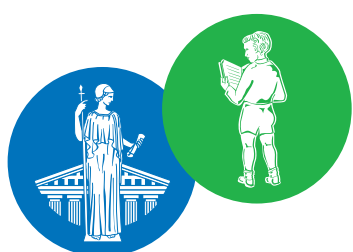
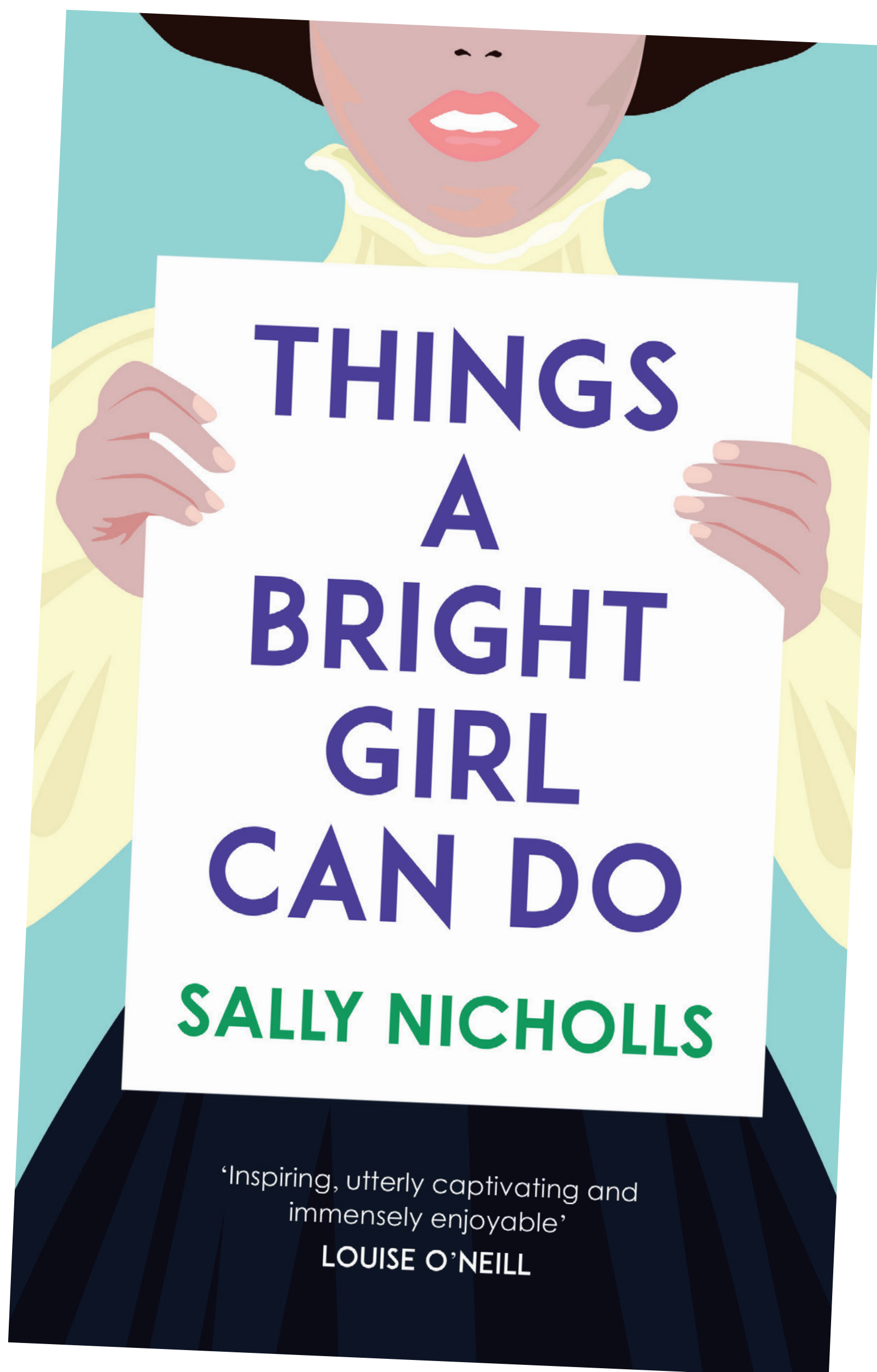


