

Regarding The Fountain

by Kate Klise

Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Kathy Sammis

A Perma-Bound Production

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SYNOPSIS

This humorous novel is told through a variety of graphically diverse narrative devices, including letters, memos, faxes, newspaper articles, postcards, telegrams, fifth-grade class announcements, and more. It is whimsically illustrated.

The tale begins in September, with a letter from Goldie Fisch, secretary to Principal Walter Russ of Dry Creek Middle School, to Flowing Waters Fountains, requesting a product catalog from which to select a new drinking fountain. Florence Waters, president of Flowing Waters, sends a reply letter explaining she has no catalog, because all her fountains are custom-made; also, she has no phone ("Hate the silly things."), so all contact must be through letters. This sets up the comic plot line about the fountain: in the next letter, Principal Russ explains that Dry Creek wants only a plain, modestly priced, standard drinking fountain. Florence replies breezily to "Wally," ignoring his specific request for a catalog and price, and announces that she will soon visit the school and make some sketches.

Florence visits the school on October 1, hits it off splendidly with Goldie (as we gather from Flo's exuberant follow-up letter), and asks for design ideas from the fifth-graders in Mr. Sam N.'s classroom, nearest the leaking water fountain. The students write back with illustrated thoughts such as water coming out in a loop-the-loop, a wading pool around the fountain's base, fish inside a glass-sided fountain, and a fountain that dispenses drinks besides water. Mr. Sam N.'s reply letter mentions a class research project about the history of Dry Creek.

Florence writes that she loves the students' ideas, and in return sends them a selection of musical instruments from her attic. The delighted students write back that they are forming a class band called Sam N.'s Tune-A-Combo, and that Dry Creek was called Spring Creek before the creek dried up a long time ago. On October 20, a school press release reports that the school board has voted to conduct a feasibility study about installing a new drinking fountain. Only School Board President (and owner of the town's only swimming facility) Sally Mander objected, arguing Delbert "Dee" Eel, owner of Dry Creek Water Company, can simply repair the old fountain, which he installed when the school was built. But in an ensuing fax-mail exchange, Sally and Dee voice concerns to each other about the "leak," with Sally declaring, "If they install a new fountain, it's over—for you and me both!" Now the mystery subplot is actually underway.

Mr. Russ tries again unsuccessfully to elicit a bid and pro-

posal from Florence, who refuses to respond to letters Russ sends through his secretary. Sam N.'s fifth graders send Florence a copy of the November *Dry Creek Gazette* ("The Creek May Be Dry, But the Gossip Is Juicy!") reporting on the clash between Sally Mander (fix the fountain) and Walter Russ (install a new fountain). Also in the paper is an article about a customer's unhappiness with Pearl's Curl and Twirl; owner Pearl O. Ster explains that she can't give proper hair treatments using only bottled water. Mr. Russ sends a letter to Florence again, who responds blithely about children thirsting for "beauty, art, joy, adventure" in their water fountain and suggesting tension-relieving activities for "Wally." She also sends used cameras to the fifth-graders.

In December, Florence begins sending a series of letters and postcards from locations around the world where she is gathering ideas and "thingumadoodles" for the fountain and picking up gifts for Sam N.'s students. From Spain, she sends flea-market costumes (they become band uniforms). From Zambia, she sends monkeys and gathers water plants. In February she sends tropical fish from Japan for Goldie's aquarium and gathers more for the fountain. March brings a spectacular Blue Morpho butterfly from Costa Rica, with more to come for the fountain. Florence also tells the children she plans to connect the fountain to "the nearest babbling brook, creek, spring or stream" and asks them to find a topographical map of the town.

Meanwhile, Sally keeps quizzing Dee about progress on fixing the "leak," and Dee responds, "If they find out about the you-know-what under the you-know-what . . . Well, YOU know what could happen." By February, Dee reports the "leak" is getting stronger, but Sally's overtures to cozy up to Mr. Russ fail. Mr. Russ continues to request a business proposal from Florence, who continues to reject any such approach, declaring, "My fountains are a celebration of the life force."

In January, the fifth-graders invite Florence to attend the annual Dry Creek Days in May, when they will present their town history report and give their first band performance. Florence says yes, and the students send her the first draft of lyrics about how utterly boring Dry Creek is. Florence replies by sending tape recorders, which the students use to record town-history interviews. One of these is with Pearl O. Ster, who sadly remembers the day when water stopped flowing in her beauty shop, on the very day the new middle school opened. An illustrated time line created by Sam N.'s students shows the glory days of Spring Creek, when it was a vibrant center of farming (fish and plants), business, and tourism, and its sad decline since the middle school opened and the spring dried up thirty years ago.

