

Teacher's notes

Sweet Valley High: The Stolen Diary

Written by Kate William
Created by Francine Pascal



SUMMARY

Sweet Valley High is a top-selling, American series of fiction for teenagers. The stories take place in a fictitious town in California in the USA, and focus around the lives of teenage twins, Jessica and Elizabeth Wakefield and their friends at Sweet Valley High School.

Elizabeth is having problems with her long-standing boyfriend, Todd. He has decided they need some time apart. Upset, Elizabeth tries to prove that she doesn't need Todd, and starts seeing a new boyfriend. Elizabeth is confused and unhappy, and knows that she really wants to be with Todd. She confesses all her feelings and fears to her diary, which she writes regularly.

When Todd tells Elizabeth that he still loves her, she thinks her problems are over. But unkind stories about Elizabeth begin to circulate, and Elizabeth finds her friends turning from her. Only her sister, Jessica, remains loyal, and is determined to find out the truth.

ABOUT FRANCINE PASCAL

Francine Pascal was born Francine Rubin in Manhattan, USA, on May 13th 1938. It was neither her father, an auctioneer, nor her mother who encouraged her to write, but her brother.

Francine met John Pascal while they were students. They got married in 1965 and together brought up Francine's three girls from her former marriage. John and Francine worked together on several projects including TV shows, the popular musical 'George M' and a book about one of the 20th century's most famous trials - *The Strange Case of Patty Hearst*.

When John died from lung cancer in 1981 at the age of 48, Francine was distraught. 'He was my mentor, a lovely man, a wonderful father and a beautiful writer' she said. She went to France for nine months and felt strong and healthy again. However, she fell apart when she returned to New York, and turned to writing again to try to recover. It was her writing that rescued her from misery, when she launched the *Sweet Valley High* series in 1982. This rapidly became a profitable business.

Francine Pascal has also written several other teenage books and several adult novels. She now divides her time between writing, travelling, and her homes in New York and the South of France.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

In 1982 Francine Pascal was planning to sell an idea for a daytime drama to a TV network. However, she was persuaded by a friend to turn the idea into a book series instead. This became the *Sweet Valley High* series.

The first book in the series was called *Double Love*. It introduced the world to identical twins Jessica and Elizabeth Wakefield, who are identical in looks alone. In character they are very different. Elizabeth, the elder twin, is sensible, loyal and kind, and helps her sister in times of trouble. Jessica is wild, frivolous, and manipulative. She is, however, devoted to her sister. 'The trick is to think of Elizabeth and Jessica as the good and the bad sides of one person,' says their creator, Pascal.

The *Sweet Valley High* books have become one of the most popular series of all time, and has led to the development of other series: *Sweet Valley Kids*, when the twins are in primary school, *Sweet Valley Twins*, and *Sweet Valley University*, when they are in college.

Pascal's three teenage daughters provided her with a certain amount of material for her books, but her own memories of growing up in New York gave her most of the ideas and themes. She recalls: 'I was a very optimistic teenager and my conflicts were the stuff of everyday teenage trauma - loyalty, friendship, sacrifice, honor, truth and love - I think the books appeal because teenagers today are still an idealistic group.'

The Stolen Diary focusses mainly around Elizabeth, usually the sensible twin, and her problems with boyfriends. Jessica is neither manipulative nor wild in this book, and is worried about her sister. She also keeps urging Elizabeth not to hurt Kris Lynch by using him. Jessica shows herself to be loyal and trustworthy.

Loyalty is a strong theme running through *The Stolen Diary*. The loyalty of Elizabeth's friends is tested when unkind rumours about her run through Sweet Valley High School. When everyone else doubts her and turns from her, it is Jessica who sticks by her and determines to prove her innocence. Afterwards Elizabeth's best friends feel tremendously guilty that they hadn't remained loyal to her.

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Another theme that runs through the book at various levels is that of honesty and dishonesty. We see Elizabeth being slightly dishonest towards Kris, whom she uses to try to make her boyfriend, Todd, jealous. In turn Kris is dishonest once he realizes he has been used. He starts telling lies about Elizabeth and pretends she has told him intimate things about her best friends. In both cases it is shown that dishonesty leads to problems when events run out of control.

The Stolen Diary deals entirely with the isolated world of teenagers. Adults hardly enter this world, except as shadowy figures in the background. The themes of the book cover fundamental teenage issues, such as love, friendship, loyalty and fun. The lives of the young people, although packed with good times, are full of adolescent pressures as they struggle to deal with their emotions and learn to develop friendships and relationships.

