Ideas for exploring Julia Lee’s novel with pupils in Years 5&6 (P6&7)
INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF THE STORY

On this day 24th June 1920 I turned fourteen. I plan to have a very exciting future now that I have thrown off the SHACKLES of SCHOOL! A detective is what I would most like to be. I cannot think of any reason why I could not be one. Except perhaps I am too young. And I don’t like blood.

Nancy Parker has recently been engaged in her first position – as a housemaid for the very modern Mrs Bryce. It’s not Nancy’s dream job (she’d rather be investigating crimes like they do in her beloved six-penny thrillers) but as Mrs Bryce starts to entertain her new neighbours with lavish parties, it becomes clear that something strange and interesting might be afoot. Local burglaries, a cook with a deep, dark secret – and Mrs Bryce’s own glamorous but murky past. Will Nancy solve the mysteries while still keeping on top of her chores?

Set in the 1920s and inspired by the detective fiction of that era, this is a mystery story full of pace and fun. For 8 year olds upwards it’s narrated part in the third person and part through Nancy’s journal.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julia has an MA in Creative Writing; she has worked in education and for children’s charities, particularly in the field of disability. She has also written The Mysterious Misadventures of Clemency Wrigglesworth and The Dangerous Discoveries of Gully Potchard – as well as a novel for adults under the name Julia Widdows. She lives in Sussex.

Have a look at her author blogs at

http://blog.oxfordchildrens.co.uk/tag/julia-lee/

and

https://julialeeauthor.wordpress.com/

And here are two online interviews with Julia:

www.readingzone.com (and search for Julia Lee in the author profile list in the Children’s Zone)

and

http://www.tatumflyn.net/blog/here-be-dragons-julia-lee
KEEP A JOURNAL LIKE NANCY’S!

As Nancy says,

A Journal is not the same as a diary. You don't have to write in it every day, only when you have something you want to say – something important. (p1)

Get a nice notebook – maybe you could ask for one for your birthday! – and then keep your own Journal, writing about all the important things which happen to you, which you want to remember.

You could also have a go at writing a Journal entry here. It can be real or imaginary; it can be something important that has happened to you – or imagine yourself in the future and write about what might be happening then!

Date: .................
How do you see the Future?!

Now I am about to step into The Future. How I see the Future is like this...

Nancy sees the Future as a door with a question mark on it, at the top of some steps, and with light shining behind it.

I have tried to explain this Theory to my family without any real success...

Can you explain Nancy’s vision for her future? What do you think is the meaning of her theory, with her drawing of the steps, the door, the question mark, and the shining light?

Have a go at imagining your Future! In the picture of a bottle below write about or draw all the things which you dream of for the future – maybe things you want to do, places you’d like to visit, people to meet, challenges to achieve! Then imagine that you are taking the stopper out of the bottle and start making your future happen!
## WHO’S WHO?

Here are ten of the characters in *Nancy Parker’s Diary of Detection* telling you something about themselves. Can you match the right name to each description? You can choose from:

- Reggie Atwood
- Aunty Bee
- Mrs Bryce
- Cook (Mrs Jones)
- Miss Dearing
- Guy Gommershall
- Quentin Ives
- Alfred Lubbock
- Ella Otter
- Nancy Parker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>MY NAME IS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>My father is a Professor… My mother died when I was born and there is a window in the church to her memory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>I was a flying ace in World War 2, taking photographs of enemy territory. I was badly injured and now I live on the airfield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I work for Mrs Bryce, her family was very kind to me at a hard time. I’m not very chatty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>I live in Apple Cottage in Seabourne. I have a rescue donkey called Pancho and a magpie called Marius.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>I am staying with the vicar to improve my studies. I like to imagine that I am really a spy called John Horsefield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>I have just left school and am working as a maid. I would really like to act on the stage or in films – or be a detective!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>I tell everyone that I am planning to make films here in Seabourne. And I wear grey silk pyjamas with navy blue spots on them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>My uncle owns the garage and I am the chauffeur who drives a car for Mrs Bryce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Nancy works for me as my housemaid and I have come to Seabourne with plans to make some money!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>I work as a Bus Conductress and live at 44 Bread Street, London. Like Nancy I enjoy six-penny thrillers!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECRET CODE

