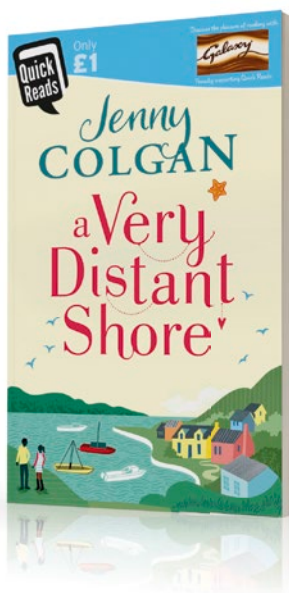




Learning with Quick Reads

Bite-sized books by bestselling authors



A Very Distant Shore

By Jenny Colgan

About the book

Wanted: doctor for small island. Must like boats, the seaside and having no hope of keeping a secret...

Lorna lives on the tiny Scottish island of Mure, a peaceful place where everyone helps their neighbour. But the local GP is retiring, and nobody wants his job. Mure is too small and too remote.

Far away, in a crowded camp, Saif is treating a little boy with a badly cut hand. Saif is a refugee, but he's also a doctor: exactly what Mure needs.

Saif is welcome in Mure, but can he forget his past? Over one summer, Saif will find a place to call home, and Lorna's life will change for ever.

About the author

Jenny Colgan is the author of numerous bestselling novels, including *Christmas at the Cupcake Café* and *Little Beach Street Bakery*, which are also published by Sphere. *Meet Me at the Cupcake Café* won the 2012 Melissa Nathan Award for Comedy Romance and was a *Sunday Times* Top Ten bestseller, as was *Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams*, which won the RNA Romantic Novel of the Year Award 2013. Jenny is married with three children and lives in Scotland.

Visit Jenny's website www.jennycolgan.com

Follow her on Twitter @jennycolgan



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If you are a teacher, librarian or practitioner using Quick Reads, read our 'notes for practitioners' section.

Tweet us @quick_reads.



Here is a range of activities to try as you read the book. See the key at the bottom of the page to explain the symbols we've used.

Before Reading



- Look at the cover of the book.
Does the cover design and title make you want to read this book? Why or why not?
- What comes to mind when you read the words 'A Very Distant Shore'?
- Which 'shores' are 'distant' to you?



- What do you know about the author, Jenny Colgan? What else has she written?
Search the internet, or search in a library, to see what you can find out.
Write down what you find, either in note form (words and phrases) or in sentences.
If you are in a group, present what you have found to others.
Talk about what you expect from this book.

Chapter 1



- Where are we? Re-read this chapter, aloud if you like, looking for clues about where we are, who we meet in this chapter and what is going on.
- How would you describe this place?

Chapter 2



- Where are we now? Re-read this chapter, once again looking for clues about where we are, who we meet and what is happening.
- How would you describe this place?

Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6



KEY

- Can you see a pattern in these chapters, to do with where we are or who we are with? Describe the pattern.
What effect does it have on you as a reader?
- How are these two 'worlds' different?
- How are these two 'worlds' similar?
- Go back and find the words or phrases that tell you about the 'mood' or 'feeling' in each of these places.
Note these down and, if you are in a group, compare your notes with someone else's.



- What do you know about the current or recent refugee crises?
- Use a library or the internet to try to find out more and what we can do to help.
Talk to other people about what they know.
- One of these two 'worlds' is the 'Scottish island of Mure'. There isn't really a Scottish Island called Mure, but there are many Scottish islands. Use a library, the internet or talk to others to find out something about one or more Scottish islands.
Note down what you find and share with others.



- In Chapter 3 someone gets hurt. Who and why?
- Imagine you are the victim's mother. You have been asked by the authorities to write a report (a few sentences) about what happened. Write it.
- Imagine you are a guard. You have been asked by your boss to write a report (a few sentences) about what happened. Write it.
- Think about how these two reports may be different and why.



- Look back over Chapter 4. What does this chapter tell us about Lorna? Her father? And the people around her?
- Look back over Chapter 5. What does this chapter tell us about Saif? And about the 'man in charge'?

Chapters 7 and 8



- Imagine you are the 'crying teenager' (p. 19). Write a letter home to your grandmother about what has happened and how you feel.

KEY



- What have we learnt about Saif in Chapter 7?
- And about Lorna in Chapter 8?
- On page 25, why does Mrs Bruce get upset?

Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12



- What do Saif's experiences on the train and feelings about the boat tell us?
- What does the gathering of people meeting the boat in Chapter 10 tell us about the island?
- In Chapter 11, why does the red-faced man tell Saif his story?
- Why is Lorna at first worried about Saif living in the 'rectory'?

Chapters 13-18



- Look back through these chapters and notice Saif's impressions of life on Mure.
Does anything surprise you?
Does anything remind you of your own experiences of being somewhere new or different?
Talk to other people about their first impressions of life in Britain or life somewhere new.
- What is happening to Lorna's father? And to Lorna? Have you ever been in a similar situation? Talk to someone else, or think to yourself, about what it was like.



