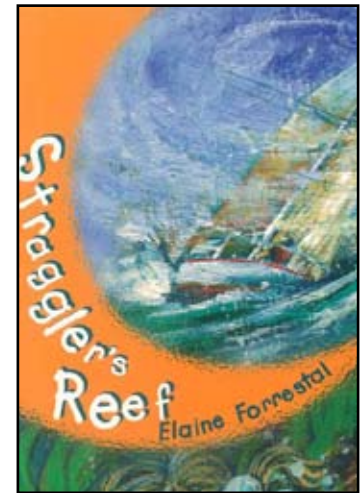


Straggler's Reef

Elaine Forrestal

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The story

Straggler's Reef has kept its secret for four generations; now it threatens to change everything.

Out sailing with their father, Karri and Jarrad find the adventure of a lifetime. A freak wind strikes their yacht, thrusting them onto a reef. In the eerie calm which follows, things are not altogether what they seem. Karri is deeply entrenched in her grandmother's history of the family when Caroline suddenly appears out of nowhere. Karri thinks Caroline must be a ghost, but she is flesh and blood. How she comes to be around, in the middle of the ocean, is a mystery, especially as she believes it's 1840!



Then Caroline tells Karri and Jarrad that the reef they are stuck on is the site of a wreck, a wreck with treasure. She convinces Jarrad to dive with her while Karri keeps watch, but things go horribly wrong when a shark appears, and Caroline disappears.

About the author

Elaine Forrestal is an award-winning author of fiction titles for young readers. She has been writing stories and poems since she was in primary school. Born in Perth, Western Australia, Elaine grew up in small wheatbelt towns. After travelling the world and teaching for many years she now lives in Scarborough with her husband, Peter, and their beagle, Fling. She has two daughters.

www.elaineforrestal.com.au

Before reading

1. Predict what the story might be about by looking at the front cover only.
2. Now look at the back cover. Does this confirm any of your suggestions? Which ones?
3. Read the blurb about the author in the back of the book.

4. Read the whole quote from Joseph Conrad on the opposite page to the map.

*There is no way of getting away from a treasure
once it fastens itself upon your mind.*

Here is what Elaine Forrestal said about the writing of *Straggler's Reef* in a speech that she made when the book was launched in June 1999:

'That is exactly what happened to me. From the moment I saw that etching in the Rottne Museum, the Lancier treasure fastened itself upon my mind. The picture shows a stormy sea and a tall ship, wrecked on a reef. A small rescue boat has come as close as it can to the stricken ship. In the square window of the ship's stern cabin two men balance a large chest. Just as they try to pass it to the men in the open boat, the sea heaves and the chest falls into 40 fathoms of water.

The rest, as they say, is history. Or is it? To this day the treasure has never been recovered. There are still a number of mysteries. Who tore out the three pages of the Captain's log book? The very pages that contained the only record of the exact position of the treasure chest. What was really in the chest? Newspaper reports at the time varied, although they all agreed that it contained silver coins. Where is the treasure now?

This is a story that would not let go of me. I tried, twice, to write it. Unsuccessfully. On the third attempt I made drastic changes to the setting and focused the action over a much shorter time span. At last, it worked. I hope you enjoy the result.'

5. Look at the map which appears in the front of the book. [*See Appendix A for a full-page copy of this map.*]
6. Take out your atlas and compare this with a map of the Western Australian coastline. Can you replace the fictitious names with real place names?
7. Does this map add anything to your predictions? If so, what?

Analysis and application

1. Write a description of Karri. What sort of character is she?
2. How does Jarrad see her? If he were to write a description of his sister, how would it compare with the description you've written?

Interview – in pairs

3. One person pretends to be a character from the story, the other person interviews that character about the events that took place.

