



The Faraway Truth



Welcome!

Hello, year 7 and welcome to the English department of Scalby School, we are really looking forward to meeting you all in September!

As the letter you get with your book mentions, we are all keen readers and we encourage all of our students to read for pleasure to. Obviously, the more you read, the better you get and the better you get the more you learn. However, it's just as important to us that you can find books to read that you enjoy and want to read.

Introduction

The Faraway Truth

We hope you enjoy this book and that you all find something in it that interests you. We understand that it might not be your first choice if you were picking a book for yourself, but we wanted to send out the same book to you all, so we can discuss it in class at the start of September. There are lots of different themes in there, and we hope that, like the main character and her search justice for her dad, that you keep going until you've finished it.

How you could read this book

Obviously you know to start at chapter one and keep going! If you are prefer to sit down on your own and read it by yourself than that is fine; however, here are a couple of different ideas for you.

- Share the reading with a family member, taking turns to read different pages to each other.
- Read it with someone online – you could do this by video call.
- Pair up with a friend who also has been given the book and discuss it with them.
- Read along with the audio clip of the opening chapter - the title is for the American edition of the novel; however, it is the same book!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uh9uM27hSDs>



Completing the tasks

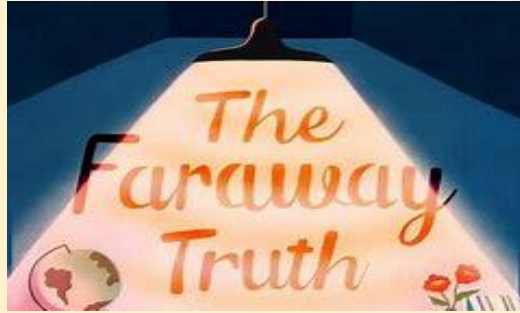
You don't have to complete every chapter activity, instead think of them as optional tasks to help you develop an understanding of the themes and characters in the book. You don't have to write down your answers either – you could discuss them with a family member or friend.

However, we really want you to engage with this book, and will be giving away prizes at the start of the new term, so look out for competition opportunities in the activity booklet. These will be clearly marked so you don't miss them.

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Chapters 1-3

Judging a book by its cover



- Why do you think the title is under the spotlight?
- What does the metaphor “putting something under the spotlight” mean?
- Is a truth that is faraway the same as a lie?
- Is telling the truth always the best thing to do? Is it ever okay to tell a lie?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uh9uM27hSDs>

The letter (chapters 1-2)

- Why do you think Zoe has only ever received one letter from him? Is he lying? If not, what might have happened to the other letters?
- Why does she call him ‘Marcus’ and not ‘dad’?
- Why does she hide the letter from her mum?
- “It was a total lie” - is it okay that she has lied to her mum about receiving the letter?
- Zoe is certain that Marcus has, “committed a terrible crime”. Why aren’t we told what that crime is?
- What crime do you think Marcus has committed?
- What do you think Zoe should do with the letter? Why?



The “ex-best friend” (chapter 3)

- What does the word “trudged” mean? What does it tell you about how Zoe feels about going to see Trevor?
- Why do you think Zoe is so upset about Trevor’s team-mates on the Basketball Team?
- Do you think Trevor knows why Zoe is upset with him? Why?
- What does Zoe’s present tell you about how well Trevor knows Zoe?



The extra mile!

- Imagine you are in Zoe’s position. Write a list of 5 questions for Marcus.
- Listen to the song mentioned in the letter – what do you think about it? Why might the lyrics relate to Zoe?

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Chapters 4-6



Your playlist

Music plays a big part in this book, starting with Marcus suggesting songs for Zoe to listen to. Here are some musical tasks for you to tackle.

- Ask a parent / friend / relative about favourite song.
- Listen to the song with them and ask them to explain why they like it so much.
- Swap over and play them one of your favourite songs and explain why you like it.
- Do you have similar taste in music, or not?
- Create a playlist of your favourite top ten songs that make you feel “upbeat and happy.”