Nancy says:

*I wish I could write this Detective Diary in Secret Code* (p118)

But she doesn’t know any codes and she thinks that even if she did, it would take too long to write her diary in code. Here are two simple codes which she might have used:

A. **Back to Front Code:**
   e.g. YCNAN REKRAP = NANCY PARKER

B. **Numbers for the letters of the alphabet in order:**
   e.g. A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, D = 4 etc.
   – and so  14,1,14,3,25  16,1,18,11,5,18 = Nancy Parker
   To help in your decoding, write out the whole alphabet, each letter with its number next to it.

Here are the first two sentences of Nancy’s Journal in Back to Front Code. Can you translate it?

YM EMAN SI YCNAN REKRAP DNA SIHT SI YM WEN LANRUOJ.

A LANRUOJ SI TON EHT EMAS SA A YRAID.

Have a go at decoding this sentence from Nancy’s Journal – it’s written in the secret numbers code described above.

9,22,5  7,15,20  1  14,5,23  8,9,4,9,14,7  16,12,1,3,5
6,15,18  20,8,9,19  10,15,21,18,14,1,12.
Here are some things which you will probably find in a detective story – most of them turn up in Nancy’s Detective Diary!

They are all scrambled up – see if you can use your powers of detection to unscramble them and match them to the pictures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IGINFANGMY LASGS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BONETOOK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINGFRITEN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIVIBINES KIN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOONIP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUNC SHAFF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOFTISTROP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

---
NANCY PARKER’S DIARY OF DETECTION QUIZ

Choose a, b, or c for the right answer.
Watch out – one of the questions has two right answers!

1. Which of these jobs does Nancy definitely not want to do?
   a. Acting on the stage or in films
   b. Working in a shop
   c. Working at the Biscuit Factory
   d. Being a detective

2. What job does Nancy end up doing?
   a. Helping in an office
   b. Being a maid for Mrs Bryce
   c. Helping at home

3. Why has Quentin been sent to stay with Mr. Cheeseman, the vicar?
   a. Because the vicar is his uncle
   b. Because the vicar is giving him extra lessons to improve his schoolwork
   c. Because his parents are away in India

4. What is Ella’s Anthropology Scrapbook about?
   a. Studying a South American tribe
   b. Local wild flowers
   c. Observing the people who live in Seabourne

5. Which house in Seabourne does Mrs Bryce move to?
   a. Cliffe Lodge
   b. The Vicarage
   c. Rose Cottage

6. What does Ella’s father call Constable James Towner?
   a. Clever Clogs
   b. Dozy Jim
   c. Smart Alec

7. Who is the thief stealing sparkly objects from the people of Seabourne?
   a. Miss Dearing
   b. Guy Gommershall
   c. Marius the magpie

8. What does Guy Gommershall say he is?
   a. A film producer
   b. A flying ace
   c. A property developer

9. What does Mrs Bryce want to do?
   a. Get a new husband
   b. Make money by getting people to invest in the Blue Skies film company – which doesn’t really exist
   c. Be a famous film star

10. What are ‘extras’ in a film?
    a. People who fill up the crowd scenes
    b. Understudies
    c. Treats for the actors

11. Nancy is caught taking £20 from Mrs Bryce’s Wooden Box. What does Nancy want the £20 for?
    a. To pay Mrs Lockett for making a dress for Mrs Bryce
    b. Her wages from Mrs Bryce
    c. To get a train back to London

12. What did Ella use to stop the plane in which Guy Gommershall and Mrs Bryce were escaping?
    a. A red flag
    b. A hockey stick
    c. A gun
A PICTURE POSTCARD FROM HOME

Nancy and her Aunt Bee send picture postcards to each other with news of what they are doing, including one from Auntie Bee which has a picture of Tower Bridge in London.

Make another card for Auntie Bee to send to Nancy, using these templates and writing in the address and a message.

On the left side write a message. On the right-hand side put the address.

