

RESOURCE KIT

Longacre Press Young Adult Fiction

Cross Tides

Lorraine Orman

IN THE LATE 1820s, Lizzie Dawson, only sixteen, was forced to be the child bride of a notorious whaler in the remote Marlborough Sounds of New Zealand. There began a living hell. Until she met Matthew – a young Maori preacher – and with love came defiance.

Flash forward to today. Bel, also sixteen, is sent to a remote farm in the Sounds. Her parents are in the throes of divorce and Bel's turbulent thoughts attract an uneasy force.

'At last,' says a voice in my head. 'You're here.' And I know without a doubt that Lizzie has come for me, and me alone.

Lizzie has an urgent story to tell. Past events drive her to reach across time, across worlds.

This is an extraordinary first novel. Lorraine Orman evokes the nineteenth-century whalers' lives as vividly as the contemporary story. *Cross Tides* sweeps you into its double world with eerie, irresistible power.

LORRAINE ORMAN:

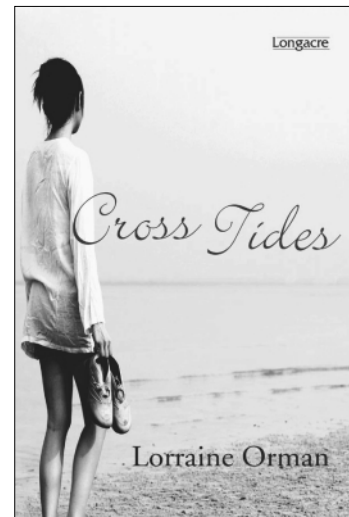
Lives in Auckland and is a children's book specialist. She's a judge for this year's NZ Post Awards.

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SPECIFICATIONS:

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SYNOPSIS:

IN THE LATE 1820s, Lizzie Dawson, only sixteen, was forced to be the child bride of a notorious whaler in the remote Marlborough Sounds of New Zealand. There began a living hell. Until she met Matthew – a young Maori preacher – and with love came defiance.

Flash forward to today. Bel, also sixteen, is sent to a remote farm in the Sounds. Her parents are in the throes of divorce, and Bel's turbulent thoughts attract an uneasy force.

Lizzie's ghost has an urgent story to tell. Past events drive her to reach across time, across worlds.

Bel's own involvement with Daniel, a young Maori man, a member of a local tribe setting up a protest camp to argue for their rights to Crown Land, begins to eerily parallel Lizzie's love for Matthew, all those years ago. Bel begins to realise that she has a mission, a task that Lizzie has posed for her, so that Lizzie's and Matthew's souls can rest in peace. Bel needs Daniel's help if she is going to carry out this role – and in the race against both time and the aggression of a local racist thug, Bel begins to untangle just why Lizzie has chosen her as emissary.

WRITING STYLE:

In just one book, Lorraine Orman already shows her versatility as a writer, as she quilts together the supernatural, the historical, the romantic and the contemporary. The novel also uses two quite distinctive styles. The voice of Bel is sharp, prickly, the perfect mix of surface sophistication and inner vulnerability for a young girl trying to present a tough exterior to the world, while she copes with the meltdown of everything she has loved and trusted.

Complementing and enriching this fresh, frank, and familiar contemporary voice is the meditative, poignant tale of Lizzie, who speaks directly

to Bel – and to us – from a place of spiritual limbo. Alongside this intensely imagined voice, we can also hear Orman's ear for contemporary dialogue. Her historical register is just as honed – the novel is animated and lifted by examples of other dialects, tongues, and sensibilities: from the salty, rough, clipped dialogue of the menfolk who surround Lizzie in her hellish island exile, to the gentle, musical Maori-inflected English of the local tribes people.

All of these elements combine to make a fluent, smooth, compelling whole.

AUTHOR INSPIRATION:

NONE OF THE CHARACTERS in this book are intended to portray real people, either living or dead. The exception is Te Rauparaha, whose stormy relationship with the Marlborough Sounds shore whalers is well documented. The confrontation between Jack Dawson and Te Rauparaha in Chapter 11 is based on an actual event that took place involving John Guard and Te Rauparaha, although I have changed a few details to fit the plot.

The characters and the setting were, however, inspired by history. John Guard, an ex-convict from Sydney, set up the first shore whaling station in the Marlborough Sounds, based at Te Awaiti on Arapawa Island. Popular tradition says this probably happened

in 1829. He brought his 16-year-old bride, Betty Guard, from Sydney to live at Te Awaiti. Betty led a long adventurous life and produced nine children. Descendants of the Guards still live in the Marlborough area.

The most comprehensive book about the Te Awaiti shore whalers is *Guards of the Sea*, by Don Grady (Christchurch, Whitcoulls, 1978). For books about present-day life on Arapawa Island, read *Weather Permitting* (Cape Catley, 1996) and *Flood Tide* (Cape Catley, 1997), both by Heather Heberley, whose husband is a descendant of one of John Guard's shore whaling crew.

—Lorraine Orman

AUTHOR PROFILE:

Lorraine Orman can trace her love of literature right back to when she was eight years old. It was around this time that her parents separated, and, with her world “thrown into confusion” she found that “books were the best escape”.

That early love of reading and writing clearly led to her involvement in the literary life as an adult. Initially, she worked in the National Library in Wellington; then when she had her own family, she began to write short stories for children, seven of which were published in the *School Journal*. Over the years, she continued to work as a librarian in places as varied as Birkdale College, Unitec Library, and the Auckland College of Education Library.

