

Creased up



Tickled pink



Gobsmacked

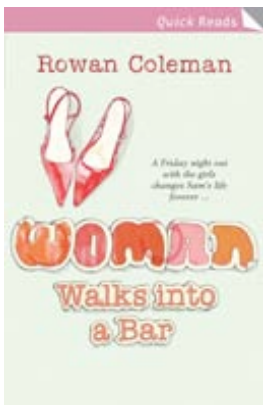


Swept away



Quick Reads

Get hooked on books.



Woman Walks into a Bar Rowan Coleman



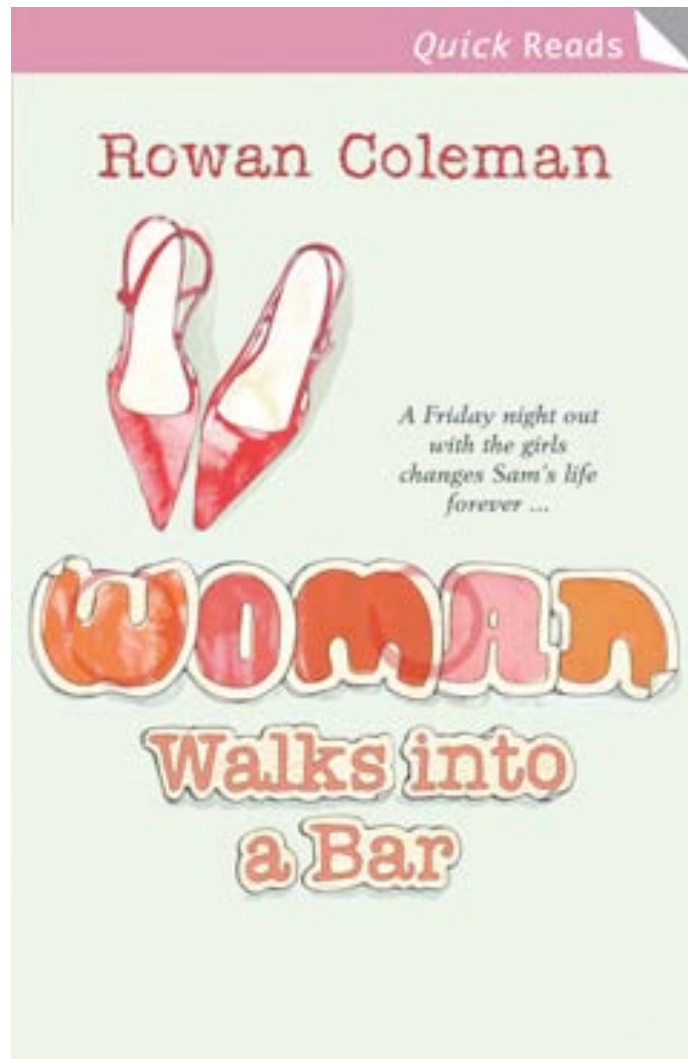
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**The
Vital
Link**



Blurb

After a series of terrible dates Sam is starting to lose heart – then her friends tell her they have set her up on a blind date.

Synopsis

A Friday night out with the girls changes Sam's life for ever... Twenty-eight-year-old single mother Sam spends her days working in the local supermarket and her Friday nights out with her friends, Joy and Marie, letting her hair down at the White Horse. Life has never been easy for Sam, but she's always hoped that one day she'll meet The One. After a series of terrible dates with men she's met through an Internet dating agency she's starting to lose

heart – until her friends tell her they've set her up on a blind date. Sam's horrified but finally she agrees to go – after all you never know when you might meet the man of your dreams...

Readability

11 Level E3

Rowan Coleman

Extract from the website of Rowan Coleman's agent: www.davidhigham.co.uk

Rowan worked in bookselling and then publishing for seven years, during which time she wrote her first novel which was published in 2002. *Growing Up Twice* follows the story of a 29-year old woman who amazes herself and falls in love with an 18-year old boy. She comes to realise that she never really grew up the first time... and she is still making the same mistakes second time around.

Rowan left her job in publishing to write her second novel *After Ever After*, which proposes that sometimes 'happily ever after' is only the beginning...after a whirlwind romance, a fairytale wedding and a happy pregnancy, Kitty's life should be perfect. So why is she so unhappy? Shot through with charm and wit, *After Ever After* nevertheless dares to touch young lives with tragedy.

