece of journal writing beginning with "I'm Louie and I feel..."

Louie (pp. 58-66)

- SPEAKING** 13. In groups, act out the scene between Louie and her parents (pages 58-60)
- VIEWING** 14. Watch each performance and evaluate.
- LISTENING** 15. Read pages 62-66. After listening to it, get the students to write an honest response.
Read the responses to each other in pairs and discuss.

Willa (pp. 67-75)

- READING** 16. Before reading this chapter, brainstorm what might happen when Willa meets Louie's family for the first time.
- WRITING** 17. Write bio-poems based on the events of this chapter for Willa or Louie or Susi.

Willa (pp. 76-82)

- WRITING** 18. Reflecting on both this chapter and the previous one, write a paragraph comparing the two mothers and their reactions to the friendship between Willa and Louie.

Louie (pp. 83-86)

- READING** 19. Read a prose version of "Twelfth Night".
- SPEAKING** 20. Why is "Twelfth Night" a significant choice of play to be performed in this novel?
- READING** 21. Skim back over the first 11 chapters of the book. Make a list of the features of Louie's personality. In the light of these, look closely at the conversation Louie has with Mo, pages 84-86.

Louie (pp. 87-95)

- WRITING** 22. Take the class to sit in the hall and write in their own words what Louie has experienced in this chapter.
- SPEAKING** 23. Organise the class into pairs – one person to represent Susi, the other to represent Louie. Pass a piece of paper back and forth recording a silent conversation between the characters. Read it aloud to the class.

Willa (pp. 96-102)

- PRESENTING** 24. Make a visual response to the emotional tensions Willa is experiencing, focusing particularly on the effect Keith and Susi are having on her.
- and / or ...**

Louie (pp. 103-107)

- PRESENTING** 25. Make a visual response to the conflict Louie is experiencing with her mother.

Louie (pp. 108-109)

- VIEWING** 26. Colour photocopy a reproduction of Munch's "Scream" on to an overhead transparency. Put it up while you read the chapter.
- READING** 27. Read pages 108-9. Look at the contrasts between characters. Explore the imagery Boock has used.

Willa (pp. 110-113)

- WRITING** 28. After reading the chapter, look for clues to piece together what must have happened when Willa's relationship with Cathy was discovered.
- This could be the basis for a poetic writing assignment.

Willa (pp. 114-116)

- SPEAKING** 29. In pairs, act out this scene using the chapter as a script.

Willa (pp. 117-121)

- LISTENING** 30. Read the chapter aloud in episodes. After each episode get the students to write an entry in Willa's diary.

Louie (pp. 122-132)

LISTENING

31. Read this chapter in the same way as the previous one, getting the students to write entries for Louie's diary.

Willa (pp. 133-138 & pp. 139-142)

READING

32. Read through the two chapters, picking out key quotations which get to the essence of Willa's confusion and depression.

PRESENTING

33. In groups, combine the quotations you've chosen and use them to create a series of freeze frames. Present them to the class.

Louie (pp. 143-146)

SPEAKING

34. Have a class discussion around the issues touched on in this chapter. Create a safe atmosphere where the students can express their personal views and are also open to hearing the views of others.

Willa (pp. 147-151)

PRESENTING

35. Choose a quotation from this chapter and present it in visual form.

Louie (pp. 152-159)

WRITING

36. After reading Louie's description of Willa on page 156, write the description of Louie you think Willa would give to Father Campion.

SPEAKING

37. Compare the views Father Campion expresses in this chapter with those expressed by Keith two chapters previously. Discuss as a class.

Louie (pp. 160-168)

READING

38. After reading this chapter, rewrite it from Willa's point of view.

Willa (pp. 169-174)

READING

39. After reading this chapter, rewrite it from Louie's point of view.

Willa & Louie (pp. 175-180)

READING

40. Read the last chapter aloud and after sitting in silence a while to absorb it, get the students to journal their thoughts.