“Practically a teenager” (chapters 5 & 6)

- What ideas do you have about what you’d like to do in the future?
- Do you think Zoe’s mum and dad are right in letting her audition for the reality TV show? Why?
- Do you think Zoe is old enough to know the truth about her father? Why?
- Does Zoe really have “no choice” to keep his letters secret? Is she doing the right thing?

The awkward porch incident (chapter 4)

- Why do you think Trevor came out on the porch when Zoe was there? Was it a coincidence?
- Why doesn’t Zoe just go straight back inside if she wants to avoid Trevor?
- What do we learn about Zoe’s dad from the conversation they have?
- Knowing why Zoe’s dad is in prison, do you still feel the same about her writing to him? Is it a good idea?
- What does Zoe mean when she says she “can focus on what really mattered?”



The extra mile!

- Create a playlist of songs for your friends or family that you all enjoy listening to.
- Watch *Junior Bake Off*
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/shows/junior-bake-off> . Does it change your mind about whether children should enter reality TV shows?



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Chapters 7-9



Your music

Last time you thought about favourite songs. This time, think about a song that represents you.

- Find and listen to “ Tomato”. Why do you think Marcus chose it to represent how he feels about Zoe?
- Choose a song that represents you – maybe it would be the title track in a film about your life!
- List 3 reasons why your chosen song represents who you are – it could be because of your personality, experiences, beliefs, circumstances, or a mixture of these ideas.



The letter (chapter 8)

- What do you think Marcus means when he writes, “ I wish I’d had the chance to be a better dad to you?”
- Why does Marcus tell Zoe how important education is? Do you think he has the right to give her advice about her life? Why do you think that?
- Zoe’s letter reveals that she knows nothing about her dad’s family. Why do you think this is?
- How do you think Zoe’s mum is going to feel if she finds out that Zoe has been writing to her dad?

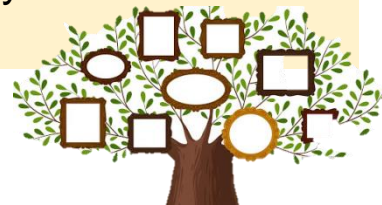
Another awkward meeting with Trevor (chapter 9)

- Why didn’t Zoe’s parents ask Zoe about Trevor coming to the bakery? Do you think they know how much they have fallen out?
- Was it right for Trevor to lie to Ariana?
- Why does Trevor think that it was to lie?
- Draw your own tasty cupcake design.



The extra mile!

- Create a family tree for both sides of your family – how far can you go back? You could ask family members to help you and add dates and even pictures.



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Chapters 10-12



American Pancakes

Try making this recipe for American pancakes – make sure you get an adult to help you with the cooking.

Ingredients

- 135g/4¾oz plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 tbsp caster sugar
- 130ml/4½fl oz milk
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 2 tbsp melted butter (allowed to cool slightly) or olive oil, plus extra for cooking

To serve

- maple syrup
- butter



Method

1. Sift the flour, baking powder, salt and caster sugar into a large bowl. In a separate bowl or jug, lightly whisk together the milk and egg, then whisk in the melted butter.
2. Pour the milk mixture into the flour mixture and, using a fork, beat until you have a smooth batter. Any lumps will soon disappear with a little mixing. Let the batter stand for a few minutes.
3. Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and add a knob of butter. When it's melted, add a ladle of batter (or two if your frying pan is big enough to cook two pancakes at the same time). It will seem very thick but this is how it should be. Wait until the top of the pancake begins to bubble, then turn it over and cook until both sides are golden brown and the pancake has risen to about 1cm/½in thick.
4. Repeat until all the batter is used up. You can keep the pancakes warm in a low oven, but they taste best fresh out the pan.
5. Serve with lashings of real maple syrup and extra butter, if you like.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/fluffyamericanpancak_74828



Grandma and the letters (chapters 10-11)

- Why are the relationships with our grandparents sometimes different to the relationships with our parents?
- Do you think Zoe's grandma is right to help her?
- Is keeping the information that Zoe is writing to Marcus from Zoe's mum a lie?
- Do you believe that Marcus is innocent? Why?
- How do you think Zoe feels about having a set of relatives that she has never met.