Although Francine Pascal now has help to write the *Sweet Valley High* books, she maintains control of them by planning them all. Pascal gives her writers strict guidelines for the themes, characters and settings of the books, and outlines the plots so that her series remains close to her heart.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. Further supplementary exercises, covering shorter sections of the book, can be found on the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers, but with the exception of pair/groupwork questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Put students into pairs and tell them to look at the pictures in the first four chapters of the book. One student chooses a picture and describes it to the other student. The other student finds the picture in the book. The second student then describes a picture to the first student, which he/she has to find.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Chapters 1-3

Write the names of the people in the book on separate cards, and write a description of each person on the other side of the appropriate card. Put students into small groups and give each group a set of cards. Students lay the cards out on the table with the description on the top. In turn, students take a card, read it, and without turning the card over, say who the person is. The first group to finish is the winner. (You can also play this game with the name of the person on the top. Students take a card and say something about the person they have chosen.)

Chapters 4-5

Put students into small groups. Ask them to write down what they think will happen next. The groups read out what they have written.

Chapters 6-7

Draw a time line on the board, starting on Monday at lunchtime and ending on Friday night two weeks and four days later. Put students into small groups. They look back through the book and write in the important things that happen on the days of the time line.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Put students into small groups. Write these facts on sets of cards and give each group a set of cards.

Jessica is a kind person.

Elizabeth wants to tell Kris that she cannot go out with him.

Enid likes Hugh Grayson.

Todd wants to have some time away from Elizabeth.

Kris likes Elizabeth.

Ask students to find a sentence in the book which tells the reader these things. Students can then write their own cards and give them to other groups.

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the Before You Read sections of exercises at the back of the book.

Chapters 1-3

apart (adj/adv) away from

cartoon (n) a funny picture

diary (n) people write in a diary about their feelings and what they do each day

library (n) a building or room with many books

lucky (adj) having good things happen to you

message (n) something you say on an answerphone or write on paper when a person is not at home

need (v) to feel that you have to have something

steal (v) to take something that is not yours

together (adv) to be with somebody

true (adj) / **truth** (n) words that are right / what is right

twin (n) one of two children born at the same time

upset (adj) unhappy

worried (adj) unhappy because you can't stop thinking about a problem

Chapters 4-5

alone (adv/adj) without any other people

blush (v) to go red in the face

kiss (v) to touch a person with your mouth

locker (n) a small cupboard

suit (n) trousers and jacket

Chapters 6-7

forgive (v) to say to someone that you are not angry with them when they did something bad to you

lie (v) to say things which are not right



Student's activities

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Student's can answer these questions alone or with one or more other people.

Activities before reading the book

Read the Introduction at the front of the book, then answer these questions.

- What do you think the book is about?
animals, boyfriends, young children, sport, school
- When did Francine Pascal write the first *Sweet Valley High* book?
- Does Francine Pascal write all the books?
- How many *Sweet Valley High* books are there?
- In how many countries can you buy the *Sweet Valley High* books?

Activities while reading the book

CHAPTERS 1 - 3

Chapter 1

Which of these people says these things? Who do they say them to?

Jessica, Caroline, Todd, Elizabeth, Enid

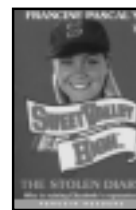
- says to 'You're only sixteen - you aren't married to him.'
- says to 'So where were you at lunch?'
- says to 'Can't you eat lunch without me for one day?'
- says to 'Perhaps we need a little time apart.'
- says to 'I'll plan things so you won't feel sad without Todd.'
- says to 'You'll have to go to Big Mesa.'
- says to 'You're very quiet about your sister and Todd.'
- says to '...people are saying that Todd has got a new girlfriend.'

Chapter 2

This is the story of Chapter 2. Which thing happens first? Which thing happens second? Put the numbers 1 to 7 next to the sentences.

- Elizabeth tells Enid that she will have to phone Hugh so that he doesn't forget her.
- Enid and Elizabeth are driving to Big Mesa.
- They see Todd with a pretty dark-haired girl.
- Elizabeth tells Jessica that she can come to the cinema.
- They see Hugh Grayson outside Beach Café.
- Elizabeth, Enid and Hugh have a drink together.
- Elizabeth is upset. She wants to think.

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Chapter 3

Finish the sentences with the words below.

dance love Kris Lynch because cartoons excited diary tells number with message

- The eyes of follow Elizabeth everywhere.
- Enid is She tells Elizabeth that she left a on Hugh's answerphone.
- Kris Lynch is good at drawing
- Kris asks Elizabeth to go to the with him.
- Kris gives Elizabeth a cartoon with his telephone below it.
- Todd Elizabeth that he is going to the dance Peggy.
- Elizabeth writes in her : '...I'm only interested in T.'
- Enid is upset Hugh has not phoned her.
- Everybody knows that Kris is in with Elizabeth.

CHAPTERS 4-5

Chapter 4

1 Write down answers to these questions, or talk with a friend about them.

Why did Elizabeth go out with Kris? Was this kind of her? Why/Why not?