In March, Sally calls an emergency meeting of the school board in which she denounces reports that Mr. Russ is going forward with plans for a drinking fountain, unauthorized by the board. The newspaper reports on Sally's charges that Florence, a "wacko fountain lady," is bribing the students. The paper also describes another failed treatment at Pearl's Curl and Twirl due to the lack of running water. Late in the month, on advice of the school's attorney (Barry Cuda), Mr. Russ orders communication between anyone in the school and Ms. Waters be halted, and all her gifts to the fifth-graders be returned. The students write Florence about the sad news, but as usual, she ignores it all. She sends a postcard to the kids from Egypt hinting they will need scuba gear and ice skates for the fountain and sending a papyrus plant. She also sends Mr. Russ a postcard, saying she will turn her fountain on during Dry Creek Days, even though he has told her the project is officially off. Sam N. is so crushed about the ban on Florence, he signs an official resignation form, but Goldie (as she confesses in a forbidden letter to Florence) removes it from the principal's mailbox.

Although forbidden, the students continue to send letters to Florence. They mention the topographical map is missing from the courthouse, borrowed by the construction company that built the school — Dee-Sal Builders — and never returned. The town historian, Liz Ard (Sally's sister), also has lost most records of thirty years ago. But the students have found newspapers from that time, which report that Sally Mander campaigned for the School Board seat then with a pledge to build a new middle school — using secret design plans created by the firm she and Dee Eel owned, Dee-Sal Builders.

In May, the students interview Dee Eel at his office and take a photograph of him standing by his desk in front of an interesting picture—enlarged, it will show the secret pipes stopping water flow everywhere in town except to Dee's and Sally's businesses. Two days later, the kids discover Minnie has left a tape recorder on in her locker overnight. This locker happens to be next to the fountain, and the tape has captured a conversation between Sally and Dee, who met at the fountain early that morning to examine the leak. "Now hush up before you tell the whole world there's a natural spring under this drinking fountain," Sally says clearly.

On May 22, *The Dry Creek Gazette* reports the fifth-graders have very surprising information to reveal at Dry Creek Days. The paper also announces that Florence Waters, fountain designer, will arrive in two days by private rail car and seventeen freight cars. On May 24, Sally and Dee agree they must meet at the school that night and "cap off the you-know-what" before the old drinking fountain is removed. That evening, Sam N. and the fifth graders have dinner with Florence, who has finally arrived. On their way home from the café (as revealed in an Emergency Dispatch report from the Dry Creek Fire Department), the group discovers the middle school is flooding, and they see Eel and Mander running away, shouting blame at one another for the fiasco. The next day's paper announces that Pearl's Curl and Twirl is closing and an angry crowd of townspeople—including a group of fifth-graders—rejected Sally Mander's statement that Dry Creek Days must be canceled this year.

The next day, Sam N.'s fifth-graders perform their "opera" about the nefarious scheme of Sally and Dee to build the school thirty years ago above the town's spring, cap most of it off, and build underground pipes that brought water only to Dee's and

Sally's own businesses. "We had to pay Dee for water. / We paid Sal to swim. / There was no creek to play in. / The whole town was grim." The song goes on to explain that the spring is actually a geyser, and that water will now be freely available to all townspeople. Dry Creek is resurrected as Geyser Creek! The song also praises Florence Waters for giving the school its fountain, and a pool, and more: "What Flo taught us was this: / The more you give, the more you gain."

The renamed *Geyser Creek Gazette* reports on the May 27 opening of Florence's fabulous fountain, with features such as exotic birds, a whirlpool, a geyser, swimming, ice-skating, deep-sea fishing, and scuba-diving areas—and a walrus named Wally. As a side note, Pearl O. Ster has kept her salon open, with running water, and renamed it The Fountainhead. Sally and Dee are found guilty of "fraud, misrepresentation, greed, and in general, weasel-like conduct and slimy business practices." They are sentenced to thirty years in the county jail, but are released under police supervision every afternoon to serve snacks, provide towels, and pick up garbage at the Geyser Creek Fountain. Florence leaves town for Sri Lanka but writes to her "dear friends" the fifth-graders, giving them operating instructions for the fountain and asking them to maintain it. She agrees to give Sam, her "treasured friend," art lessons and congratulates him on his decision to keep his teaching job.

The novel's final document is a September 6 letter from Walter Russ to Florence Waters requesting a bid to replace a sink in the school cafeteria, in a plain style and at a modest price. . .

TIME LINE

- Sept.** Principal Russ requests a bid for a drinking fountain from Flowing Waters Fountains.
- Oct. 1** Florence Waters visits Dry Creek Middle School.
- Oct. 10** Sam N.'s fifth-graders send fountain ideas to Florence.
- Oct. 15** Florence sends musical instruments to the class.
- Oct. 30** School board votes to study installation of a new drinking fountain, with Sally Mander objecting.
- Nov.** Florence sends old camera equipment to the class.
- Dec.** Florence sends costumes from Spain to the fifth-graders.
- Jan.** Fifth-grade students invite Florence to Dry Creek Days.
- Feb.** Florence sends tape recorders to the students; they create a time line and conduct interviews for their town history project.
- March** Florence asks students to find a natural water source for fountain; the school board and school attorney put plans for new fountain on hold; Mr. Russ bans contact with Florence Waters.
- April** Students find newspaper stories about construction of Dry Creek Middle School by Dee-Sal Builders.
- May 6** Fifth-graders photograph Dee Eel at office.
- May 8** Student's tape records Dee's mention of a natural spring.
- May 24** Florence Waters arrives in Dry Creek; Sal and Dee try to cap the leak.
- May 26** Fifth-grade students reveal the true town history; Sal and Dee are arrested; Florence unveils the fountain.
- May 27** Sal and Dee are convicted and sentenced.
- May 28** Florence Waters leaves Dry Creek for Sri Lanka.
- Sept.** Walter Russ requests a bid from Florence Waters on a new cafeteria sink.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kate Klise and M. Sarah Klise are sisters. *Regarding the Fountain* was their fictional debut, and they have followed it with other documentary-narrative novels. Kate Klise lives in Norwood, Missouri, and is a writer for *People* magazine in addition to being an author of middle-grade novels. Sarah lives in Berkeley, California, illustrates children's books, and teaches art in San Francisco's Chinatown.