CILIP CARNEGIE SHORTLIST 2019

SHADOWING RESOURCES



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards

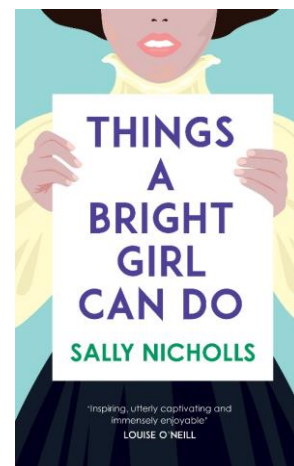


CILIP Carnegie Medal 2019 TALKING POINTS

Title: **Things a Bright Girl Can Do**

Author: **Sally Nicholls**

Publisher: **Andersen Press**



THINGS A BRIGHT GIRL CAN DO

What do you think of the book's title? What did it lead you to expect from the book?

Nicholls explains in an afterword where the title came from – did that change what you thought of it?

EVELYN, MAY AND NELL

Evelyn, May and Nell all come from quite different backgrounds. What are the different *constraints* under which they are living?

All three lead characters are strong and determined – but how do we see each of them develop over time?

As the characters learn some hard lessons about reality (e.g. Evelyn discovering what a brutal thing a hunger strike is), do the readers have their perspectives changed, too?

This isn't a first-person novel, so how does Nicholls make you see each of the girls' stories from their own perspectives?

The story is set a century ago – but how modern do the three main characters feel? Could you imagine them in our world?

SUFFRAGETTES

Each of the young women engages with the cause quite differently – what is it makes each one of them turn to the suffrage movement?

What are they expected to sacrifice?

The suffrage campaign was itself made up of different groups with different agendas and priorities. Did this book clarify what you knew about it, or complicate it? (Either one of these could be considered a compliment to the author!)

How much do the characters worry about what would happen *after* they got the vote?

WAR

The suffrage movement is at the heart of the novel, of course, but setting a book in the 1910s means also engaging with the First World War, too. So how does Nicholls choose to tie these two things together?

How much does the characters' experience of the war and the hardships it brings with it depend on their social position, their class and money?

The book's main characters are young women, as most of the heroes of the suffrage movement were. Does the war allow Nicholls to tell a different story specifically about young men and masculinity, too?

RELATIONSHIPS

What did you think of the way the different romantic relationships are portrayed in this novel?

Think of Nell and May on the one hand, and Evelyn and Teddy on the other – how are the challenges their relationships face different? And how much is this to do with background, or class, or sexuality, or just personality?

TELLING HISTORY

The picture Nicholls paints of this period is a broad one, covering slums and workers and wealthy houses, too – do these parts feel like they add up somehow to a big, comprehensive view of a whole society?

This book is a work of well-researched history as well as a work of fiction, except that it's history revealed through fictional characters, seen not through huge heroic figures but through lives on an ordinary scale. How does that approach – history through normal lives – help you to understand the period? And does it change how you think of your own place in the world today?

Does what you read in the book have parallels in any injustices in the world today? And does the book make you more or less optimistic about the possibility of righting them?

OTHER THEMES

Through the lives of Evelyn, Nell and May, the stories of suffrage and war intersect at various points with so many other big themes, even if sometimes only briefly. What role is played in the book by:

- religion?
- sexuality?
- poverty?
- class?
- race?

ENDING

The ending Nicholls provides is a realistic one. But is it the ending you would have chosen for the characters?

Do you think this book should win the 2019 Carnegie Medal? Why, or why not?