2 Are these sentences right or wrong? Change the sentences that are wrong. Make them right.

- Elizabeth wanted to go to the dance with Kris.
- Kris was in a black suit.
- Elizabeth looked at Todd and Peggy dancing.
- Kris thinks Elizabeth is a good writer.
- Elizabeth is not going out with Kris again.
- On Monday Elizabeth gets to school late.
- Todd doesn't want to have lunch with Elizabeth.
- Kris takes Elizabeth to the theatre.
- Kris wears a white suit when they go to the cinema.
- They go to the cinema in Kris's green Volkswagen.
- Elizabeth thinks about Todd all evening when she is at the cinema with Kris.

Chapter 5

1 Write down how Elizabeth feels at the party. Write her diary for her.

2 Make sentences. Put (a) - (h) with (i) - (viii).

- Jessica is worried
- Elizabeth cannot talk to Kris at the party

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Student's activities

- (c) Elizabeth opens a door of another room and is upset.....
 - (d) Kris shouts at Elizabeth
 - (e) Everything falls out of Elizabeth's bag...
 - (f) Elizabeth is upset at home....
 - (g) Jessica is very angry ...
 - (h) Elizabeth is very happy ...
 - (i) ...because Todd tells her that he loves her.
 - (ii) ...because she can't find her diary.
 - (iii) ...because Todd and Peggy are in the room.
 - (iv) ...because the girls at school think that Elizabeth and Kris are girlfriend and boyfriend.
 - (v) ...because he is angry.
 - (vi) ...when her friends tell her that her sister and Kris went to Miller's Point.
 - (vii) ...because it is too noisy.
 - (viii) ...when she and Kris fight in the car.
- 3 Why is Kris angry? Is he right to be angry? What do you think?

CHAPTERS 6-7

Chapter 6

- 1 Use one of the words in *italics* to finish the sentences.
- (a) Enid hears the story about Elizabeth and Kris in the girls' *classroom/toilets*
 - (b) Peggy tells Todd the story about Elizabeth and Kris with a smile on her face. *little/big*
 - (c) Kris tells Todd and Enid things he has in Elizabeth's diary. *read/written*
 - (d) Elizabeth puts on a dress for her evening out with Todd. *red/green*
 - (e) Elizabeth telephones Todd he does not arrive. *when/if*
 - (f) Todd and Enid do not want to talk Elizabeth on the phone. *at/to*
- 2 Are Todd and Enid good friends to Elizabeth in this chapter? What do you think?

Chapter 7

- 1 The words in *italics* are wrong. Put the right words into the sentences.
- (a) Elizabeth's friends *run* away when they see her.
 - (b) Enid and Todd tell Jessica *with* their conversations with Kris Lynch.
 - (c) Jessica knows Elizabeth *longer* than Enid or Todd.
 - (d) Elizabeth always feels better when she writes about everything in her *book*.
 - (e) Kris Lynch knows Elizabeth doesn't love *her*.

- (f) In the café Kris tells Enid and Todd the *lies*.
- (g) On Friday afternoon Elizabeth is going *at* The Oracle office.
- (h) Kris tells Elizabeth that he is *upset*.
- (i) Kris gives Elizabeth a *story* for the school paper.
- (j) On Friday night Elizabeth, Jessica and their friends go to Guido's *cinema*.
- (k) Enid is *sad* because she and Hugh are back together again.
- (l) Jessica wants to *sell* a jeep.

- 2 Three people feel bad in this chapter? Who are they?

Activities after reading the book

- 1 Here are the names of the chapters. Put them in the right order, without looking at the book.
- The Party, Big Mesa, Jessica's Plan, Boyfriend Problems, The Dance, Unkind Stories, A Meeting
- 2 Close your books. Answer these questions. Can you answer them before your friends can answer them?
- (a) What is Elizabeth's family name?
 - (b) Who is Elizabeth's best friend (first name and family name)?
 - (c) What is Elizabeth's boyfriend's name (first name and family name)?
 - (d) What is the name of the school in the book?
 - (e) In which country does the story happen?
 - (f) Who wrote the first Sweet Valley High book?
 - (g) How old are the twin sisters?
 - (h) What is the name of the school magazine?
 - (i) Which boy does Enid like (first name and family name)?
 - (j) Where does he go to school?
 - (k) What does Kris do for the school magazine?
 - (l) Where does Elizabeth write about her feelings?
 - (m) Who wants to be Elizabeth's boyfriend?
 - (n) What car does Kris drive to the dance?
 - (o) What does Kris wear to the dance?
 - (p) How many times does Elizabeth go out with Kris?
 - (q) Why does Elizabeth lose her diary?
 - (r) Where does Elizabeth find her diary?
 - (s) When does she find her diary?
 - (t) What is Miller's Point?
 - (u) Why are Todd and Enid angry with Elizabeth?
 - (v) Why did Kris tell stories about Elizabeth?
 - (w) Who helped Elizabeth?
 - (x) Where do the twins go on Friday night at the end of the book?

