

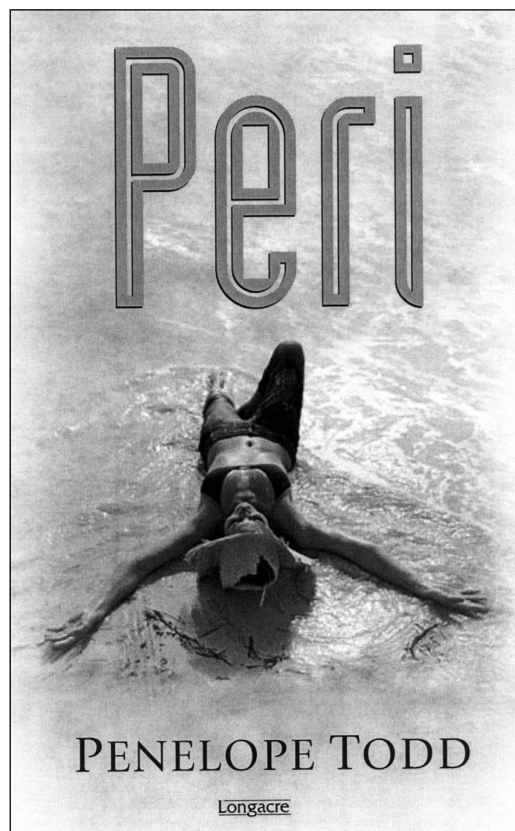
Peri

by PENELOPE TODD

A move to a new town throws Peri's whole family into a spin – especially her younger brother, Luke, who decides the safest place for himself is high up in a front garden tree.

Then Peri's new friend, Tamsin, introduces her to Max. Magnetic, brooding, slightly dangerous, Max begins to wield an irresistible power over Peri – and Luke. Should Peri protect her little brother? Or should she pursue her own strong attraction to Max? Whatever Peri chooses, there are some potentially frightening consequences along the way.

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YOUNG ADULT FICTION



Resource Kit for use in schools

THIS RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Chapter by chapter comprehension questions
- Short essay topics
- Research questions
- Group discussion points
- Debate topics
- Critical and creative exercises
- Visual interpretations
- Vocabulary exercise

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Comprehension Questions

The following comprehension questions will help you to keep a "reading diary", or study notes on the novel, as it progresses.

Chapter One:

1. What is the initial setting of the novel?
2. Why exactly does Peri's family move?
3. Why does Aunt Charlotte want the family to move to Christchurch?

Chapter Two:

1. pp 12-13: What sorts of things is Luke imagining in his tree?
2. p. 15: What sort of atmosphere seems to suit Luke best? What aspects of Luke's behaviour in the tree would reinforce your answer? (See also Chapter 8, pp 52-53).

Chapter Three:

1. What is it about Aunt Charlotte's bedroom that makes it feel like an old woman's room?
2. pp 11 & 21: What are Peri's initial impressions of her new school?
3. p. 21: What makes the living room seem like a museum?
4. p. 22: Are there any responses to the new house that Luke and Peri seem to share? Can you imagine quite different responses to a new house?
5. p. 23: Why is Luke so sensitive to the aura that Aunt Charlotte has left behind in her house?

Chapter Four:

1. Why does Luke pretend to be blind?
2. p. 26: How does Luke misinterpret the story about the last housekeeper?
3. What makes Luke's approach to the world distinctive? What difficulties could you foresee for Luke and his family if he continues to see the world the way he does at age nine?
4. How does Peri persuade Luke to stay out of the tree for the evening?

Chapter Five:

1. p. 32: Where is the change in time frame on this page?

2. How does Peri deal with her problems? Do you think she is a coper? Do you admire her?
3. What sort of moods do you associate with the type of rooms that the author describes?
4. Why do you think Sarah and Jim leave Peri to look after Luke so often?

Chapter Six:

1. pp 42 and 53: Why do you think the story of Ping appeals to Luke?

Chapter Seven:

1. pp 49-50: Can we tell at this stage whether Max is having a positive or negative effect on Peri? Give evidence to support your answer.

Chapter Nine:

1. p. 55: "His face stayed with her that day like a stain that made her feel a kind of rich dismay every time she saw it." Offer an interpretation, in your own words, of what this means. What could the different causes of the dismay be? Can you identify with it?
2. p. 56: What does a "bye" mean in context here?
3. p. 56: Why does Peri reply "in relief" to Sarah's questions at this point?
4. p. 61: What is the "sixth sense"? Have you heard any stories about people who are supposed to have the sixth sense? Do you believe these stories?

Chapter Twelve:

1. p. 75: Why do you think Luke misses a particular style of cooking?
2. p. 75: What is the connection between Tamsin, Max, and the fact that Peri doesn't eat much at this stage of the story?
3. p. 76: Why is Luke so wary about the dining room?
4. What sort of influence does Max seem to be having on Luke?