CRITICS' CORNER

Critics were very pleased with the Klises' debut offering. Reviewers found Florence Waters irresistible, "an artist, *bon vivant*, world traveler, and shrewd cookie" (*Horn Book*), an "irrepressible main character who won't take no for an answer" (*Publishers Weekly*), and "the Auntie Mame of fountain designers" (*Booklist*). *Horn Book* continued, "The hilarious shenanigans are unremitting; the puns flow faster than the leaks in the old fountain. And the splendiferous new fountain...is a credit to the unfettered imagination." *School Library Journal* called the novel, "A mystery with an unconventional, yet fun and effective approach . . . solved in a suspenseful, amusing conclusion. . . . The author cleverly establishes character traits and motive. Even if readers guess what's going on halfway through, it's still fun to continue reading the diverse pages . . . just to see how the mystery will be revealed and solved. Fresh, funny, and a delight to read." *Booklist* concurred, saying, "The humor is right on target [T]he lively presentation . . . will keep even reluctant readers turning the pages to reach the satisfying conclusion."

WORKS BY KATE KLISE

(illustrated by M. Sarah Klise)
Regarding the Fountain (1998)
Letters from Camp (1999)
Trial by Journal (2001)

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To consider the place of art and beauty in everyday life
2. To discuss this concept: The more you give, the more you gain
3. To think about the value of unfettered artistic expression versus the need for social and business rules and policies
4. To identify examples of business greed and corruption, and the motivations for this
5. To examine the sources, uses, need for, and control of a community's water supply
6. To identify and understand various methods of written communication

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize the reasons why Spring Creek turned into Dry Creek, the changes this involved, and what really happened to the town's spring and water supply
2. To trace the evolution of the fountain design
3. To understand Florence Waters's character traits and identify the effect Florence has on the people of Dry Creek with whom she interacts
4. To identify the ways in which Sally Mander and her partner in crime, Dee Eel, deceive the community
5. To recognize the humorous elements of the novel, as expressed in its correspondence and puns
6. To analyze the ways in which the author sustains suspense through the course of the novel

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

To enhance students' appreciation and understanding of the novel, present them with these terms.

documentary novel: a term devised by the popular author Avi to describe a narrative form in which the novel's events are presented without a narrator, via "documents" such as letters, memos, faxes, newspaper articles, postcards, telegrams, class announcements, and transcripts of conversations. This form removes any possible narrative bias and leaves the readers to interpret events and motives. The documentary novel is an extension of the **epistolary novel**, a narrative in the form of a series of letters.

mystery tale: a genre that presents clues about a mysterious crime; as it invites readers to match wits with the protagonist who attempts to solve the mystery, it is an especially appealing fictional genre for young readers. In this novel, the mystery surfaces as a **subplot** (see below) to the main narrative about Florence Waters's plans for the new fountain.

pun: a play on words in which the same words suggest two different meanings, or two words that are spelled differently but pronounced the same have a similar meaning, or two words that are spelled and pronounced somewhat the same but have different meanings. This novel abounds in puns, most notably in the names of its characters, which are all puns on marine-related subjects (e.g., Sam N. = salmon; Walter Russ = walrus).

subplot: a secondary sequence of actions in a story; it may be a parallel or contrast to the main plot, or it may be mostly separate from the main plot. In this novel, the question of why the town's natural spring suddenly dried up, on the day the new middle school opened, is a mysterious subplot, which the fifth-grade students delve into as they work on their town history project. The subplot merges with the main plot as it becomes increasingly clear that the suppressed spring is causing the leak in the drinking fountain Principal Russ wants to replace.

suspense: expectant uncertainty about the outcome of a plot. This novel maintains humorous suspense, as Sal and Dee conspire to keep their secret while numerous clues suggest what the secret is. Although we know from the book's cover that Florence Waters almost certainly does build the fountain, the novel maintains suspense about just how she is going to accomplish this as Principal Russ tries to restrict and then suppress her activities.

SETTINGS

The settings of this novel are not described in detail, for the most part, because of the "documentary" narrative approach. The main setting is Dry Creek Middle School, where the leaky drinking fountain outside Mr. Sam N.'s fifth-grade classroom sparks

the plot developments. Principal Russ and his secretary, Goldie Fisch, interact in the school office as Mr. Russ carries on his written correspondence with the incomparable Florence Waters. The fifth-grade students write letters to Florence and receive gifts from her in Sam N.'s classroom. They also leave the school for field trips to the Dry Creek Courthouse, doing research on their town history project. In the novel's climactic scene, Florence unveils the spectacular new "drinking" fountain at the school, with the centerpiece being the geyser spouting from the former location of the leaking old drinking fountain.