The extra mile!

- Listen to the songs that Marcus writes about on YouTube, or another streaming service. What do you think if them?
- Do they reveal anything to us about Marcus?



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newsround

Black Lives Matter

You might have heard of the Black Lives Matter Movement, which Zoe refers to in these chapters.

- Watch this special report from the BBC children's' news programme, Newsround, about the Black Lives Matter protests.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52813673>
- Have you learned anything new about Black Lives Matter?
- Zoe admits that she doesn't know much about it – what are the important points that you could tell her about it? Maybe you could discuss these with a family member.



“Fitting In” (chapter 15)

- Do you sympathise with Zoe's reasons for ignoring Trevor?
- Why did Trevor find it so hard to be honest?
- Was ignoring Trevor the best way for Zoe to tackle the issue? What else could she have done?



Chapters 13-15

The Innocence Project (chapters 13-14)

- Marcus says he has an alibi. What is an alibi?
- Why do you think it is so important to Zoe that Marcus is innocent?
- Do you think Zoe can trust Marcus to keep her secret? Should he?
- Trevor says that Marcus “sounds guilty” (page 105). Now you have heard about the case, what do you think?
- What do you think Zoe means when she considers that idea that the truth wasn't “as simple as black-and-white”? (page 108).



The extra mile!

- This is the part of the novel where Zoe turns detective! Which famous detectives have you heard about in TV, books and films?
- Create your own detective duo – they could be like Holmes and Watson, or Batman and Robin. What special powers would they have? What sort of crimes would they solve?





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Innocent until proven Guilty

In the English legal system a person is considered innocent until they are proved to be guilty. This novel tackles some challenging and sensitive issues about how different groups of people are viewed and treated.

- Based on the news clip you saw about the Black Lives Matter movement why do you think that Zoe's grandma might feel so strongly about the way that Marcus was treated by the legal system in the book?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52813673>

More about Marcus (chapters 17-18)

- Why is Zoe's mum so convinced of Marcus' guilt?
- What evidence is there that Marcus could be innocent?
- Whose "gut" do you think is right about Marcus – Zoe's mum or her grandma? Why do you think this?

Chapters 16 -18



The hunt for clues (chapter 16)

- How do you feel after reading this chapter? Do you feel a sense of excitement about what you might find out next?
- Is it right that Zoe's grandma is going to tell her what she knows? What do you think Zoe's mum would think if she found out?
- Do you think Zoe's grandma think Marcus is innocent? Why? Why might her opinion about this effect her decision to tell Zoe what she know.

The extra mile!

Create a table with 2 columns. On one side list all the evidence that suggests that Marcus could be innocent. In the other column all the evidence that points towards his guilt.

- Now that you have listed all the information you have, do you think Marcus is innocent or guilty? Why?

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Friends

In this chapter, Trevor finally stands up to his friends this must have been hard to do.

- Have you ever had to stand up for something, or someone, you believed in as a friend? What did it feel like?
- Sometimes, we say things to people, or about people that we don't really mean. Have you ever, like Trevor, said something about someone you care about that you have regretted? What did you do about it?

Chapters 19 - 22

Trevor stands up (chapter 20)

- Why do you think Trevor decides to stand up for Zoe?
- Why does Zoe “freeze” when Trevor’s other friends arrive?
- How do Trevor’s friends react when he defends his friendship with Zoe?
- Do you think he would have done the same if Zoe hadn’t told him why she wasn’t speaking to him?



The phone calls (chapters 21-22)



- How do you think Zoe feels about speaking to Marcus for the first time?
- How might Zoe’s grandma be feeling about making this conversation happen?
- Zoe tries out Marcus’ Macaroni Cheese recipe. What’s your favourite family recipe? Could you learn how to cook it with a parent to teach you?
- Why does Marcus not want Zoe to get involved in the case? Is he right to warn her off?