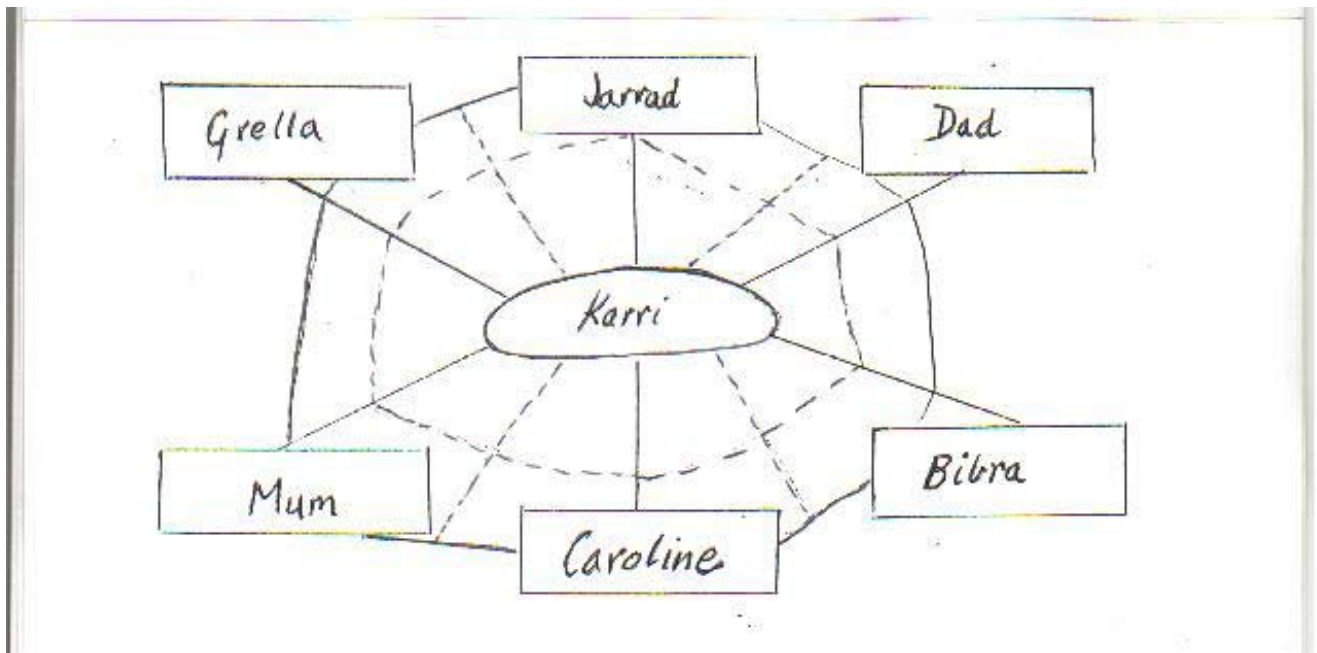
Sample questions:

How did you feel when

What did the look like?

How do you feel about’s actions?

4. Map the story itself using a story ladder, explosion chart, or feelings web. (For example, complete the feelings web below.)



5. Remove Karri’s name from the centre of the feelings web and replace it with the name of one of the other characters. Write down how the new central character feels about each of the others.
6. The song ‘Hear the Call’ was written by Richard John in response to the novel *Straggler’s Reef*. It was performed for the first time at the launch of the book and is now available on CD from the Western Australian Maritime Museum or by contacting rjohn@arts.uwa.edu.au or phoning 0419 937 088.

Hear the call; the call of the waters.
The lazy rise and fall of the sea
Feel the bond? Like father and daughter ...
An ancient song, which beckons to me.

’Neath the yawl, the waves softly murmur ...
A soft refrain, of promises real.
Ageless sounds, all-knowing, eternal
To guide me where my heart longs to be.

And in the depths, the dark, brooding waters conceal
My hidden world, with treasures so vast
But heavy skies conspire, my heart to reveal
And bring me back ... back from the past.

'Cross all time, the ocean stays constant
A moving frame, its images free.
Wind and sky join forces in concert
To sing as one, their eerie melody.

Driving winds push waters unending;
The salty swell tugs, beckons, feels
To pull below new treasures, descending
To silent depths that welcome, not steal.

For waters deep are boundless, a scene undefined;
A shrouded home where secrets can last
But in your mind the memories clear and refined
Will bring me back; back from the past.

Words and Music by Richard John © 1999

From which character's point of view is this song written?

7. Write a poem or song from the point of view of one of the other characters in the book.
8. If you could trade places with any of the characters from *Straggler's Reef*, which one would it be? Why?
9. In the back of the book and below, you will find a copy of the McLean Family Tree. [See *Appendix B* for a full-page copy of the family tree.]
10. Work out how many people could possibly have searched for the treasure before William James McLean discovered that three pages had been torn out of the Captain's log book. Choose one and write the story of that person's search, remembering that the first diving helmet was invented in England in 1837, which was well before air travel and mass production.
11. Plot four generations of your own family tree, using the format in the back of the book. Run a pencil or texta down the direct line of descent.
12. Do you have any old photographs or family heirlooms that you could bring to school? Write a museum caption (about 50 words) for a display of such items.
13. Imagine that the McLean family's silver bowl is one of those items. Write a caption for it (refer to p. 27 in *Straggler's Reef*).

Extension activities

Mapping

1. In your atlas find Mauritius, Tasmania (where the *Lancier* was headed when she ran aground) and Rottnest Island.
2. Make your own treasure map so that your classmates can find a 'treasure'.

Research

Some possible topics are:

- Scuba diving
 - The invention of the diving bell and its use in the Western Australian pearling industry
 - Other wrecks off the WA coastline
 - Other reports of ghost sightings in WA (e.g. Fremantle prison; the 1885 Restaurant in Margaret River)
3. Choose three things that you read about in *Straggler's Reef* that you would like to know more about.