Chapter Thirteen:

1. Why doesn't Peri tell Chloe all the details about what happened when Max came over to take Luke surfing?

Chapter Sixteen:

1. What connections are there between the family story about Aunt Charlotte and the man injured in the war (p. 71) and the events that happen between the main characters in Chapter Sixteen?

Chapter Seventeen:

1. What is Peri's response to the fight between Max and Stuart?

Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen:

1. pp 106-108: Who is the most responsible for the near accident? Who is the least responsible?
2. pp 107-108: How can we tell that Max is concerned about Luke's actions?
3. p. 110: Did Peri have any way of knowing how Max would respond to her when they were alone in the boat?
4. p. 110: What makes Peri feel "caught between loyalty to Max and anger"?

Chapters Twenty and Twenty One:

1. p. 115: Why did Luke become so distressed when overhearing Max's and Peri's conversation in the rowboat? (Re-read pp 104-106 also.) What interpretation of the conversation does Luke arrive at?
2. pp 115-116 and p. 123: Considering Luke's responses to the way Max treated Peri in the rowboat, why does Luke then draw a picture for him? What do you think he is trying to convey through the drawing?
3. pp 119-120: On page 119, what do we find out about what Peri wants from a relationship? On page 120, what do we find out about what Tamsin wants in contrast?
4. p. 120: What, on this page, seems to contradict Tamsin's opinion of Max?

Chapter Twenty Two:

1. p. 126: What does it mean when Luke the author writes, "Mum dropped a paper. Luke didn't see it actually falling but she had time then to unpack the boxes and start painting the horrible bathroom ..."?
2. What do you think might have influenced Sarah to drop her paper and Jim to give up one night a week with the band?

Close Reading/ Short Essay Topics

The following questions can either be answered in complete paragraphs, or used as the basis for short essays.

1. When you have read the whole novel, re-read pages 8-9 and page 21. How does the description of the mother's character change over the course of the novel? Does Peri's opinion of her mother on page 21 seem to hold true in all things?
2. pp 35-36: Do you agree with Tamsin's assessment of how friendships develop? Is her approach failproof? Do opposites always attract in friendships?
3. p. 37: Re-read the conversation Peri's family has here. Which issues do you feel comfortable discussing with your family? Which topics do you find it difficult to confront with them? Have there been any decisions that your parents have made which you'd prefer to have had more part in?
4. Onomatopoeia is a technique often associated with poetry, but Penelope Todd uses it for strong effects in prose also. She often uses it in the chapters to do with Luke, but onomatopoeia is also interspersed throughout the novel. List as many instances as you can find. Comment on what mood or tone they convey.
5. If you have a favourite sport, describe exactly what it is about it that particularly appeals.
6. p. 98: Peri talks about her animal self and her responsible self. If you had to divide up your personality in a similar way, what emotions, qualities, or past actions would each separate half control?
7. Do you feel that all the tensions in the novel are resolved at the end? Is resolution of all tension what a novel should aim for?
8. When you have finished the novel, re-read the first two pages. Do you think Peri's dream has any particular significance in the context of the whole novel? Write two or three paragraphs about one of your own most significant dreams – be it an anxiety dream, a premonition, or simply something quirky and funny.

9. Choose one of your favourite chapters, and list all the similes and metaphors that you can find. What sort of difference do you feel this descriptive language makes to a novel?
10. There are many evocative descriptions in the novel of how people communicate their moods and thoughts through simple eye contact. How many can you find in *Peri*? What emotions do they convey?
11. What are the main points of climax in the novel?

Research Questions

1. See if you can find out what “tree-dwellers” have been associated with most frequently in the news over the past decade or so.
2. What does the life of a professional, competitive surfer involve?
3. Find out about New Zealand’s involvement in World War Two – or, if you weren’t born in New Zealand, find out what involvement your native country had in World War Two.

Debate Topics

Divide the class into affirmative and negative teams to debate the following topics:

- “Books and television are sworn enemies.”
- “School balls are all an act: they’re a place where nobody can be themselves.”
- “Men are all brawn and women are all talk.”
- “Children with special needs can never be a part of our community.”
- “Email friendships are the best way to get to know someone properly.”
- “Midlife catastrophes are just an excuse for adults to act like stropky children.”

Group Discussion Points

Either divide the class into small groups of 2-4, and then get these groups to present a summary of their discussion to the general class, or discuss the following issues as a large group.