Lorraine has worked as a part-time tutor at the Auckland College of Education for several years; but in a sense she became a student again when she was accepted as a writer on the NZSA mentor scheme. Through this scheme she received advice on her manuscript from the novelist Tessa Duder: this work became *Cross Tides*, her first novel for young adults.

Lorraine lives in Auckland with her husband, though she'd prefer to live at their beach house at Omaha Beach, near Warkworth. She loves walking, beachcombing, cruising the Internet and lunching with friends. When young children ask how old she is, she likes to see how far their eyes widen when she replies, “Over half a century”.



EDITORIAL COMMENT:

It's highly unusual to find a novel with a double narrative where you are equally eager to read each tale. More commonly, readers find they are itching to race through one story, and can only really empathise with the personalities in the other. *Cross Tides* is exceptional: both the historical narrative and the contemporary make for compulsive reading. Lorraine Orman's sense of dramatic timing, her instinct for character dynamics, her sensitivity to the inner worlds of her two heroines, nineteenth-century and millennial, show the eye of a writer who has meditated long and hard on her materials, but deftly conceals all such labour in the work itself. The prose seems effortless; it uses just one or two brush strokes to give us an entire social and sensuous portrait of a totally different – and to YA readers, potentially utterly alien – epoch, without overwhelming us with detail, or descending into history lecture. The ghost story is so persuasive and authentic, it will haunt the most die-hard of sceptics – for Lorraine Orman has the emotional temperature, the sense of desire, longing and unfulfilled hopes, just right.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- the author is a respected librarian and children's book specialist
- the author was one of the judges for the NZ Post Book Awards in 2004
- highly dramatic historical story
- relevant contemporary story
- great educational tool

STUDY NOTES:

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Do you think Lizzie's treatment or fate is more to do with the particular personalities of her stepfather and the husband in her arranged marriage, or is it do with historical circumstances? Can we separate the two?
2. Do you think Lizzie's mother could have done more to protect her?
3. List all the elements in the first two historical chapters that help to convey an authentic sense of the era.
4. How have Bel's parents 'blown her life to bits'?
5. Compare and contrast Bel's dilemma with Lizzie's experiences. Are they in fact comparable at all?
6. In the sections where Bel is on the farm in the Sounds, the author uses the immediate present tense for her narrative. What literary effects does this style create? Relate your answer closely to a particular extract – e.g. pages 43–46.
7. Do you believe that physical places can carry emotional layers from the past? Describe an experience that supports your answer.
8. Do you think that Matthew and Lizzie are moral or immoral characters, according to the social laws of their own day?
9. Do you think that Bel's mother and Reuben are moral or immoral characters, according to the social laws of our own time?
10. Does Bel's character change throughout the course of the novel? Explain your response.
11. Do you find Lenny to be a convincing portrait? Is he a fully rounded character? Is he evil, or just misguided?
12. Does *Cross Tides* have one or two heroines, in your view?
13. Do symbolic acts of atonement for wrongs in the past carry any weight, in your opinion?

FORMAL ESSAYS

1. *The colonial mentality still informs all Maori and Pakeha relations in New Zealand*. Argue for or against this statement in relation to your reading of *Cross Tides*.
2. *The wounds of history lead to the sickness of the present*. Discuss how this might be true to the world of *Cross Tides*.
3. Write an essay on the use of the natural and the supernatural in *Cross Tides*.
4. Discuss how the social status of young women has changed from the nineteenth century to the present moment, as portrayed in *Cross Tides*.
5. *Historical fiction is by its very nature unethical, as it distorts the known facts*. Discuss in relation to *Cross Tides*.

DRAMA/THEATRE

Turn one or two scenes from the novel into a performance piece either for video or for stage. Write a dramatic monologue from the point of view of one of the characters in the novel, and perform this for the class.

VISUAL RESPONSES

- In your preferred medium, create a two-piece art work that you feel captures the overriding mood of (a) the historical narrative (b) the contemporary narrative.
- *Cross Tides* is a sell-out: the publisher has to reprint. Design a new cover for the novel.
- Design a poster for the movie version of the novel.

CREATIVE RESPONSES

- Write the lyrics for the ballad ('Lilies White and Roses Red') that Lizzie hums and that Bel hears early on in the novel.
- Write a contemporary pop lyric based on one of the relationships in the novel.
- Write a sermon given by Matthew as he preaches to a new community.
- Write a letter from Bel to Daniel telling how she feels about her experiences once she has left the Marlborough Sounds.
- Write a poem in the voice of a spirit trapped into haunting the present.
- Write a two-page narrative about a boat journey (contemporary or historical).
- Re-read the description of the setting on pages 129–130. Using your own similes, metaphors, assonance, and sensory images, write a couple of paragraphs that evoke one of your favourite settings.

RESEARCH TOPICS

- Find out more about the history of whaling settlements in nineteenth-century New Zealand.
- Find out more about the nature of missionary stations in the early white settler colonisation of New Zealand.
- Find out about the contemporary whaling industry. What ecological and political issues does this industry raise now?
- Find out more about Te Rauparaha and his influence on the early history of New Zealand.
- Find out about the history of Maori and Pakeha settlement in your own geographical region of New Zealand. If you are an overseas reader, find out about the history of the cultures that have settled in your own area.
- Find out more about the twentieth century history of land rights protests in New Zealand.

DEBATE TOPICS

Divide into affirmative and positive teams and debate the following topics:

1. History is old bones.
2. Biculturalism is a new racism.
3. Love is anarchic.