Draw a picture here of a London landmark – maybe Big Ben or the Tower of London. Remember it must have been built before 1920 – the London Eye, for example, wasn’t there until 2000!
READING AND TALKING ABOUT
NANCY PARKER’S DIARY OF DETECTION

DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR TEACHERS AND READING GROUPS
(You may also want to use some of the activities above.)

Get together a collection of books for your class/reading group to read, and use for discussion and finding things out – diaries, and fiction in diary format; stories about detectives and mysteries.

INTRODUCING THE BOOK

Look at the cover and the blurb, set the scene, and read aloud the first part to introduce the book.

Then read this book all the way through, either reading aloud to everyone together, or letting everyone read and experience the book for themselves.

Try not to interrupt the flow of the story: let children have the opportunity to experience the whole book and become absorbed in the story itself.

At the end allow time for people to reflect on the story and think about their responses to it.

TALKING ABOUT THE BOOK: SOME BOOK-TALK QUESTIONS

Get everyone to share their first responses to this book. This could be with the whole class/group – or children could discuss in small groups, and then share their main feelings and questions with everyone.

Ask lots of open questions to get people talking and encourage discussion about feelings and responses to the story, the characters, and the writing.

Explain that there are no right or wrong answers – we’ll all have our own feelings and opinions about the book, and the things we like, or don’t like. Here are some questions you might use.

◆ How did you feel when reading this book? And when you’d finished it?
◆ Which parts of the story do you remember most?
◆ Did you skip any parts? Which ones?
◆ Was there anything that took you by surprise?
I am going to write carefully & try my hardest over the spelling – which was always my weak point – because this book is so bieutiful. (p2)

How should you really spell these words? What do they mean?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NANCY’S SPELLING</th>
<th>CORRECT SPELLING</th>
<th>WHAT DOES THE WORD MEAN?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bieutiful (p2)</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>lovely, attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diserpointed (p22)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disfiggered (p115)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enuff (p71)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greef (p186)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impresshuns (p212)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lickwids (p83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neybours (p34)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>showfer (p35)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success (p7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sy collagy (p212)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEEP A DIARY OR JOURNAL

◆ Talk about keeping a diary, asking questions such as:
  Does anyone keep a diary?
  How often do they write in it?
  What things do they write about?

◆ Can you think of any famous diaries? – e.g. Anne Frank’s Diary; Tom Riddle’s diary in Harry Potter; the diary of Samuel Pepys; The Princess Diaries (Meg Cabot); Diary of a Wimpy Kid (Jeff Kinney). Talk about these.

◆ People keep all sorts of diaries – e.g. reading diaries; travel diaries. Ask everyone as a group to suggest all the different types of diaries they can think of – the more unusual the better!

◆ Nancy Parker hides her Journal under a floorboard. Make a list together of all the places people can think of for hiding a diary.

◆ Ask your group/class to write or draw, in 3 minutes, a quick diary entry about what they’ve done today.
WRITE A SIX PENNY THRILLER!

Nancy and her Aunty Bee enjoy six-penny-thrillers, with titles such as *Scream Blue Murder* and *Murders in the Mist*. These were cheaply produced books and very popular. (Sixpence in 1920 would be the equivalent of about £1.80 today.)

What do you think might have happened in the story *Murders in the Mist*?

Have a go at writing the first exciting paragraph to catch readers’ attention. You could use the first line suggested below, to get you going.

Or in small groups, plan the whole story and then draw the main scenes in a storyboard for your thriller.

You can find some top tips for storyboarding in this BBC video:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03fgntq

---

**Murders in the Mist**

As the mist came down over the village Susan could no longer see her way clearly along the lane to her cottage.
MAKE AN ANTHROPOLOGY SCRAPBOOK LIKE ELLA’S!

Over the summer holidays Ella is making an Anthropology Scrapbook – anthropology is the study of people’s customs and habits ... her father said it had to concern people she could actually observe and study. So it really had to be the people of Seabourne, the town where she lived. She was to make notes, draw maps, and snip bits out of the local paper. (p13)

Have a go at making your own Anthropology Scrapbook about the town or village where you live. In your class or reading group you could list all the sections you would like to have in your scrapbook – e.g. a map of the town; popular places; different age groups and their main activities; information about people’s jobs; leisure activities.