Outside the school, Sally Mander and Dee Eel correspond by fax and letter from their respective business offices, Sally from Dry Creek Swimming Pool and Dee from Dry Creek Water Company. Sal's swimming pool is the only place in the otherwise dry town where people can swim—for a fee. Dee's water company is the only source of water for the townspeople—for a fee. The picture on the wall behind Dee's office desk reveals that Sal and Dee have capped off the spring, so water in the town flows only to their businesses and nowhere else. Sal's and Dee's early-morning and late-night visits to the middle school provide evidence of their nefarious scheming.

Other local businesses include Pearl's Curl and Twirl, a beauty salon with dwindling business because of its lack of running water; and Dry Creek Cafe, where Florence dines with Sam N. and the children. Florence adds an implied international flavor to the settings with her letters and postcards from locations around the world.

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Tell Me Why: Science (Water & Weather) (Penguin)
Town Government: Decisions, Decisions (Tom Snyder)
Vote for Me: Politics in America (Center for New American Media/Midnight Films/WETA)

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in *Regarding the Fountain* should include these aspects.

Themes

- water supply and diversion
- communication methods
- value of art in daily life
- power of the imagination
- being free-spirited, breaking rules
- giving freely and happily
- greed, business corruption

Motifs

- fountains
- puns
- water-related subjects
- font variations
- eclectic drawings
- world travel
- springs, leaks, geysers

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. Please send a catalog of your products to our school. (p. 2)
(A catalog is a pamphlet or book that lists items, with descriptive details. Goldie Fisch is requesting a straightforward catalog offering various types of standard drinking fountains.)
2. Where is the proposal and bid from Florence Waters?
 (p. 29)
(Mr. Russ still believes he is dealing with a standard vendor, who will write up a description of a standard drinking fountain and quote a sale price for it. By now, readers realize Florence Waters is certainly not going to follow any standard procedures regarding the fountain.)

3. You know, give him the old run-around. (p. 53)
(*"The old run-around" is deceptive or delaying action. Dee is telling Sally to distract Principal Russ from pushing ahead with the fountain replacement project.*)
4. We thought you might get a kick out of seeing some of the transcripts. (p. 72)
(*A transcript is a written, printed, or typed copy of recorded or dictated material. In this case, the fifth-graders are sending Florence their typed version of Sal Mander's statements, and Mr. Russ's feeble responses, at the previous night's school board meeting, from their tape recording.*)
5. I'm guessing that you might have stumbled across a topographical map of the town. (p. 67)
(*A topographical map shows natural and human-made features of a place or region, including their relative positions and elevations. Florence points the students toward finding a topographical map that might show the location of water sources in and around Dry Creek.*)
6. I am asking for an immediate termination in all communication between our school and Ms. Waters. (p. 79)
(*Principal Russ is ordering all people connected with the school to stop writing or speaking to Florence as of right now, because of Sal Mander's accusations against Florence and the fountain project at the previous night's school board meeting.*)
7. I certainly wasn't trying to bribe anyone. (p. 85)
(*A bribe is money or favor given or promised to a person in a position of trust to influence her or his judgment or conduct. Sal Mander has accused Florence of bribing the fifth-graders by giving them gifts in order to influence them and their teacher to advocate for her fountain design.*)
8. Today Mr. Sam N. submitted his resignation. (p. 90)
(*Mr. Sam N. has formally notified the school that he is giving up his teaching job, effective at the end of this school year. Goldie knows Sam is the school's best teacher, so she takes the resignation form out of Principal Russ's mailbox and sends it to Florence for safekeeping instead.*)
9. Pearl O. Ster: Beautician of the Year (AGAIN!) (p. 96)
(*Pearl is a beautician, a person who gives beauty treatments to people's skin and hair. When Dry Creek was Spring Creek, and spring water ran freely, Pearl was the best beautician in the region. Since she has had to rely on bottled water for her beauty salon, her customer base has been shrinking.*)
10. "The History of Dry Creek": The Riveting Saga of Our Fair City (p. 105)
(*The fifth-graders have discovered the real history of Dry Creek and uncovered Sal's and Dee's long-running scam. They have written up their discoveries in the form of a long song, or "opera," which is indeed a long, detailed account [saga] that attracts and holds the audience's attention completely [riveting].*)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-4 (Literal Level)

1. Describe the town of Dry Creek when it was Spring Creek.

(*The townspeople had an unlimited supply of clean water. Farmers could grow just about anything they wanted, and had record yields. The town became the fish farming capital of the United States. Kids swam and played happily in the creek. Tourists came to see the exotic aquatic birds and plants. Businesses thrived, and the population grew rapidly. Spring Creek was even named one of the "Top Ten Most Exciting Cities in U.S." by WOW! magazine.*)

