



EXTRACT 4: HEROINES (Taken from Chapter 37 – The library, Godmersham Park)

Fanny found herself sitting down at her father's desk, and taking her father's pen, and picking it up, playing with it. She was playing, too, with the picture in her mind, of Anna's cross face, her beautiful hair, the passionate way she always spoke, even if she was saying the silliest, lightest thing in the world.

A heroine.

Fanny foraged for a fine, fresh piece of paper, and picked up the pen.

'Anna,' she wrote at the top, like the title of a story.

She underlined it.

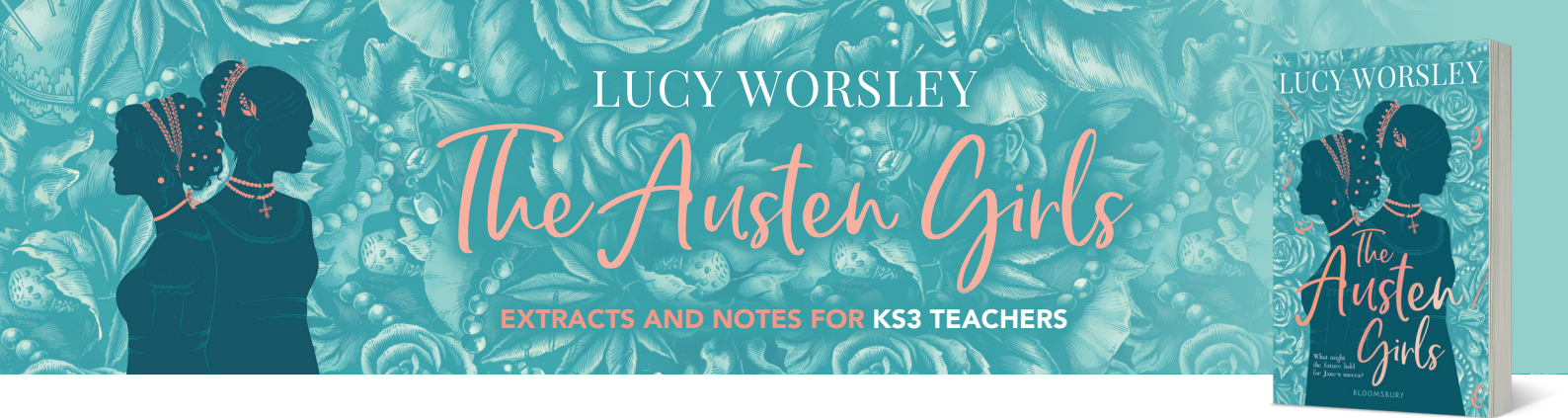
She felt like she was poised on the brink of something, like that moment before pushing off on skates for the first time in the winter when the pond froze.

And underneath the title she wrote, 'Miss Austen, Thief-Taker. A Novel of Adventure.'

And then she began.

'Miss Anna Austen, sixteen years of age, was assistant to the celebrated thief-taker, Mr ...'

Yes, if she wasn't going to go out, then at least Fanny would have a thief-taking adventure here at home, and Anna would be the heroine. It would be very pleasant to have a secret.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What is a 'heroine'? What sorts of qualities would you associate with a heroine? Give examples.
- Why does Fanny choose Anna to be the heroine of her story? Why does Fanny think it would be pleasant to 'have a secret'?
- What connections could you make between the story's ending and Jane Austen's life? Explain your ideas.
- Which tragic event has had a big impact on Fanny's future and why?
- What kind of woman do you think Fanny grew into? Discuss your ideas.

ACTIVITY: FEMALE WRITERS THROUGH HISTORY

- As a class, consider how female writers through history might also be considered 'heroines' of their own real-life stories.
- Discuss any female authors you admire or that you have studied so far. Reflect on the time periods in which they were writing, the challenges they faced, connections/differences they have with other writers and any other biographical details.
- Use computers, textbooks, previous notes and any other resources you have to research your chosen female writer. Try not to just pick the first woman that comes to mind! Research as much as you can about different writers before choosing one. Once you have chosen your writer, make bullet point notes about them on a cue card in preparation for a five-minute presentation you will give.
- When you have completed your research and filled in your cue card, take it in turns to give your presentations. Each student will receive one question from another class member after their presentation to enable you to demonstrate how much you've learned.
- For an extra challenge, borrow or buy a text by your chosen author and write a short book review afterwards. Take into consideration the period your chosen author was writing in and why this makes her achievements especially impressive!