You could share out the sections, so that each person has a particular area or activity to observe and find out about, or be responsible for pulling together all the contributions for that section.

You could end up with a fascinating picture of your town in 2016!
## More Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More books by Julia Lee</td>
<td>The Dangerous Discoveries of Gully Potchard</td>
<td>OUP</td>
<td>9780192738677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Mysterious Misadventures of Clemency Wrigglesworth</td>
<td>OUP</td>
<td>9780192734822</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## More Detective Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Child</td>
<td>Ruby Redfort: Look into My Eyes series</td>
<td>HarperCollins</td>
<td>9780007334070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Conan Doyle</td>
<td>The Hound of the Baskervilles</td>
<td>OUP</td>
<td>9780192743589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Gray</td>
<td>Atticus Claw Breaks the Law series</td>
<td>Faber</td>
<td>9780571284498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erich Kastner</td>
<td>Emil and the Detectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Lane</td>
<td>Young Sherlock Holmes – series, including Stone Cold</td>
<td>MacMillan</td>
<td>9781447228011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Riddell</td>
<td>Ottoline and the Yellow Cat</td>
<td>MacMillan</td>
<td>9780110450287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Slater</td>
<td>Smart: a Mysterious Crime, a Different Detective</td>
<td>MacMillan</td>
<td>9781447236672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Stead</td>
<td>Liar and Spy</td>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>9781849395427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin Stevens</td>
<td>First Class Murder: a Murder Most Unladylike Mystery</td>
<td>Corgi</td>
<td>9780552570749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harriet Whitehorn &amp; Becka Moor</td>
<td>Violet and the Pearl of the Orient</td>
<td>Simon &amp; Schuster</td>
<td>9781471118951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Woodfine</td>
<td>The Mystery of the Clockwork Sparrow</td>
<td>Egmont</td>
<td>9781405276177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**And**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agatha Christie! Try:</td>
<td>The Mysterious Affair at Styles</td>
<td>Harper</td>
<td>9780007119271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murder on the Orient Express</td>
<td></td>
<td>9780007119318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Sherlock Holmes Book All you wanted to know!</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>9780241205914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Life in the Early 20th Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richmal Crompton</td>
<td>Just William</td>
<td>MacMillan</td>
<td>9781447285588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve Garnett</td>
<td>The Family from One End Street</td>
<td>Puffin</td>
<td>9780141355504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline Wilson</td>
<td>Opal Plumstead</td>
<td>Corgi</td>
<td>9780552574013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTHOR</td>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>PUBLISHER</td>
<td>ISBN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Kinney</td>
<td>Diary of a Wimpy Kid</td>
<td>Puffin</td>
<td>9780141324906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony McGowan</td>
<td>Donut Diaries</td>
<td>Corgi</td>
<td>9780552564373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Renee Russell</td>
<td>Dork Diaries</td>
<td>Simon &amp; Schuster</td>
<td>9781471144011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dee Shulman</td>
<td>Polly Price’s Totally Secret Diary: Mum in Love</td>
<td>Corgi</td>
<td>9781849415422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline Wilson</td>
<td>The Lottie Project</td>
<td>Yearling</td>
<td>9780440868538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANSWERS

WHO’S WHO?
A. Ella Otter
B. Reggie Atwood
C. Cook
D. Miss Dearing
E. Quentin Ives
F. Nancy Parker
G. Guy Gommershall
H. Alfred Lubbock
I. Mrs Bryce
J. Aunty Bee

SECRET CODE

MY NAME IS NANCY PARKER AND THIS IS MY NEW JOURNAL. A JOURNAL IS NOT THE SAME AS A DIARY. (P1)

I’ve got a new hiding place for this Journal! (p63)

SCRAMBLED DETECTION!

In order, going down: NOTEBOOK
INVISIBLE INK
GUN
MAGNIFYING GLASS
FINGERPRINT
HANDBILLS
POISON
FOOTPRINTS

QUIZ

1c, 2b, 3b, 4c, 5a, 6b, 7c, 8a & b, 9b, 10a, 11a, 12b

NANCY’S SPELLING

beautiful disappointed disfigured enough grief impressions liquids neighbours chauffeur success psychology