On April 6, 1999 *Straggler's Reef* was the scene of a real rescue drama. Research this incident which was reported on the ABC television news on April 7, 1999 and referred to in an article in the *Stirling Times*, May 11–17, 1999.

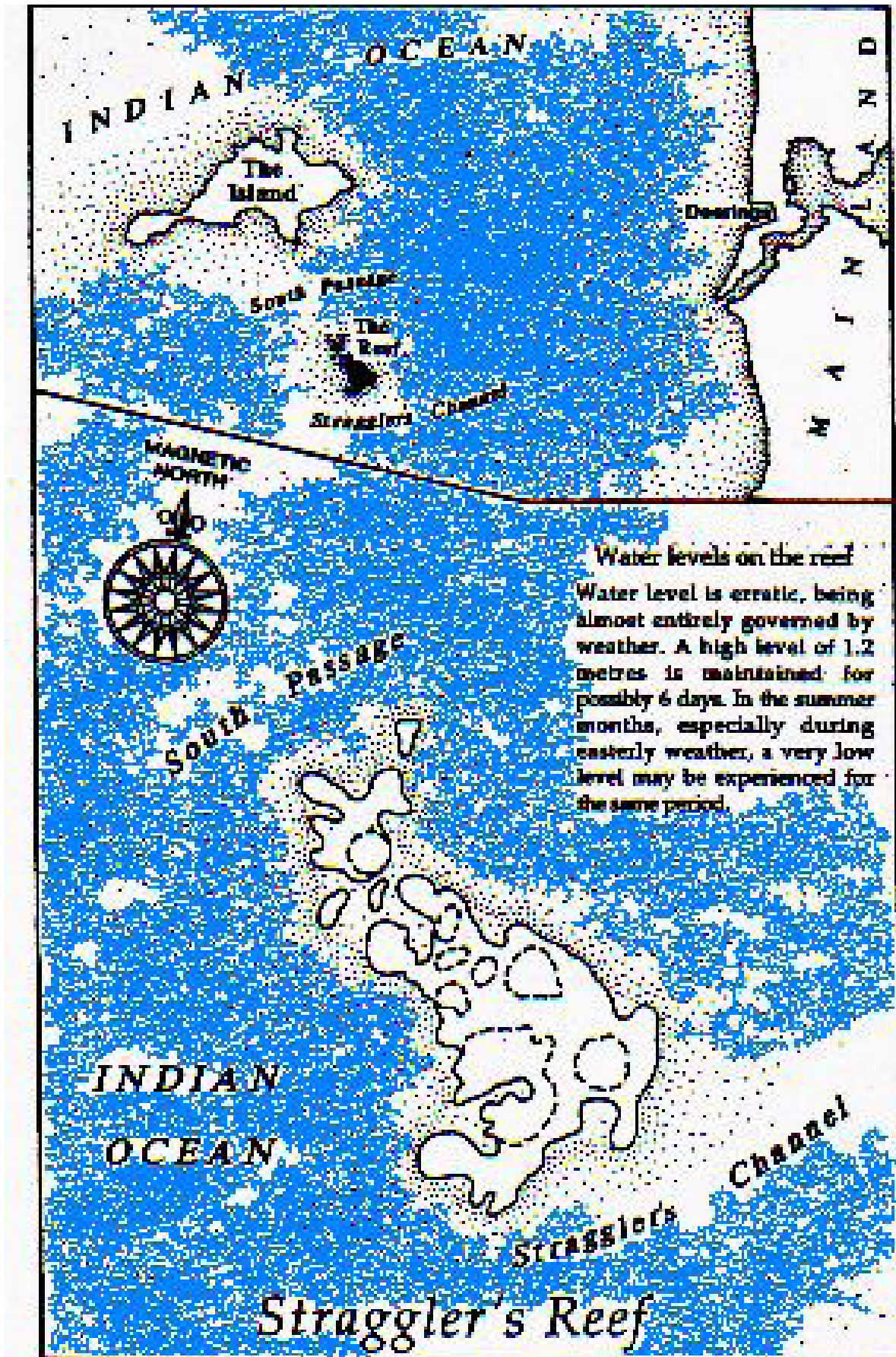
Excursions

- The Western Australian Maritime Museum, Cliff Street, Fremantle holds many fascinating treasures including artefacts from the *Lancier* and other ships of that era.
- The Wreck Trail and the Underwater Explorer on Rottnest Island (although neither of these include the actual wreck of the *Lancier* because it is a bit too far off shore).
- Buckland House (Deerings). This was the home of James McLean Dempster from 1853, when the family left Rottnest, until his death in 1890. James and his sons built the main house, which joins two older cottages, between 1874 and 1876. After James died, his family stayed on until 1913 when the property was sold.

The present owners have preserved the house and a lot of the original furnishings. Visits can be arranged by contacting:

Tony or Penny Motion
Buckland
Irishtown
Northam WA 6401
phone (08) 96221130

Appendix A



Appendix B

McLean Family Tree