2. How and why did the town of Spring Creek become Dry Creek? What effect did the drying up of the spring have on the town?
(*Spring Creek became Dry Creek when Sally Mander and Dee Eel came to town, built the new middle school over the spring [actually a geyser], and secretly capped all the water lines in town except the ones to their businesses. People now had to buy their water from Dee Eel's water company. Farmers couldn't afford to irrigate, so they stopped farming. Businesses couldn't compete with establishments in the next towns because of the cost of buying water, so they closed and relocated to nearby Springfield. Aquatic birds no longer came to Dry Creek, so the tourists stopped coming too. Many life-long residents packed up and moved to Springfield. Today, Dry Creek is labeled one of the "Top Ten Most Boring Cities in U.S." by YAWN magazine.*)
3. Describe the many elements of the fountain design as it develops.
(*Lily and Paddy suggest a splashing area around the drinking part of the fountain; Flo expands this into a swimming area. Minnie suggests fish in water around the fountain, so Flo adds a variety of marine creatures and plants to the greatly expanded fountain. Shelly and Gil suggest the fountain dispense drinks besides just water, and Flo adds this element to her fountain. Sam N. suggests a whirlpool, which is part of the finished design. Flo then gathers tropical plants in Africa, tropical fish in Japan, butterflies in Costa Rica, papyrus in Egypt, sand from Brazil, and swans in France. The finished fountain also features statues, and ice-skating, scuba-diving, and deep-sea fishing sections, plus the central geyser—and a walrus.*)
4. What past jobs, avocations, and activities have been part of Florence Waters's life?
(*Florence has built fountains all over the world, for hotels, palaces, parks, and plazas, which has made her a world traveler extraordinaire. In addition, she once played in a mariachi band, directed a water ballet company in Fiji, and became engaged to a Russian composer.*)

Questions 5-7 (Interpretive Level)

5. Write a character sketch of Florence Waters.
(*Florence Waters is the ultimate free spirit, traveling widely around the world, drawing inspiration for her fountains from diverse global sources, refusing to consider any limitations to the free flow of her imagination regarding fountain design. She is devoted to her art, and she sees her fountain creations as "a celebration of the life force, a tribute to tributaries, a praise of waves." She is a fountain designer and artist who thinks big and understands human nature very well—edging Goldie Fisch into adjusting her subordinate relationship with Principal Russ, asking questions that spur the fifth-graders to dig deeply into Dry Creek's past, and drawing attention to the role of Sally Mander and Dee*

Eel in that history. As the Booklist critic aptly put it, Florence is “the Auntie Mame of fountain designers.”)

6. In what ways does Sally Mander deceive the community of Spring Creek / Dry Creek?

(Soon after Sally came to town thirty years ago, with Dee Eel, she ran for the position of school board president on a platform of building a modern middle school. She claimed her election to the post gave her the right to have the new school built according to her own secret plans, and to choose the contractor Dee-Sal Builders, co-owned by Delbert Eel, without a competitive bid process. What Sally hid from the townspeople then was that she was the other co-owner of Dee-Sal Builders and the secret design plans included diverting all of the town’s water supply from the spring to only her swimming pool business and Dee’s water company. Today, Sally and Dee continue to hide the fact that the spring has not dried up; rather, it is underneath the drinking fountain in the school and is the source of the fountain’s increasing leak. She also falsely claims that the flood in the school is the result of a broken water main, which Dee Eel will shortly fix.)

7. What effect does Florence Waters have on Sam N. and his fifth-graders?

(They all become more enthusiastic about learning in a hands-on way—for example, starting a band with Flo’s old musical instruments, then writing a song about Dry Creek, then becoming even better at playing their instruments when they don Flo’s costumes. The kids also become very fired up about their town history project as they begin to explore—subtly guided by Flo’s questions—the real reason why the town’s water supply disappeared. Sam N. has always been a creative teacher, but Florence inspires him to be even more creative and to break his own rules if that seems to be the best teaching approach.)

Questions 8-10 (Critical Level)

8. How does the correspondence between Florence Waters and Walter Russ add humor to the novel?

(Go-by-the-rules Principal Russ repeatedly states in his correspondence with Florence that the fountain is to be simple, utilitarian, modestly priced, and approved via standard school bid and requisition policies. Readers laugh as Flo blithely ignores each of these statements, expressing instead her unfettered design ideas. As the novel progresses, Mr. Russ humorously reaches heights of frustration as he vainly tries to tell Florence she cannot build the fountain while she continues to express her delight about her plans. Readers also laugh when we imagine what Mr. Russ’s reaction must be to Florence’s advice to him to loosen up [“perhaps water ballet?”], take a vacation, and have more respect for his secretary.)

9. We know from the novel’s cover and the opening two-page spread that plans for the “drinking fountain” are going to get very elaborate. Given this, how does the author maintain suspense about the novel’s plot?

(The opening “document” of the novel is the letter from Goldie Fisch to Flowing Waters Fountains requesting a catalog from which the middle school can order a new drinking fountain. Mr. Russ’s follow-up letter to Florence Waters specifies a “plain” and “modest” drinking fountain. We

can’t imagine how a simple drinking fountain design can morph into the elaborate creation we see on the book’s cover and opening spread, so we are eager to read on through the novel to find out. Also, the author introduces early in the novel the mystery subplot about the connection between Sal and Dee and the truth behind the “leak” they are trying to keep covered up.)

