



## **Farmed Out**

Christy Goerzen

Reading Level: 4.0

978-1-55469-910-0 PB

978-1-55469-911-7 LIB

AR Quiz # 146753

### **Book Summary**

Maddie has big-city dreams, and this summer she's found her chance to visit New York. An art magazine is holding a portrait painting contest, and the first prize is an all-expenses-paid trip to the Big Apple. Maddie plans to win, but her mother has different plans for her: a mother-daughter adventure in organic farming. Maddie is furious. How will she find an inspiring subject for her portrait amid the goat poop and chickens? And worse, her New-Age mother's attempts at pig reiki are an embarrassment. But Maddie befriends the farmer's daughter, Anna, and between dodging her mother and doing her chores, she finds the perfect subject for the portrait contest.

### **Author Biography**

**Christy Goerzen** has been writing since the age of two, when she forced her parents to be the scribes for her long, convoluted stories about sheep and faeries. Passionate about everything to do with reading and writing, Christy holds a Master of Arts in Children's Literature from the University of British Columbia. She has worked as a book reviewer, copywriter, marketing consultant, television writer, bookseller, university instructor and writing mentor. She loves daydreaming, dancing in the kitchen, wearing costumes, and goofing off with family and friends. Christy lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, with her family and two funny cats.

## Connecting to the Text

### Theme

As a group discussion or individual writing exercise, ask students to choose a key theme from the novel that resonates with them personally. Encourage students to find examples from the novel to expand on their choices, while reflecting on how the theme has personal meaning. Examples of themes are:

- *It's important to be true to yourself, even if privately.*
- *You can take the girl out of the city, but you can't take the city out of the girl.*
- *Friendship can be found in unusual places if we're open to it.*
- *Adventure can be found in unusual places if we're open to it.*
- *Inspiration can be found in the most unlikely places if we're open to looking.*

### The Writer's Craft

Alliteration is a way for the writer to draw attention to words and their sounds and rhythms by using similar or same sounds at the beginning of each word in a sequence. Ask students to find examples in *Farmed Out* (there are many) and then make a list of all the alliterations they see in one day (in advertisements, logos, assignments, slang, etc.).

- Examples from early chapters include: *Wild Woman Weekend, patch of paradise, flush of frustration, Joan Jett, "Chop Chop!", Betty Boop, poops plopped into a pile.*

## Connecting to the Curriculum

### Art

1. Maddie enjoys sketching and creating art projects. Challenge students to try some of Maddie's ideas themselves. Encourage students to vary the themes according to their own muses!
  - ♦ Maddie drew feet in cool shoes at different city locations. She called it *Downtown Soles*. Think of a common object that might look "different" if placed in unusual locations. What about track shoes in a hospital or high heels at the homeless shelter?
  - ♦ Maddie wandered around the farm, looking for inspiration. To find inspiration, we must shift our thinking and look at things differently. Can you find inspiration—even in the most common or usual places? What about the school washrooms, the cinema line-up or the bus stop?
2. There are many powerful and humorous images and scenes in *Farmed Out*. As an art project using illustration, collage, print, digital drawing, sketch, etc., encourage students to choose a scene to illustrate or provide commentary on. Students may wish to incorporate a quote from the novel in their art. Some suggested scenes are below.
  - ♦ Star Mountain Skyhawk "had stringy hair down to her butt, and stringy gray armpit hair to match...The basic gist of the weekend was that we paint our faces with mud and scream into a hole in the ground." (ch. 1)

- ♦ Their apartment is “an odd mix of office slave and goddess worshipper.” (ch. 2)
- ♦ The Friesens’ “huge table was covered in pitchers of milk and juice, loaves of bread and buns, jars of jam and honey, a bowl of hard-boiled eggs, and plates of cheese, meat, tomatoes and pickles.” (ch. 3)

### *Language Arts*

As a creative writing exercise, ask students to write a descriptive paragraph that incorporates a theme topic from *Farmed Out*. Encourage students to explore multiple perspectives and to make connections to the characters in the novel and to their own experiences. Prompts to get students started:

- Maddie’s mom goes on “adventures” to be her “true self.” Why do some people only do what they really enjoy when they’re on holiday—instead of all the time? How “true to oneself” is Maddie’s mom?
- Maddie’s mom says, “Every fifteen-year-old girl should get in touch with the earth” (chapter 1). Is it true that kids from the city should visit farms? And is the opposite also true—that kids from the suburban areas should visit the city? What does each gain in looking at the other’s experience?
- Maddie’s mom makes decisions without consulting Maddie. Maddie says, “My mom never gives me any notice—or asks my opinion...Like all of our mother-daughter adventures, I didn’t have a choice” (chapter 1). This conflict is very important to Maddie. Is it okay that Maddie’s mom does this? What options do we have when others don’t consult us on decisions that affect us?

### *Science*

Maddie and her mom volunteer for a week on a farm that has cows, pigs and goats. As a research project, choose one of these animals to learn more about. For example:

- What kind of goats are suitable for raising on a farm so that they may be sold to restaurants, as Klaus does?
- Besides their meat, what other products come from goat farming?
- What are the optimal farm living condition for goats?
- Find out two interesting facts about goats.

### *Vocabulary*

1. The words and terms below are used in *Farmed Out* in the context of Maddie’s love of art and her goal to win the *Canvas* magazine art contest. Ask students to write a descriptive paragraph using the words below as well as others from the novel.
2. Ask students to write a definition for each word below, incorporating examples for each. You may wish to have art magazines available to students who wish to cut and paste their examples into their definitions.

artist

drawing

galleries

mixed media

painting

portrait

sketch

theme

**Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration**

1. Maddie's mom has many "New Age" interests. As a research and discovery project, challenge students to work in pairs or triads and choose one of her interests and find out more about it (considering student safety and what is appropriate to the values and culture of your class and school). Ask students to share what they've learned with the class through presentations. Students can consider: place of origin, the "inventor," current practice and use, practitioners, purpose, costs, etc.

tarot cards	drum circle	psychic awareness
organic farming	karma	horoscope
sweat lodge	healing vibes	healing properties of crystals
yoga	reiki	feng shui
vegetarianism		

2. Maddie's goal is to submit one of her drawings to *Canvas*, an art magazine that is running a youth art contest. Challenge students to find some art contests for themselves or other students or grades, and share links or resources. Many government and non-profit agencies run contests with information online. Submitting "youth art contest" in any search engine will provide ideas to explore (photography, video, creative writing, illustration, etc.).
3. Maddie feels anger toward her mom because her mom doesn't give her a choice in their shared activities, nor ask Maddie's opinion: "I'm...watching all my hopes and dreams crumble! Like all of our mother-daughter adventures, I didn't have a choice" (chapter 1). Ask students to brainstorm ways that Maddie could approach her mom about this situation in ways other than arguing or becoming angry or defensive. What might her mom be receptive to?
4. In chapter 4, Klaus tells Maddie that they don't name their goats because they "don't like to get too attached...They are our business, not pets." In a group, discuss the values at play in this scene—for Klaus and Maddie's mom. Note that Maddie's mom names "everything, from her hairdryer (Barbara) to her car...[and] high heels." Values to explore: connectivity, wonder, respect for living things, profitability, utility, resourcefulness.