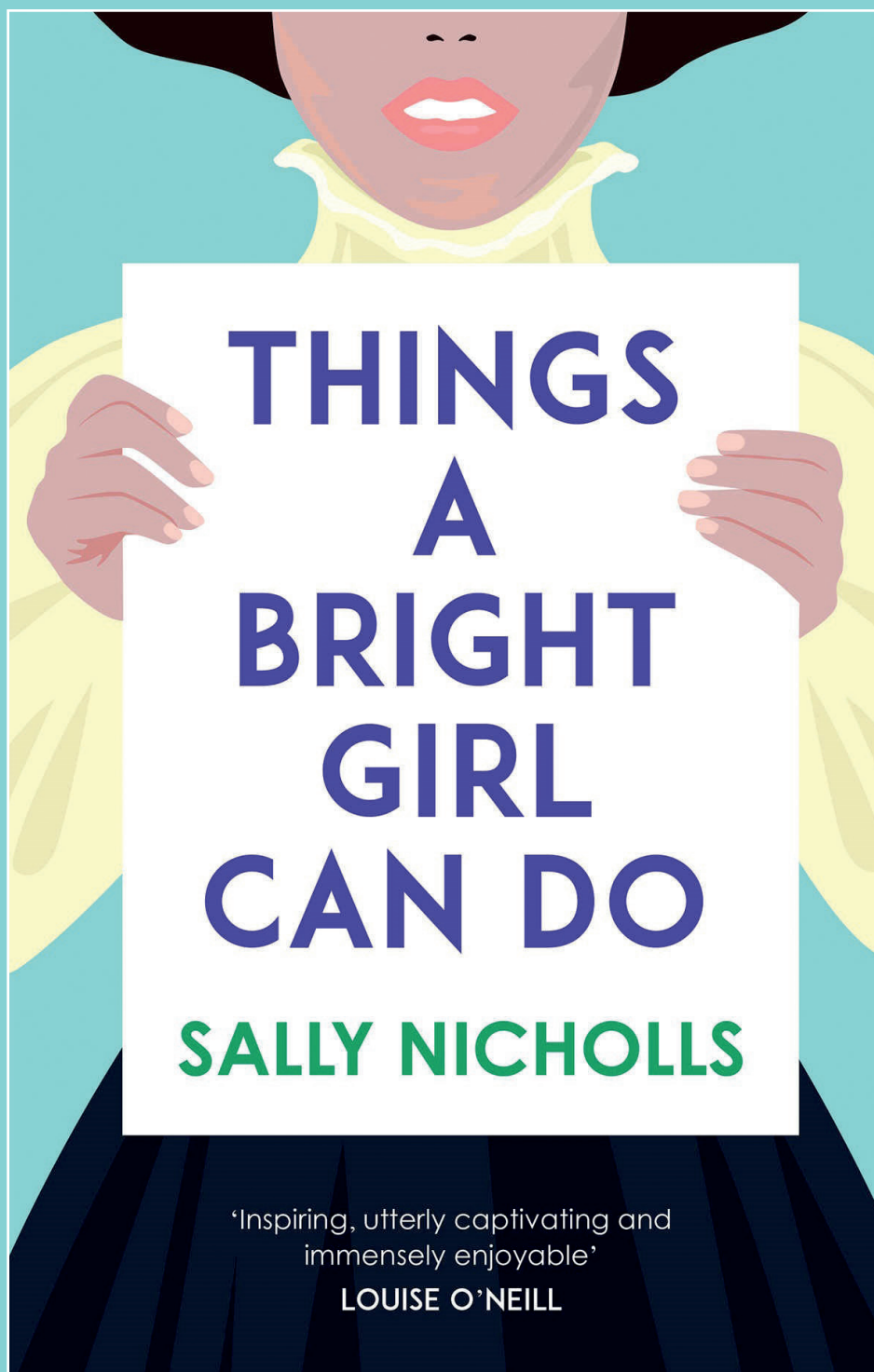
Discussing human rights in this story:

Right to equality including women's rights and LGBTI rights; to participate in the government of our country; to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; right to enough food, clothing, housing and healthcare; to peace and order; to work; to education.