- In these chapters Lorna and Saif have two conversations in his doctor's office.
Find the first conversation and, if you are in a group, act it out. Notice how both Lorna and Saif worry about what the other person is thinking.
Find the second conversation and act it out too. How does Saif feel? How does Lorna feel? Is Saif right or should he have given Lorna some sleeping pills?
- Imagine you are Lorna. You go and tell your friend Flora about how Saif wouldn't give you sleeping pills. Write down the *dialogue* (what Lorna says, what Flora says), and if you are in a group, act it out.

Chapters 19-23

KEY



- Describe what happens between Lorna and Saif in these chapters.
- Does anything worry you?
- What do you think is going to happen next?
- Why does Lorna call Saif a 'big racist' (p.89)?



- Find or draw a picture of either a Scottish kilt or a Scottish ceilidh. Use a library, the internet or ask around if you need some help.

Chapters 24-28



- Imagine you work for a local newspaper. Write a short article about the village ceilidh. Write about who is there and what happens.



- Are you surprised that Lorna and Saif almost kiss? Why or why not?
- Are you surprised that Saif does not kiss Lorna? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Saif could not kiss Lorna? And why do you think he almost kissed her?

Chapters 29-36



- Look back over each of these chapters and write down as many words as possible for all the emotions that Lorna goes through, chapter by chapter.



- Read chapter 33 again. At which point in this short chapter do you know that Lorna's father has passed away?
- Why does Lorna not understand what has happened at first?
- The very last line of this novel is 'And had you been looking, you would not have noticed any difference between them at all' (p. 129). What does this mean?
- What do you think the future holds for Lorna and Saif?

KEY

After reading the book...

These are some questions to think about individually or as a group.

- Lorna and Saif have had such different lives. Do you think it is possible for them to really understand each other? Do you think they could be happy together? Why or why not?
- Do you think that we (each of us as individuals as well as our governments) are doing enough to help those forced to flee their homes because of war? What do you think we should be doing?

If you liked this, you might enjoy these other Quick Reads...



Continuing your reading journey

As well as Quick Reads, The Reading Agency runs lots of programmes to help keep you reading.

Reading Ahead invites you to pick six reads and record your reading in a diary in order to get a certificate. If you're thinking about improving your reading or would like to read more, then this is for you. Find out more at www.readingahead.org.uk

World Book Night is an annual celebration of reading and books on 23 April, which sees passionate volunteers give out books in their communities to share their love of reading. Find out more at worldbooknight.org

Reading together with a child will help them to develop a lifelong love of reading. Our **Chatterbooks** children's reading groups and **Summer Reading Challenge** inspire children to read more and share the books they love. Find out more at www.readingagency.org.uk/children

KEY

These resources have been designed for those using Quick Reads independently, as well as for those using Quick Reads in a group.

As teachers, you could therefore refer your students to these resources as independent study material, or use them with groups in the classroom. We have included activities focussed on discussion, reflection, close reading, writing, ICT, mathematics/numeracy and other ways to explore a topic or theme.

Quick Reads have been created specifically for adults who are less confident in their reading, who may not see themselves as readers or who may feel that it has been a long time since they have read. They will also appeal to younger people who feel daunted by reading their first book.

In the terms of the English adult literacy core curriculum, or Functional Skills levels, they are often seen as suitable for those at Entry 3, Level 1 or Level 2. Adult literacy or functional skills English learners below Entry 3 may find them too challenging (as may some Entry 3 learners), but everyone is different, so it is always worth having a look.

ESOL learners - those learning or developing their English as an additional language - may also find Quick Reads a helpful introduction into reading books in English and a useful way to develop vocabulary and awareness of language structures. Quick Reads are often used by ESOL teachers teaching at Entry 3 or above. What works will individual learners will depend on the learners, their confidences, their language and literacy backgrounds and the particular books themselves.

As with all resources, Quick Reads could potentially be used with a range of groups and levels, depending of course on how you use them. It is worth remembering that Quick Reads are authentic texts - real books written by real authors - and so can be particularly motivating for adult learners.

We have written these resources so that they are accessible by those who would also find Quick Reads accessible. However, the needs, strengths and interests between and within groups vary (whether your groups is a Functional Skills English class, an adult literacy class, a GCSE class or an ESOL class) and so you may want to adapt the language at times, as well as adapt and play around with the ideas. You may find that you prefer some activities to others and that you will want to adjust them for your particular group(s) and context(s).

We hope that if you do use these with your students, you try things out that you haven't tried before, and let us - and your colleagues - know what worked well and not so well.

Email us at quickreads@readingagency.org.uk

To find out more about **Quick Reads**, visit www.readingagency.org.uk/quickreads

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