10. What use does the author make of puns in the novel?

(The author adds to the novel’s humor by lacing it with puns, most notably by making virtually every character’s name a pun about something water-related. For example: Walter Russ = walrus; Sam N. = salmon; Lilly and Paddy = lily pad; Tad Poll = tadpole; Sally Mander = salamander; CeCe Salt = sea salt; Minnie O. = minnow; Pearl O. Ster = pearl (in an) oyster. The Dry Spring Gazette specializes in punny headlines, and “Pearl’s Curl and Twirl” is yet another kind of pun. Students will find more examples throughout the novel.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. As Florence Waters, respond to Walter Russ’s letter at the end of the novel regarding the cafeteria sink.
12. Create scenes with dialogue to act out with classmates based on interactions mentioned in the novel’s documents—for example, the scene between Sally Mander and Dee Eel at night at the school.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art and Architecture

1. Create a portrait of Florence Waters.
2. Create a large, poster-size illustration of the completed Geyser Creek fountain.
3. Create a class display of images of fountains around the world, old and new. Identify the creator of each fountain, where possible.

Careers

1. Find out about and chart all the different elements required for a person to own and operate her or his own beauty salon.
2. Write job descriptions for the positions of middle-school secretary, principal, teacher, and cafeteria worker.

Geography

1. On a map of the world, trace the travels of Florence Waters as shown by her correspondence.
2. Report on the geography of Missouri, focusing on areas where Spring Creek—where farm crops and farmed fish flourish—might be located.

Language Arts

1. Read *The Landry News* by Andrew Clements. Then compare that novel’s Principal Barnes with this book’s Principal Russ, and compare the teachers Mr. Larson and Sam N. and each teacher’s relationship with his principal.
2. *The Dry Creek Gazette* specializes in punny headlines. Read some school, local, or national newspaper stories, and write your own pun-laced headlines for those stories.
3. Pearl O. Ster owns and operates Pearl’s Curl and Twirl. Create other business names that use words which sound similar.

Mathematics

1. On graph paper, outline a plan for the final version of the Geyser Creek Fountain, allowing enough room for all the

features that are included.

2. Develop a list of actual prices for a replacement drinking fountain.

Music

1. Set the lyrics of the fifth-graders' opera "The History of Dry Creek" to music, and perform it.
2. Demonstrate each of the musical instruments Florence sends to Sam N.'s fifth-graders.
3. Compose and perform a song about your own town.

Science

1. Draw up a job-list chart assigning individual students of Geysers Creek Middle School the tasks needed to maintain the fountain and its many aspects.
2. Research and report on the water cycle, springs, and/or geysers.
3. Research and report on one of the creatures or plants that Flo adds to her fountain area or draws on pages 88-89 of the novel.
4. Alternatively, research and report on one or more of the creatures whose punned names are the names of the novel's human characters.

Social Studies

1. Explain why and when, under the U.S. Constitution, search warrants are required.
2. Explain the legal charges of "fraud" and "misrepresentation" and typical penalties for these crimes.
3. As a class project, research and report on your own town's history. Include oral interviews and many illustrations as part of your report.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Design your own school or community drinking fountain. Estimate the cost to actually purchase or construct it.
2. Make a case for not having a telephone (as Florence does not). Without a phone, can you still communicate with others effectively?
3. Attend, plan, and/or take part in a water ballet.
4. Create an illustrated brochure about setting up and maintaining an aquarium, and describe typical fish for such an aquarium.
5. Using yourself or volunteer classmates as models, create hairdos of the 1950s like the ducktail and chignon that Pearl mentions.
6. Make and serve to classmates a meal of Spanish *tapas*.
7. View the video of *Auntie Mame*. What similarities do you see between Mame and Florence Waters?
8. If possible, view and take photos of an actual geyser.
9. Find out where your home's water supply comes from, and how it gets to your faucets.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Identify and trace the clues throughout the novel about the real history and current status of Dry Creek's spring.
2. With classmates, stage the trial of Sally Mander and Delbert "Dee" Eel on the charges of fraud and misrepresentation, plus greed, weasel-like conduct, and slimy business practices.
3. Make a chart of the many different narrative devices, or documents, that the novel uses and explain what part each type plays in the novel.