- Do you think it matters how you achieve change?
- How are the characters' priorities shaped by their home lives?
- What would you have done, if you were May?



The Carnegie Shortlist 2019



EMC Resources: Things a Bright Girl Can Do



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BEFORE READING

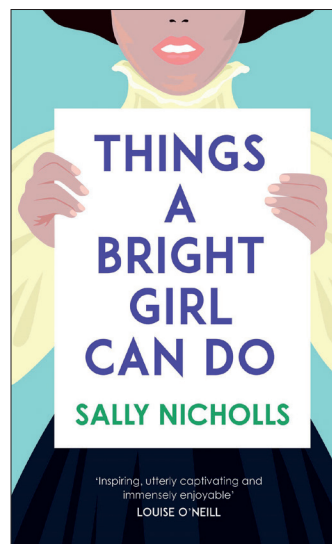
Making predictions

- Complete the three prediction tasks, below, in a pair or three.
- When you have completed the tasks, pool all your ideas about the novel as a whole group.
- Keep a note of your ideas so that you can refer back to them as you read.

1. The front cover

- In a pair or small group, examine the book's front cover.

- ▶ What do you think the book will be about?
- ▶ What is the likely audience for the book?
- ▶ Does it remind you of any other books? Does it make you want to pick the book up and start to read?



2. The title

The title of the novel you are going to read is *Things a Bright Girl Can Do*.

- Working with your partner or three, discuss what you think about the title. What meanings and connotations can you think of?
- Discuss your ideas, questions and predictions about the novel, including what genre of story you might expect.

3. Structure

The novel is split into 7 parts called: February 1914, August 1914, March 1915, October 1915, June 1916, March 1917, February 1918.

- Working with your partner or three, discuss your ideas about the section titles and why you think the story might be structured in this way. Some key dates for you to bear in mind:
 1. The women's suffrage movement (fighting for women's right to vote) became a national movement in 1872. As well as fighting for the vote, women were fighting for equality in other ways, for example better wages for the poorest women.
 2. In February 1918 a law was passed in the UK giving the vote to all men (previously only those who owned property could vote) and women over 30 who owned a certain amount of property.
 3. The First World War started in July 1914 and ended in November 1918.

DURING READING

We recommend working through the novel without pausing too often, then doing some more substantial work afterwards. The novel does offer lots of opportunities to pause for reflection, particularly about the different relationships described and the issues raised.

- Keep a journal while reading, pausing to write down your reflections about each of the points below. Where possible, have a discussion with other readers before putting your thoughts down on paper.

Two strands

The novel follows two parallel stories: Evelyn, Teddy and their families; May, Nell and their families.

- As you read, think about why the writer chose to follow the two stories. In 'After Reading' you will find a chart to help you to develop your thinking.

Rich and poor

Evelyn's family seems to be pretty well-off, May's family seems middle class and Nell's family is working class and poor.

- As you read think about how their class position affects each girl and her family, especially as the war begins. You could think about what choices and opportunities each girl has available.

Free to be me

- How far is each character free to be themselves? Which characters have to hide part of themselves? Think about whether this is mainly because of the expectations of family, what society expects, or the personalities of the characters themselves. Think about male characters such as Teddy and Bill as well as female characters.

A woman's place

- Think about what you learn about the position of girls and women just before the First World War. How does inequality and society's expectations of women affect the main female characters? How do they deal with this?

The IWSA and the WSPU

May's mother is very involved with the IWSA (International Woman Suffrage Alliance) which took a peaceful protest approach to getting more equality for women and later opposed the war. Evelyn on the other hand is involved with the WSPU (Women's Social and Political Union) which was a militant organisation. The WSPU felt that they had tried protesting peacefully for long enough (over fifty years) and a more attention grabbing approach was needed. For most members this meant things like damaging property (but avoiding harming people), chaining themselves to railings, and getting arrested. Some went further.

- As you read, think about whether Sally Nicholls is more in sympathy with one approach or another, or whether she leaves the reader to make up their own mind.