The Extra Mile!

Create your own cake recipe. Your competition entry should include:

- A name for your creation
- A list of ingredients needed to make your recipe.
- Instructions for how to make the cake.
- A picture / photograph of the finished, decorated cake.

Please bring in your photos and ingredients list for the first week back of term for the chance to win an edible prize!

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Chapters 23 - 25

Telling the truth

The further Zoe gets in her hunt for the truth, the more she lies to her family.

- Think about all the lies that Zoe has told, what do you think the worst one is and why?
- Has Zoe been lied to?
- Do you think Marcus is telling Zoe the truth? What would he have to gain from lying to her?
- Is Trevor right to encourage her in her search for the truth?
- Do you think Zoe has REALLY thought hard about the consequences of what she is doing, or about how it will affect those she cares about?

The hunt for the truth continues (chapters 24-25)

- Why is Mr Miller so unhelpful?
- Would Zoe have been able to locate Professor Thomas without Trevor's help?
- What do you think about Zoe and Trevor's plan to find professor Thomas? Are they doing the right thing?

The witness (chapter 23)

- Zoe promises her grandma that she won't look for the alibi witness. Does she deserve honesty from Zoe considering they have both been hiding the truth from Zoe's mum?
- What clues do Zoe and Trevor have to help them find the right witness?
- It's a long time since the crime – if Marcus was telling the truth, do you think Susan will remember him?
- If Marcus is telling the truth why do you think that Susan didn't come forward to tell the police at the time?

The extra mile!

Zoe lives in Boston. Research what Boston is like and find a map of the area.

- Is it similar to Scarborough?
- What problems might Zoe run into with her plan to find Professor Thomas?



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American English

This book is set in America, so some of the language used is unfamiliar. Use the internet to help you research what the following words / phrases mean:



- CharlieTicket
- Quad
- Plaza
- T station
- Dollar bills
- Cupcake
- Tag sales / Yard sales

Chapters 26 - 28

The plan (chapter 26)

- How does Zoe feel about lying to her mum?
- What problems so Zoe and Trevor face in putting their plan into action? What could go wrong?
- In lockdown, the cinemas have been closed – have you missed being able to go to see films. Is there any need for cinemas now that we can live stream show and watch films from the comfort of our own homes?
- What is your all time favourite film and why?



Desperately Seeking Susan (chapters 27-28)

- Would you take a train journey without telling your parents where you were going?
- How does Zoe think her parents would feel if they found out?
- Why does Zoe shake when she finds Professor Thomas' room?
- Why has Trevor walked into the classroom? What do you think he wants to know?



The extra mile!



Using the language from the American words section, add to it to create your own two-page American – English dictionary.

Please bring in you entries for the first week back of term for the chance to win an American-themed prize!



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The playlist

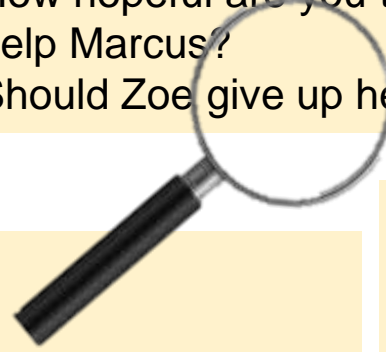
Marcus has given Zoe some more musical recommendations since the Boys II Men track.

- Make a list of all the tracks he has recommended to Zoe so far and listen to them. Do you like them?
- Why do you think music is so important to him?
- Do your parents recommend songs for you to listen to – or, the other way around?

Chapters 29 - 31

Meeting the witness (chapter 29)

- Why doesn't Professor Thomas think that Zoe's email is important?
- How does the information she gives make Zoe feel?
- Was Zoe unrealistic to expect the Professor to remember Marcus?
- How hopeful are you that the Professor will remember something to help Marcus?
- Should Zoe give up her search for justice?