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. r | 6. l | 11. h | 16. o |
| 2. f | 7. g | 12. m | 17. d |
| 3. a | 8. b | 13. c | 18. n |
| 4. j | 9. q | 14. s | 19. p |
| 5. e | 10. t | 15. i | 20. k |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. j |
| 2. i | 7. f |
| 3. e | 8. h |
| 4. b | 9. a |
| 5. d | 10. g |

Part II: Fill-In (20 points)

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Middle | 6. Courthouse |
| 2. Geysers Creek | 7. Tune-A-Combo |
| 3. Flowing Waters | 8. school board |
| 4. Wally | 9. Swimming Pool |
| 5. leak | 10. September |

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. plain | 9. mustaches |
| 2. aquarium | 10. Dee-Sal |
| 3. water | 11. Fontaine |
| 4. Curl and Twirl | 12. train |
| 5. bottled water | 13. Ard |
| 6. photo cameras | 14. puns |
| 7. aquatic birds | 15. a leak |
| 8. Pool | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. e | 6. h |
| 2. a | 7. f |
| 3. i | 8. g |
| 4. b | 9. c |
| 5. d | 10. b |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1. Kate Klise | 6. May |
| 2. Spring Creek | 7. Dee |
| 3. Missouri | 8. beauty salon |
| 4. fifth-graders | 9. Walter Russ |
| 5. Water Company | 10. Spain, Zambia, Japan, Costa Rica, Egypt, or France |

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. history | 9. Middle |
| 2. drinking fountain | 10. CeCe |
| 3. water ballet | 11. attorney |
| 4. fish | 12. courthouse |
| 5. Water | 13. Boring |
| 6. geyser | 14. Tad |
| 7. sandwiches | 15. water slide |
| 8. History | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

VOCABULARY

Match each **boldfaced** word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- | | | | |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| a. payment | f. small village | k. lasts | p. took away from |
| b. quarrel | g. artistically | l. without waste | q. relieving with liquid |
| c. very odd | h. make public | m. lawyer | r. not shortened |
| d. greed | i. fascinated | n. complex | s. basic and necessary |
| e. hold dear | j. not agreeing | o. station | t. hopeless |

- ___ 1. Inform Ms. Waters that I prefer the **unabbreviated** version of "Walter."
- ___ 2. What a charming little **hamlet**!
- ___ 3. Think of the musical instruments as **compensation** for sending me your wonderful ideas for the fountain.
- ___ 4. The only **dissenting** voice was that of Sally Mander.
- ___ 5. I **cherish** your drawings.
- ___ 6. **Efficiently**, Mr. Walter Russ, Principal.
- ___ 7. **Aesthetically** yours, Florence Waters.
- ___ 8. This petty **squabble** we seem to be having over a small, insignificant fountain really is silly of us, isn't it?
- ___ 9. Talk about **quenching** your thirst!
- ___ 10. "I'm about ready to throw in my towel turban," said a **despondent** Pearl O. Ster.
- ___ 11. See you at Dry Creek Days. I'm coming to **unveil** the new fountain.
- ___ 12. Barry Cuda, the school **attorney**, returned your call.
- ___ 13. You might recognize some of the people mentioned in the old newspaper articles. **Weird**, huh?
- ___ 14. Swans are **essential** for the fountain, don't you think?
- ___ 15. I was **intrigued** by the old newspaper clippings you sent.
- ___ 16. Waters wrote a letter to the Dry Creek **depot**, explaining her reason for traveling with seventeen freight cars.
- ___ 17. It's been said before that **avarice** makes evil.
- ___ 18. Using an **elaborate** underground network of pipes, Eel and Mander channeled water from the creek directly to their private businesses.
- ___ 19. The scam **deprived** residents of Geyser Creek of their fresh, clean water.
- ___ 20. You're the only ones who can make sure the fountain **endures** for future generations of students.

COMPREHENSIVE TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. Use each name only once.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| a. Goldie Fisch | c. Walter Russ | e. Sam N. | g. Delbert Eel | i. Lily and Paddy |
| b. Florence Waters | d. Tad Poll | f. Sally Mander | h. Pearl O. Ster | j. CeCe Salt |

- ____ 1. Principal of Dry Creek Middle School.
- ____ 2. Student duo whose joint name is the word for a floating leaf.
- ____ 3. Fifth-grade teacher at Dry Creek Middle School.
- ____ 4. Fabulous fountain designer.
- ____ 5. Student with a young-frog name.
- ____ 6. Former, unhappy customer of the local beauty salon.
- ____ 7. Public official who objects to installing a new fountain.
- ____ 8. Owner of the local beauty salon.
- ____ 9. Secretary to Dry Creek school's principal.
- ____ 10. Sal's partner in crime.

Part II: Fill-In (20 points)

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

- 1. Florence Waters is designing a fountain for the Dry Creek _____ School.
- 2. The new name of the town of Dry Creek is _____.
- 3. The name of Florence Waters's company is _____ Fountains.
- 4. Much to Principal Russ's annoyance, Florence always addresses him by the nickname _____.
- 5. Sal and Delbert work hard to cover up the drinking fountain's "_____."
- 6. The students find interesting details about town history at the Dry Creek County _____.
- 7. The fifth-graders adopt the name "Sam N.'s _____" for their band.
- 8. Sally Mander is the elected president of the Dry Creek _____.
- 9. Sally Mander's business is Dry Creek _____.
- 10. The first documents of this novel are dated during the month of _____.