A moment in history

- Why do you think Sally Nicholls chose to begin her story just before the First World War?

The impact of war

Sally Nicholls has chosen to write mainly about the effect of the war on those left at home rather than the experiences of the soldiers.

- Think about why she has done this. It might help to think about how the novel would be different if part of it was set in the trenches with the soldiers. How do the different characters respond to the declaration of war? How do attitudes change as the war continues?

AFTER READING

What is the novel about?

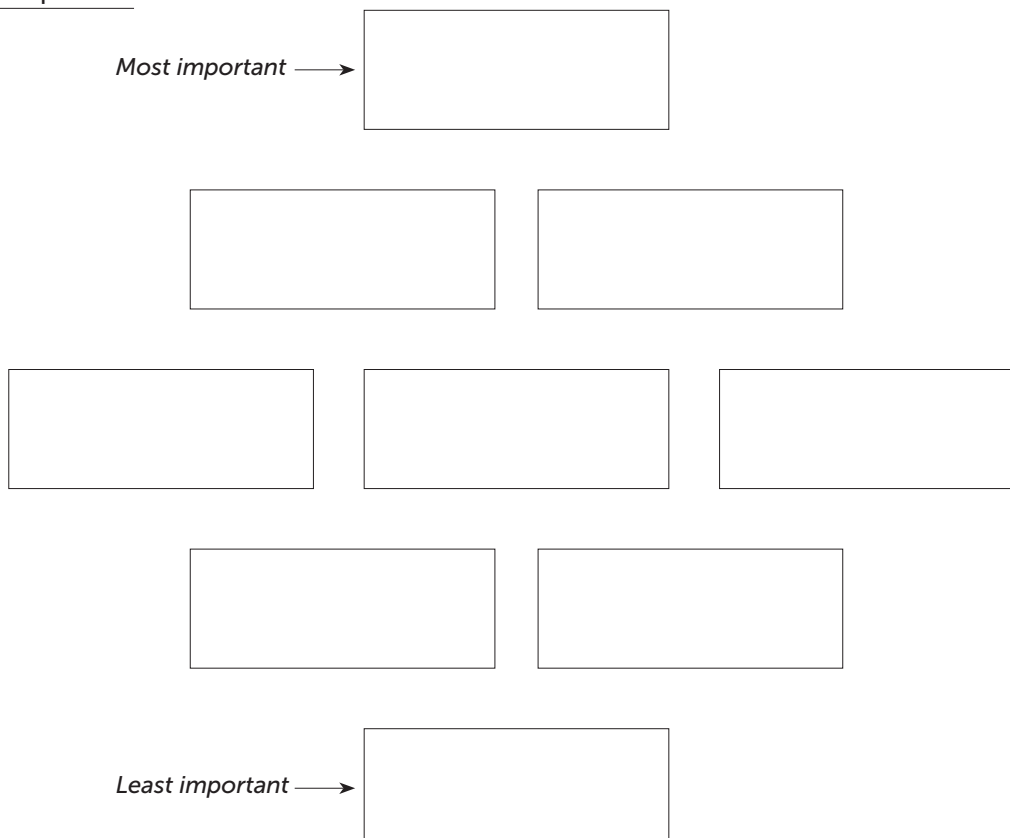
- Below are nine suggestions for what *Things a Bright Girl Can Do* is about.
- Working in a pair, or small group, rearrange them into a 'Diamond 9' formation, as shown below.
- Compare your arrangement with another pair or group and discuss any differences.

Things a Bright Girl Can Do is about ...

The importance of equality for all	The impact of war on the individuals caught up in it	Feminism and the 'Votes for Women' campaign
Whether violence is ever justified	The importance of being free to be yourself	What it means to be brave
Standing up for what you believe in	What limits people's life chances and opportunities both in the past and now. For example: sexism; poverty; homophobia; the expectations of family and society	How things have changed for women and girls since the 1900s

Diamond 9 pattern

Most important →



Two stories

The novel follows two different stories.

