



Writing Prompts and Discussion Topics for *The Automobile Girls at Newport* and *Grace Harlowe's Freshman Year at High School*

Gender Roles

Consider how girls and boys are portrayed in these series books.

- Do you think the girls in these series are supposed to be seen as equal to boys? Why or why not? Give examples from both texts to support your position.
- Based on the experiences of Grace and her friends in *Grace Harlowe's Freshman Year at High School*, how similar does Oakdale High School sound to high schools and middle schools today in terms of how girls are educated? What are some of the most important differences? Use evidence from the text as well as personal experience to support your answer.
- Based on the experiences of Ruth and Barbara and the others in *The Automobile Girls at Newport*, how much freedom do you think girls in the early 1900s had to explore and have adventures without any boys around to protect them? Why? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Jobs Held by Women

Spend some time women's roles in the workforce in the early 1900s.

- For women who wanted to or had to work, what kinds of jobs were most available?
- Pick three of the jobs you listed above. For each of those jobs, describe the characteristics of a woman who might have held that job. Consider social class, race, geographic location, and any other factors you think are relevant.
- Why do you think some jobs were harder than others for women to obtain?
- If you were a young woman living in the early 1900s and you wanted to go into the workforce, which of the careers available to women would you be most likely to go into? Why?
- Compare the career you chose above to that same career today. Has anything changed? If so, what and in what ways?

Suffragette Movement

Spend some time researching the suffragette movement in the United States.

- In *The Automobile Girls at Newport*, some of the girls and Aunt Sallie have a conversation about suffragettes (page 83). What do they say? How do you think each of them feels about the suffragette movement? Why?
- Do you think the writers of *The Automobile Girls at Newport* and *Grace Harlowe's Freshman Year at High School* approved or disapproved of the suffragette movement? What makes you think so?

- Imagine you are a girl living in the early 1900s. Write a short essay about the suffragette movement as it relates to your life. Do you approve of it? Disapprove? Are you planning to join the suffragettes when you're older? Do you have any relatives who have strong feelings about suffragettes one way or the other? Give as much detail as you can about your life—family, friends, neighborhood, etc.
- What are some of the issues facing women today? Pick one and do some research on how it started and what its status is now. Then, write a short essay comparing that issue to the suffragette movement of the early 1900s.
- In your opinion, how far have women's rights in the United States come since the early 1900s? Why do you think so?

Stereotypes and Prejudices

- Most of the protagonists of these novels are middle or upper class, and all of them are white. Do you think books like this would be well received if they were published as brand-new stories today? Why or why not?
- The protagonists of these books are supposed to be seen as good and kind, but many of them hold negative and offensive views towards people of other ethnicities and social classes. What does this tell you about society back then?
- Imagine you are a young person living one hundred years from now looking back on people today. What kinds of prejudices or stereotypes do you think you would find in people today?
- Imagine you are a young person living one hundred years from now looking back on people today. What do you think you would say about the children's books and YA books that are being written today?
- Think about some of the negative stereotypes that can be found in these books—for instance, the portrayal of gypsies as beggars and fortune-tellers. If you could go for an automobile ride with Ruth Stuart or attend a holiday party with Grace Harlowe, what might you say to them to open their eyes to their prejudices?

New Technologies

There were a number of technologies that were new and exciting in the early 1900s—for example, automobiles, radios, and moving pictures. Pick a technology that was relatively new in the early 1900s and do some research on it.

- When did that technology become widespread?
- Who were some of the early users of that technology?
- How did people react at first?
- How has the technology changed from then to now?

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