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*A Face Like Glass* By Frances Hardinge

Frances Hardinge is a decorated author from Brighton, England, and she studied English at Oxford University. Like many young authors, she did not believe entirely in the work she created. It wasn’t until her colleague submitted a novel for her and she was signed to her current publishing label Macmillan. Her books stand out since she focuses on the underdog story where the character has a trickster or adventurous personality. Hardinge’s stories are dark and mysterious; she would write stories with the same context since she was six years old. When she was six years old, she wrote a story involving a faked death, an attempted poisoning, and a villain being thrown off a cliff. [(http://www.franceshardinge.com/)](http://www.franceshardinge.com/))

Summary-

The story takes place in the magical underground city of Caverna, where we meet Neverfell, a lost girl who does not know where she came from. She is found by a cheese master who keeps her locked up learning the craft of cheesemaking. One day she finally escapes the cheese tunnels and begins her adventure in the underground city. Caverna’s uniqueness is that people are born without facial expressions; they must learn new facial expressions through the teachings of a facesmith. Every family in this world is an expert in crafting wine, cheese, pastries, or mapmaking. As the story progresses, we meet fascinating characters like the Kleptomancer, Madame Appeline. The mysterious world has many dark secrets that need attending to, and the only person brave enough to take on such a big project is Neverfell. She has to be wiser than the 500-year-old rulers and smarter than the kidnappers.

Significant Quote #1

“In the overground world, babies that stared up at their mother’s faces gradually started to work out that the two bright stars they could see above them were eyes like their own, and that the broad curve was a mouth like theirs. Without even thinking about it, they would curve their mouths the same way, mirroring their mothers’ smiles in miniature. When they were frightened or unhappy, they would know at once how to screw up their faces and bawl. Caverna babies never did this, and nobody knew why. They looked solemnly at the face above them, and saw eyes, nose, mouth, but they did not copy its expressions. There was nothing wrong with their features, but somehow one of the tiny silver links in the chain of their souls was missing. They had to be forced to learn expressions one at a time, slowly and painfully, otherwise they remained blank as eggs.” (Pg. 27)

* The city of Caverna is a magical place but for every abnormality, there is a real-life significance behind it. From the beginning, we find out that the only way children make facial expressions is through teaching because they cannot do it naturally. This concept emphasizes the idea that children project whatever they learn from adults. This quote signifies that what is shown by a parent is very important to a child’s development. The only way to discover new facial expressions is through lessons, which hinders some people from expressing themselves. This creates a class system that represents the classism we experience nowadays.

Significant Quote #2

“I suspect that there is another Neverfell caged inside you, and that she is burning with rage. Anger at something she remembers, perhaps. Anger at being locked away for so long. She may even be angry with you.” (Pg. 206)

* Madame Appeline, the most important facesmith, is telling Neverfell why she feels so lost and disconnected. Most of Neverfells childhood is stolen from her because she worked in the cheese tunnels. In the cheese tunnels, she was hidden from the world and was tricked to believe she was too hideous to go out in public. As a result, she can not go outside and has to wear a mask. Sadly, this was all a scheme to keep her locked up from the underground world. She never got to be a young girl, so now she has an angry child inside of her that is upset since she did not get to enjoy her life correctly. It is important to note that Madame Appeline is growing a mother-daughter relationship with her at the time of this conversation, something Neverfell had never experienced.

Significant Quote #3

“They sleep all piled up like dirty washing, and their children have legs like hoops and have to carry great sacks up cliffs, and the tunnels are so tight it feels like you’re under a rockfall all the time, and everything smells sick or stale, and I saw this girl drop into the river and drown, and nobody stopped to look for the body, and they can’t even show what they feel because they have no proper Faces, only stupid ones that make them look like they only care about their next job! And sometimes people come down and kill them for no good reason! Court people steal down to try out poisons and practise murders before they do them for real up here—” ( Pg. 483)

* The excerpt from the story is significant because it exposes how the poor drudges live and are exploited by the rich. Throughout the story, we see the drudges as happy workers and very humble compared to the rest of society. Something that stood out to me the most was the inability they have to show emotion even when one of them dies in a horrible accident. They seem to have no opportunity to excel in life since the gap between them and the rich is very significant.

Teaching with *A Face Like Glass*

*A Face Like Glass* can be difficult to teach since it is very long and can sometimes take too long to reach an important topic. Even with these obstacles, it is a book that can initiate controversial discussions.

Real-World Problem

* There are many problems in the book that should not be ignored since they apply to real situations. We see neglect from a parent, classism, and finding your true self. Choose the problem most vital to you and explain why it is important to you.

Characters

* From all of the characters, which one do you believe is the most relatable? And why? Do any of the social groups represent groups you associate yourself with? How does it make you feel that you relate to them?

Wite a short essay response explaining which character is relatable.

Compare and contrast

* Compare and contrast the main characters. Neverfell and Zouelle? Grand Steward and Erstwhile? Madame Appeline and Cheesemaster Grandible? What are the key differences, and why did the author choose to portray them the way they did?

Text Complexity and Age Group

Lexile: Recommended ages 14-17 ; 920L

* The text complexity is relatively high, considering that *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson has a rating of 690L. The score is due to lengthy sentences and word frequency. The tags given include science fiction, adventure stories, personal issues, and social issues. This is ideal for the recommended age group since it is around the time they start to process the harsh reality of life.

Dale-Chall Formula: Score 8 appropriate for 8th-grade reading

* Even though we see a lower score than the Lexile recommendation, it would be ideal for teaching this novel in high school. The themes surrounding the text and the structure of long sentences can make it difficult for middle schoolers.

Category of Books that *A Face Like Glass* fits from *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning*

* Chapter 6: Books about Identity, Discrimination, and Struggles with Decisions
* Chapter 7: Books about Courage and Survival

Why should teens read this book?

* They will understand that there are problems that need to be addressed, like the gap between classism.
* The book is very detailed and it is easy to get sucked into the magical world.
* There are many themes that are important to a teen who is getting ready to live life on their own.
* They will learn to realize that you never know what is going on in someone else’s life.
* They will learn the importance of speaking up for those that do not have a voice.