- With a partner, fill in the chart, below, to help you think about similarities and differences in the stories.
- Why do you think the writer chose to structure the book in this way? Discuss your ideas as a whole group.

Elements of the stories	Similarities and differences
The main characters: Evelyn and May	
The love interests: Teddy and Nell	
Involvement with Votes for Women: Evelyn and the WSPU; May and the IWSA (see notes in 'During Reading')	
Attitudes to the war in each story	
The impact of the war in each story	
How much freedom do Evelyn and May have at the start of the novel? Does this change?	
How Evelyn and May have changed by the end of the book	

Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are all from reviews of the book.

- Working with a partner, discuss which reviewer comes closest to your own view of the book.
- Working individually, write your own paragraph to express your views about the novel. You can draw on the review extracts you have read if you wish.
- Share some of your reviews as a whole group.

A. My first thought after finishing this book was how I wish it had been around when I was studying history aged 15/16. My school barely touched on women's suffrage and instead barrelled straight on in to World War One and the experience of soldiers and the government. We didn't learn about what happened to the wives and sisters and children left to fend for themselves, without a man's wage to pay for food or coal or medicine.

B. Whilst the book treats the women in it as complex characters with a variety of motivations no such service is done to the men in the book. The only male role given any consideration is that of Teddy, whose most important feature seems to be that he supports Evelyn even when he profoundly disagrees with her...In the end Teddy becomes a burden to Evelyn that she seems to rather resent but which she stoically bares. This is typical of the paper thin characters that men are given in the book.

C. I did at first think I wouldn't like this book. The language used made the characters feel like caricatures; there was a lot of 'jolly good', 'rotten', 'splendid', and so on. People did probably talk like that at the time, but it just didn't feel natural at the beginning. I did get used to it, however, and it stopped bothering me. I also never related or connected to any of the three girls. Although I respected them in some ways, there was a lot I didn't like about each of them. Though I did find that even though I wasn't a huge fan of them as people, it didn't mean I didn't care about them and what they went through, especially Nell. It's so odd, because I've never cared and felt so emotional for a character I didn't really like before.

D. Nicholls' book seems to campaign for equality for everyone, and shows that the Suffragette movement was more diverse than we can ever imagine. *Things a Bright Girl Can Do* is such a hopeful book, and shows us how far we have come as a society, yet reminds the reader that there is still an enormously long way to go. Education for girls in lots of countries is still non-existent. Gay marriage is still disallowed (and punished) all around the world. Women are paid less for the same jobs that men have. And men are still taught to put on a brave face, 'be a man' and not talk about the things that bother them. *Things a Bright Girl Can Do* shows us that change is possible and achievable.

Cards for Literary Analysis

These cards have been designed for use with any short story or novel. You can select a particular card to work with or rely on your teacher to give you a particular area of focus. You could then work through the bullet points on your card or select a few that seem most interesting or relevant for a particular text.

Setting

- ▶ In which different settings does this story/novel take place? What part does each setting play? Which setting is most significant and why?
- ▶ How important is setting to the story/novel as a whole? Does the setting have a particular impact on the story/novel, or could it be set almost anywhere?
- ▶ What difference would it make if this story/novel was set somewhere else? E.g. another country, a rural rather than urban setting, in space!
- ▶ How effective do you think the writer has been in creating a sense of place? Are there any particular examples of setting you think are particularly well written? If so, why?
- ▶ Is there anything particularly interesting or special about the way setting is used and presented? In what ways is it similar or different to stories/ novels that explore similar themes and ideas, or that are written in the same genre?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about setting. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Characters

- ▶ Who is your favourite character, and why?
- ▶ Who do you think is the most important character, and why?
- ▶ Who are the other significant characters? What different roles do they have?
- ▶ What is special or unusual about the way one or more of the characters is presented?
- ▶ Which character would you most like to be friends with, and why? Which character might significant adults want you to be friends with, and why?
- ▶ Are characters paired or grouped in any particular ways? E.g. friends, rivals, etc. What ideas are raised by these pairs or groupings?
- ▶ Are the characters typical of ones found in this kind of story/novel? Are they distinctive and individual, or stereotypes? Explain your answer.
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about characters. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Form and structure