1. Attitudes to new pupils – are there criticisms you’d have of how your school deals with new pupils? Or of the way past schools you’ve been in have dealt with new pupils? What is the best way to welcome new students to a school?
2. Characterise the relationship between Peri and Luke. Does it seem closer than the bond between most siblings? If you have brothers and sisters, what similarities and differences are there between Peri and Luke’s relationship, and your own sibling relationships?
3. Do you think you and your family would have handled Luke’s sensitivity any differently to the way Peri’s family does?
4. How much involvement does your family have with elderly relatives? Whose responsibility do you think it should be to look after elderly, frail relations?
5. Re-read pp 80-83. These pages raise some issues about the way household and family responsibilities are divided up. Do they reflect problems common to many people in your class?
6. On page 119, Peri thinks about two options regarding the initial approach to a relationship or friendship: to talk things through, or to “follow the signals, fly like moths at the light ... let go. Free fall.” What are the pros and cons of these two different approaches?
7. What do you think about the amount of responsibility Peri has to take for Luke? Does it seem fair? Do you think Peri’s life is restricted by Luke? Would she express it that way?

Critical and Creative Exercises

1. *Either*:

Write a character study of Peri *or* Luke, *and* one of the more minor characters in the novel: i.e. Max, Sarah, Jim, Tamsin, or Stuart. For the older characters, you could do this in the form of a reference for a job application; for the younger characters, it could be in the form of a detailed school report. Think about each character's strengths and weaknesses, the way they respond under stress, their hopes and ambitions, the way they use their time, the way they interact with people both in their peer group and of different ages, whether they show creativity, practicality, inventiveness, cunning, cowardice, selfishness, etc.

Or:

Choose magazine images – or create your own illustration – and construct a poster of a character profile, using quotations from the novel, and your own list of the character's most striking qualities.

2. *Either*:

Write a review (of at least 300 words) of the novel, for a magazine or newspaper of your choice. Under your review headline, also include one or two sentences about the style of the magazine or newspaper you've chosen, and a few words about why you would like to see your review in that particular publication.

Or:

In groups of three or four, produce a panel discussion of the novel for an Arts Review section on television. Then, if your school has video equipment, record the item. If you are unable to use video equipment, present the item to the class as a live performance. When putting together the item, try various formats: e.g. everyone agreeing on points about the novel, or the discussion turning into a debate with opposing views. Which seems to work best? Which version would make you want to read the novel most of all? Explain why.

3. Write about a road trip you have made either with your family or with some other group of people.
4. Either describe a move of house that you've made, an experience of staying in an unfamiliar setting, or write about your current home as if you are a stranger moving into it. Imagine you are in the same situation that Peri experienced: i.e., all the furniture and belongings remain in their places, and you have to try to adapt to the new environment.
5. Re-read the descriptions of the vase and the portrait of Aunt Charlotte (around pp 35-36). Write descriptive accounts of two objects in your own home: one that you have a strong attachment to, and which perhaps carries some family history, and one that you dislike. Explain the origins of both the positive and the negative feelings.
6. Choose a childhood storybook that had the same kind of powerful effect on you that the Ping narrative has on Luke. Summarise the narrative, and describe what it was that appealed to you most. Can you tell if the story has had a lasting influence on the way you see the world? Did it teach you anything as a child? Track down a copy and re-read it. Discuss whether or not it has the same impact on you now. Does your memory of it match up to the fresh impressions you have?
7. Discuss as a class what the differences are between a storybook like the Ping narrative, and a novel like *Peri*. Should a novel teach us things? Or is its role simply to entertain us?
9. Write about a special family or celebrational dinner you have been to.
10. Describe or design what you would like to wear to a ball, masquerade or important dance.
11. Rewrite Chapter Sixteen as a playscript, and perform it either as a rehearsed reading or as a fully acted out performance.

12. Write a short story, poem, song lyric, or dramatic monologue – either using one of the following starting points, or using your own ideas:

“It was the summer’s day that my best friend betrayed me.”

“When I first met him, I had no idea how he would change my life.”

“We’d always been told not to go into the condemned house near the town belt, but that day....”

“It felt like freewheeling naked downhill on a bicycle....”

“Her skirt reminded me of a drooping red tulip.”

“Cut and bruised, ripped and torn....”

Trees frothy with blossom, trees stark in winter.

Sunlight dancing from a golden wristwatch.

Visual Interpretations

1. The setting is very vividly described in this novel. Either construct a diorama of one of the rooms in the house, or find magazine illustrations that you think convey a similar sense of interior decoration and atmosphere to the rooms that are described in the novel.
2. Create your own cover image for the front and back of the book.
3. Recreate your own version of the portrait of Aunt Charlotte.

Vocabulary Exercise

Either:

Design a crossword incorporating some of the following terms as the correct answers to your clues;

Or:

Write a 1-2 page story using as many of the following words as you can:

immaculate

effusive

paraphernalia

foliage

gondola

shirk

tamarillo

inscrutable

proverbial

blackguard

luscious

camouflage

wrily

adieu

swatch

rasp

fossick

flamenco

prise

gondolier

petanque

tactile

semaphore

uncouth

cayenne

silhouette

resplendent

cad

inconstancy

attrition

barrel-shanked

prattle

regale

squeamish

graft

monologue

pummel

ricochet

calibre

hors d’oeuvres

salvage

bounder

ethereal

servile

swathe