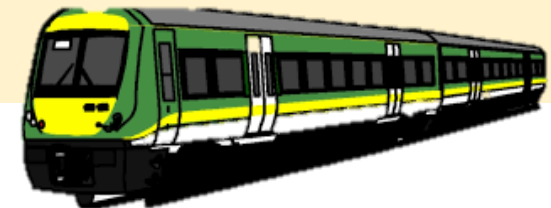


The truth is out (chapters 30-31)

- Do you think Zoe and Trevor should be punished for what they have done? Is one of them more to blame than the other? Who? Why?
- What effect does the timing of the Professor's letter create? How would things be different if she had remembered when Zoe visited her in the office?
- What do you think the Professor has remembered?
- Is Zoe's grandma partly to blame for what happened?

The extra mile!

- Find a street map of Boston, including the university on the internet.
- Trace Zoe and Trevor's journey on the map. Can you find all the places they visited – starting and ending with the movie theatre?





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Friends

This part of the novel reveals the strength of Zoe and Trevor's friendship.

- Why is the incident on the bus with Maya so important?
- How has this changed from the way that Zoe usually treats Trevor at the start of term?
- Is it possible to have more than one really good friend?
- Do you think the summer would've been different if Maya hadn't gone on holiday?

apters 32 - 34



Grounded (chapter 32)

- Why do think Zoe's mum refuses to read the email from Professor Thomas and turns her phone off instead?
- Zoe's grandma says she "was trying to do the right thing". Is it okay that she lied if she tried to do it for the right reason?
- Why does Zoe's grandma admit to the phone calls?
- Do you think she will feel better for telling the truth?
- Do you think Zoe will ever find out the truth about Marcus? What has to change for her to be able to?



The alibi (chapters 33-34)

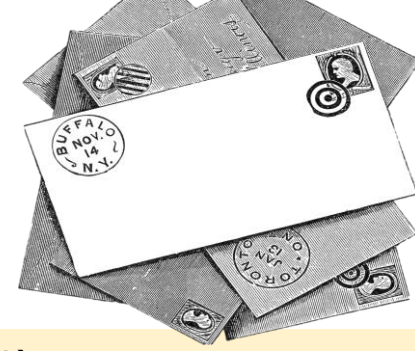
- Were you right about what had happened to Marcus' earlier letters to Zoe?
- Was Zoe's mum right to destroy them? Was there an alternative?
- What do we learn about Marcus from Professor Thomas' statement?
- Why does Zoe write a letter to Marcus when she's not sure that she will ever be able to send it?
- What do we learn from the letter she sends him that we didn't already know?

The extra mile!

- Imagine that you are Marcus and you have received the letter that Zoe sent (on page 257). Write a reply to her including a musical recommendation for their playlist.



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Nicknames

Marcus' nickname for Zoe comes from the title of a song. Nicknames are a part of our culture - why do you think we use them.

- Zoe wasn't sure about her nickname at first – why did she change her mind?
- Do you, your friends or family have nicknames?
- What are the stories behind these names?
- Maybe your first or middle name has a special significance – research the meaning of your first name, can you find out from your family why you were given that name?

Chapter 35 - Epilogue

So many changes (chapter 35-36)

- Why does Zoe's mum change her mind about Zoe writing to her dad?
- Why does Zoe offer to let her read the letter?
- How has their relationship changed since the start of the book?
- How have Zoe's baking ambitions changed?
- So many things have changed since Zoe found the letter, but Zoe's dad is still in prison – do you think he will get released?
- What do you think is more important to him – being free from prison, or Zoe knowing that he is innocent? Why?

Epilogue

- What does the word “epilogue” mean?
- Why does the writer give us this extra information, rather than just finishing with what we know at the end of chapter 36? Would you be happy with it ending then without knowing for certain if Marcus got out of prison?
- What do you think about the ending? Did everyone get what they deserved?



The extra mile!

DNA evidence plays an important part in Marcus' release from prison.

- What is DNA?
- Which British scientist developed a way of using DNA evidence in legal trials?