- ▶ What do you think is interesting about the way this story/novel begins?
- ▶ What were the key moments in this story/novel? How did they shape the story/novel as a whole?
- ▶ If you had to describe the path of this story/novel, what would it be? E.g. journey from childhood to adulthood, from grief to happiness etc.
- ▶ What did you notice about the end of this story/novel? Was it what you were expecting? Did it tie up loose ends, or leave some things unresolved?
- ▶ Does this story/novel belong to a particular genre? If so, how does it fit in with other stories that you know in the same genre?
- ▶ Does the story/novel use just one form or does it include more than one E.g. letters, diary entries, poems, newspaper reports
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about form and structure. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Themes and ideas

- ▶ What, to you, are the five most important themes and ideas in this story/novel? If you had to narrow your list down to one theme or idea, what would it be and why? In what ways is this theme presented? E.g. if the theme is love, what exactly does the story/novel have to say about love?
- ▶ Does this story/novel deal with big issues that affect the whole world, or small ones that affect individual lives? Give reasons for your answer.
- ▶ Does this story/novel contain any themes or ideas that have made you look at the world in new ways? If so, what are they, and how have they changed your views?
- ▶ Does this story/novel contain any themes and ideas that explore how people should act and behave? If so, what are they and do you agree with how they are presented?
- ▶ Are the themes and ideas presented in ways similar or different to other stories you have read, including stories of the same type, or in the same genre?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about themes and ideas. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Language

- ▶ Identify one or two of your favourite passages in the story/novel where language is used particularly well? Explain how it is used.
- ▶ How would you describe the language used in this story/novel overall? E.g. poetic, plain, chatty etc.
- ▶ Would you say the language in this story/novel is original or creative in any particular way? If so, how?
- ▶ Are there any patterns in the language used? If so, what are they, and what is their effect? Are there any other patterns, such as of imagery and symbolism?
- ▶ How is dialogue used in the story/novel? Do characters, for example, speak in particularly distinctive ways?
- ▶ Is the language similar to how it is used in similar kinds of stories/novels? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about language. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Narrative

- ▶ How does the writer try to capture and keep the reader's attention? How successful are they in doing this?
- ▶ Is the narrative told in order from beginning to end (a linear narrative), or does it move backwards and forwards in time? What is the effect of the order in which events are told?
- ▶ Can you think of any other ways the story/novel could be told? For example, by a different character, or in a different order? How would this affect your experience of reading?
- ▶ Would you say that this story/novel is told in a particular original or creative way? If so, how?
- ▶ Is this story/novel told in a way that is typical for its genre?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about narrative. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Point of view and voice

- ▶ Through whose eyes do we see the events of the story/novel? Do readers get just one point of view or several?
- ▶ What do you find interesting about the point or points of view presented?
- ▶ If the story/novel is told from different points of view, how does the writer do this?
- ▶ What would the story/novel be like if told from someone else's point of view? Whose point of view would you choose, and why?
- ▶ How would you describe the tone of voice used to tell the narrative? Does the narrative draw attention to itself by using a particular tone, or is the tone pushed to the background? What is the effect of the choice made by the writer?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about point of view and voice. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Audience and overall personal response

- ▶ Who do you think this story/novel was written for, and why? Are there any other groups of people who you think should read it?
- ▶ What was your experience of reading this story/novel?
- ▶ What would you recommend about this story/novel to other people?
- ▶ Which parts of this story/novel did you most enjoy? Were there any parts that you didn't enjoy?
- ▶ Do you think this story/novel could be improved in some way? If so, how?
- ▶ What other stories (or films, TV, plays etc.) does this story/novel remind you of? In what ways?
- ▶ Who do you think should read this book and why?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about personal response and audience. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



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