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Principal Russ wants a (fancy, expensive, plain, artistic) fountain.
2. Goldie Fisch has a(n) (aquarium, terrarium, snow globe, hamster cage) in her office.
3. Delbert Eel owns the town's (pool, water, fish, book) company.
4. Pearl's beauty business is called the (Curl and Dye, Twirly Curls, Pearl-acious, Curl and Twirl).
5. Pearl blames her business problems on (bottled water, bad dye, untrained helpers, local laws).
6. Florence Waters sends the fifth-graders (videotape recorders, movie cameras, photo cameras, movement sensors).
7. Tourists used to come to town to see the (monkeys, aquatic birds, Blue Morph butterflies, sand dunes).
8. The motto of Sally Mander's company is "A Jewel of a (Mule, Rule, Tool, Pool)."
9. Walter Russ has grown (a) bountiful (mustaches, sideburns, beard, ponytail).
10. Sal and Delbert were partners in (Salman, Dee-Sal, Deebert, EES) Builders.
11. Florence Waters tells the students she always stays at the Hotel (Majesté, Rieux, Americaine, Fontaine) in Paris.
12. Florence arrives in Dry Creek via (bus, car, train, airplane).
13. The town's historian is Liz (Ard, Smith, Mander, Zie).
14. Most characters' names in the novel are (palindromes, puns, acronyms, nicknames).
15. The apparent problem with the old drinking fountain is (a leak, polluted water, no water flow, overuse).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any two to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. How does Florence Waters change the relationship between Mr. Russ and Goldie Fisch?
2. What effect does Florence have on the fifth-grade students?
3. How have Sal and Dee been scamming the town?

COMPREHENSIVE TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke or wrote the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. You will use some names more than once and some not at all.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| a. Goldie Fisch | c. Walter Russ | e. Sally Mander | g. Pearl O. Ster | i. Ima Crabbie |
| b. Florence Waters | d. Sam N. | f. Delbert Eel | h. Shelly | j. CeCe Salt |

- ____ 1. "I don't want you calling me here at the swimming pool anymore. I'm afraid my phone might be tapped."
- ____ 2. "Florence feels that given your education, you should be responsible for your own correspondence. (I tend to agree.)"
- ____ 3. "It's just terrible what that woman did to my hair."
- ____ 4. "(I don't have a phone. Hate the silly things.)"
- ____ 5. "Here you are in town, and we're still communicating by letter (Sigh)."
- ____ 6. "When you build the fountain for our school, do you think it would be possible to have other things come out of it besides just water?"
- ____ 7. "The 'leak' around the base of the fountain is getting worse every day. I'm telling you, Sally, it was practically gushing this morning."
- ____ 8. "Well, don't you know back in the old days I was the best beautician in the entire state?"
- ____ 9. "Needless to say, none of the designs seen on the bulletin board or submitted by the children need be incorporated into your proposal."
- ____ 10. "Wally, I must say that you strike me as an extremely tense man. Have you ever considered aqua-therapy?"

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer to each of the following questions.

1. Who is the author of this book? _____
2. What was the original name of the town of Dry Creek? _____
3. In which U.S. state is the town of Dry Creek located? _____
4. Who provides the first design ideas for the fountain? _____
5. What is the name of Delbert Eel's company? Dry Creek _____
6. In which month of the year are Dry Creek Days held? _____
7. What is Delbert Eel's nickname? _____
8. What type of business does Pearl O. Ster own and run? _____
9. Who is the principal of Dry Creek Middle School? _____
10. What is the name of one of the countries from which Florence Waters sends letters and postcards to the fifth-graders? _____

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. The students of Mr. Sam N.'s class meet for a (history, science, math, Spanish) club after school.
2. Mr. Russ wants Florence Waters to replace the school's (cafeteria, principal, drinking fountain, hot water heater).
3. Florence Waters sends Walter Russ sketches for (bicycle, kung fu, water ballet, trampoline) exercises.
4. When Dry Creek was Spring Creek, (oyster, copper, lobster, fish) farmers were very successful.
5. The motto of Delbert Eel's company is "Where Clean (Air, Water, Schools, Dirt) Is a D-EEL!"
6. The town's spring turns out to be really a (volcano, sinkhole, geyser, whirlpool).
7. Florence, the students, and Sam dine on (fish, steak, veggie burgers, sandwiches) at the Dry Creek Cafe.
8. The students call their opera "The (Shame, End, History, Mystery) of Dry Creek."
9. Florence Waters designs a fountain for the Dry Creek (Elementary, Cooperative, Middle, High) School.
10. One unhappy beauty salon customer is (Table, CeCe, Pepper, Kosher) Salt.
11. Barry Cuda of Sharks, Sharks, and Sharks, is the schools' (attorney, custodian, minister, principal).
12. The fifth-grade students do research at the Dry Creek (courthouse, jail, municipal library, farmers' market).
13. Dry Creek has recently been named by YAWN magazine as one of "10 Most (Exciting, Elevated, Boring, Wet) U.S. cities.
14. (Brian, Guppie, Tad, Harry) is a fifth-grade student in Mr. Sam N.'s class.
15. The finished fountain includes a (shark tank, water slide, sea lion, admission fee).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any two to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Write a character description of Florence Waters.
2. How do the students uncover the long-standing scam Sal and Dee have been operating in town? What part does Florence play in this discovery?
3. What kind of fountain does Mr. Russ plan on installing? What type of fountain does the school actually get?



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