

LONGACRE PRESS RESOURCE KIT

watermark Penelope Todd

*Hey, Zillah,
A dare: come to Roimata.
Be spare. Bring: the less the better.
Be staunch. Be alive.
Be there.*

*Imagine getting a letter like the one they sent me.
Wait, delete that. Don't imagine it... Just cut it up,
okay? Big scissors. Chop, chop, chop.*

But 18-year-old city girl, Zillah, just finished school, pushes fear aside and 'jumps track'. She abandons her safe summer holiday plans, and takes the train to the wild West Coast.

Her destination: an empty shack on a dangerous tidal river. Here she meets the authors of the letter, Joss and Hep – a mysterious brother and sister who seem to belong to another more primitive world. Together, they wield a power over Zillah that she barely understands.

Disturbing events begin to cluster around them and even the elements appear to be turning against Zillah.

A powerful and compelling story of one young woman's awakening to questions of life, death and her own reason for being.

**WATERMARK, a finalist in the 2004
New Zealand Post Book Awards**

Resource Kit contains:

- Discussion Points
- Literary Critical Responses
- Creative Written Responses
- Visual Responses
- Formal Essays
- Debate



Specifications:

NZ Young Adult Fiction • Published 2003
• ISBN: 1 877135 83 6 • Price: \$16.95
• Format: 197 X 130mm, 176pp • Binding: paperback • Readership: 13 years plus

Quotes:

'Todd writes lovely prose, illuminated by precise, consistent imagery.' New Books

Penelope Todd is...one of my favourite emerging NZ writers for young adults. Kate De Goldi, National Radio

Download a PDF of this Resource Kit from the HEINEMANN EDUCATION website: www.henz.co.nz

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Discussion Points

- Zillah's acceptance of the semi-anonymous invitation was taking an outlandish risk. Do you agree? Had she done everything to protect herself from harm?
- Zillah seems to feel that Bernard is not entirely guilty. Is she right or wrong?
- The landscape in this novel is so powerfully depicted it almost seems like a character in its own right. Do you agree or disagree?
- How do geography and weather intersect with or reflect psychology, mood and action in *Watermark*?
- Joss and Hep are arrogant, manipulative, and self-satisfied. Do you agree or disagree?
- Do you find anything sinister in Joss and Hep's behaviour? Would you trust them at all?
- How does Zillah change and mature throughout the novel?
- Do you think your generation is over-protected – physically, psychologically? Is our world too sanitised and carefully controlled?
- How do you find out what your limits are, what you want from your life, what your bottom line is? Is it through theory and belief systems, through observation and imitation, through the path of experience?
- How reliable do you think the power of intuition is?
- What forces or events have been the most influential in changing your own world view?
- Do you agree with the philosophy that says that all people choose the patterns and events in their own lives?

Literary Critical Responses

- What distinguishes Penelope Todd's writing style from one other novel you have studied this year? I.e., how would you be able to tell her writing style apart from the other author you've looked at?
- Choose 5–7 powerful images from the novel. Describe how they create their sensuous or emotional effects.
- Write a review of the novel
 - (a) for a conservative daily newspaper;
 - (b) for a contemporary young adult magazine (e.g. *Pulp*, *Staple*, *Pavement*, *the Face*...)
- Write your own version of the back cover blurb.

Creative Written Responses

- Write about the mud ritual from Joss's point of view.
- Write an internal monologue from Bernard's point of view.
- Write a song lyric or a poem based on Zillah's impressions of Roimata after the novel has ended.
- Write a letter trying to persuade someone you don't know that well – but are curious about – to undertake a risk of some kind.
OR, write the type of letter that would entice you beyond your comfort zone.
- Write about a physical location that has changed you in some way.
- Write about an encounter that has left you with indelible memories.

Cont'd

- Write about the most significant emotional or physical risk you have ever undertaken.
- Write a scene outline that could be presented to a movie producer who wants to find a great new novel to turn into a cinematic feast.

Visual Responses

- Design your own version of the cover for a new edition of the novel.
- Use a scene from the novel as the seed for your own fine arts response.
- Take a series of photographs that could be used as illustrations to intersperse the chapters of the novel.

Formal Essays

1. 'Women's literature has been the history of women's changing social position in society.' Use *Watermark* to argue for or against this statement.
2. Zillah is an utterly unconventional literary heroine. Use *Watermark* to support or refute this suggestion.
3. *Watermark* could be defined as a *bildungsroman*, or a novel of growth into adulthood. Do you agree or disagree? Use plenty of evidence from the book to support your point of view.

Debate

Divide into affirmative and negative teams and argue the following topics:

1. Nature is stronger than nurture.
2. Inner freedom is more powerful than any social freedom.
3. There are no moral beings, only moral actions.



Penelope Todd lives in Dunedin with her husband and three teenagers. Her first novel, *Three's a Crowd* was a finalist in the 2000 NZ Post Children's Book Awards. During 2001 Penelope was Writer in Residence at the Dunedin College of Education.

Her next two books *Peri* (2001) and *Boy Next Door* (2002) received wide acclaim. All three books have been included in the annual List of Notable Books compiled by the Children's Literature Foundation of New Zealand. Her latest novel *Dark* (2004) is an elegantly written, stand-alone sequel to the acclaimed novel *Watermark* (2003).