

# Personal response to cold comfort farm



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

What was a main theme in the novel and how can it be applied to my lifestyle? Cold Comfort Farm is a novel centred around recently orphaned Flora Poste who goes to stay with her cousins living on a farm. I thought that a reoccurring theme in the novel was shown in the way in which Flora got people to look beyond their horizons and imagine a more realistic lifestyle. Thanks to Flora's encouragement and manipulation the characters living at Cold Comfort Farm look beyond their horizons and become much more interesting people.

Like Aunt Ada Doom, I have come to realise that I lead a very routine lifestyle only occasionally leaving Karori and barely ever venturing outside of Wellington. I can admit right here that I am not an enthralling person but I am not living a lifestyle which requires as dramatic a change as flying to Paris and living the High Life like Aunt Ada Doom does after reading an issue of Vogue. So really this theme didn't provoke any reaction in me at all other than how I hope I don't see anything too nasty in the woodshed that would make me live in a bedroom for the rest of my life.

How did I identify with the protagonist, Flora Poste? Throughout the novel I found myself comparing my attitudes to Flora's as she is a practical and sensible young woman completely ready to take on any medieval, melodramatic family that she feels the need to "tidy up." Flora is like a catalyst; she is the baking soda of the hokey-pokey, Flora shakes up delayed reactions and causes unusual emotions. I typically find this happening whenever I walk into a room as I normally end up saying something embarrassing that causes total controversy and many shocked expressions.

Flora does the same thing by suggesting that Adam, a farm hand, uses a scrubbing brush to clean the breakfast dishes rather than a twig. Adam said: “I don’t want a liddle mop wi’ a handle. I’ve used a thorn twig these fifty years and more, and what was good enough then is good enough now. ” Seeing the logical and practical side is something I have in common with Flora however I do not consider myself quite as cunning or manipulative as Flora proves herself to be throughout the novel. “‘But,’ suggested the cunning Flora...” If you had a little mop and could wash the dishes more quickly, you ould have more time in the cowshed with the dumb beasts. ’ Adam stopped his work. This had evidently struck home. ” While getting changed after Ballet two weeks ago a girl I dance with stated how she ‘ didn’t read. ’ I was disgusted and replied ‘ I can see it is cool to be illiterate these days’ the response ‘ What does illiterate mean’ could only result in an astonished silence from me. I then took it upon myself to help her with her homework every Tuesday before ballet. I think that Flora and I are both modern for our times and have little tolerance for unnecessary ignorance.

What was a device used by Gibbons to hold my attention throughout the novel? Stella Gibbons was a poet before she became a novelist with her first publication being a book of poems *The Mountain Beast*, and her melodramatic insertions of landscape descriptions are proof of this. “\*\*Dawn crept over the downs like a sinister white animal followed by the snarling cries of a wind eating its way between the black boughs of the thorns. The wind was the furious voice of this sluggish animal light that was baring the dormers and mullions and scullions of Cold Comfort Farm. Gibbons warns us whenever she starts this by placing a couple of asterixes in front of the

paragraph. The reader is then snatched from this world and back into the sensible yet cynical views of the young protagonist, Flora Poste. I thought this made the book ahead of its times as it was only written in the 1930s when it just wasn't the done thing for women to write comedy. However, sometimes this would confuse me and I would have to go back and read the paragraph again as a beautiful description of rugged landscape would switch to how Graceless the cow's leg fell off.

Bizarre occurrences like these made me do something that can only be described as a double take to make sure I had read the passage correctly. I couldn't leave the cow-leg incident alone and spent my lying-in-bed-pondering-before-sleep-time speculating over how a cow's leg simply falls off. Did I find the novel relevant or interesting to me as a reader? I was highly recommended to read this book by my parents, knowing I like a laugh, they told me it was hilarious and then proved how little they know about my sense of humour.

Despite having interesting characters, poetic techniques and a solid theme I found the novel as a whole: disappointing. I didn't learn anything of great epiphany significance, and no valuable life lessons, there was no exciting climax but the most disappointing thing was the lack of humour. The only thing I really laughed at being Aunt Ada Doom unable to get past how she 'Saw something nasty in the woodshed when she was a little girl,' and then spending the rest of her life sulking about it in her bedroom.

Maybe I didn't understand the humour so much because I am only fifteen and have not experienced enough of the world and its literature to understand the adult humour within the story but I did not react to the novel

at all, in fact I thought that the setting was rather dull, and reminded me of a rainy day on a farm only more bleak, the events in the story were unrealistically rushed and happened much too quickly and the perfect solutions to each problem that arose were idealistic and cliché, however I am sure it is a classic for a reason and maybe I need to live a little before I revisit it in a few years time.