Rowan's third novel, *River Deep*, was published in August 2004 and her next novel for adults, *The Accidental Mother*, will be published by Arrow in March 2006.

Rowan was chosen to write a short book for publication on World Book Day in March 2006. *Woman Walks into a Bar* combines the wit and economy of a short story with the emotional satisfaction of a novel.

Rowan's first novel for younger readers *Ruby Parker Hits the Small Time*, the story of child soap-star Ruby Parker, was published in May 2005 by HarperCollins Children's Books. The follow up *Ruby Parker walks the Red Carpet* is due to be published in May 2006.

Rowan now lives in Hertfordshire with her husband and daughter.

Activity 1

'A funny thing happened...'

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>→ To encourage readers to develop an imaginative response to a book title as a way to anticipate what the book will be about.</p> <p>→ To explore the use of humour to make a serious point.</p>
<p>Resources</p>	<p>Synopsis of <i>Woman Walks into a Bar</i> Flipchart Pens, paper, pencils</p>
<p>Activity</p>	<p>Before the session starts, write 'Woman walks into a bar' on a flipchart. Ask readers what they think this statement is about: is it familiar to them and why? Hopefully, someone will pick up on the joke theme of the title. If necessary, the tutor can make this observation herself. At this point, someone may realise that, in fact, the joke usually begins 'Man walks into a bar...'</p> <p>Encourage members of the group to tell any jokes they know beginning 'man walks into a bar...' Again, the tutor may need to have some on hand to start the ball rolling (or readers could be asked to bring their jokes to the next session).</p> <p>Once a few jokes have been offered, ask the group to consider how these jokes usually progress, i.e., are there certain common themes or situations that they usually describe? Does the punch line cause laughter or merely the acknowledgement of a silly play on words, like 'knock knock' jokes?</p> <p>What is the effect of changing the joke from 'man' to 'woman'? Has this discussion given them any ideas about what the book might be about? Word storm suggested ideas and note them on the flipchart to refer to later. When readers have finished the book, they can look back and see if any of their predictions were correct.</p>
<p>Reflection</p>	<p>Humour can be cruel as well as comic; it can also be used as a form of self-defence or to convey critical or sensitive ideas.</p> <p><i>continued</i> →</p>

<p>Reflection <i>continued</i></p>	<p>Ask the group to consider why a writer might choose to say serious things in a funny way. It might be helpful to first identify films or TV shows that do use humour in this way, e.g. The Office, The Royle Family, Little Britain, or satirical performers such as Rory Bremner or Harry Enfield. (Older readers might relate more to 'Till Death Do Us Part or Monty Python.)</p> <p>What is the purpose of the humour in these shows, other than to entertain? Do group members think it is an effective technique?</p> <p>Have any of them used such techniques to deal with serious situations in their own lives?</p>
<p>Development</p>	<p>Read the synopsis to the group. Have any of them been in similar situations? Encourage them to think of opportunities for humour in the story that is described here. Make sure that they keep in mind the fact noted above – that humour can be cruel, defensive, or instructive.</p> <p>List the ideas on a flipchart for readers to look at when they have finished reading the book.</p>

Activity 2

Girls' night out

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>→ To increase readers' awareness of how a writer develops characterisation through dialogue, action and description.</p>
<p>Resources</p>	<p>Copies of <i>Woman Walks Into A Bar</i> Pens, paper, pencils Handout 1: 'Character map' or reproduce similar on flipchart paper for whole group use</p>
<p>Activity</p>	<p><i>'Characterisation comes through what characters SAY and what they DO. We know our characters through the decisions they make, how they behave, what they say and how they speak to each other. Some characterisation may be built up through the writer revealing the thoughts that run through a character's mind as well as what other characters think. Occasionally, the narrator steps back from the action to make a comment. It is the constant weaving of dialogue, action, reaction and description that helps to create characterisation'.</i> (Extract from the National Literacy Strategy)</p> <p>The first chapter introduces us to the main female characters in the book. We meet them first as Samantha and her friends are making plans for their regular girls' night out.</p> <p>Read the first chapter with the group. Ask readers to construct a character map of everyone who appears in the chapter. Include the following information: who is the main character? How do they know this? What other characters are mentioned? What do we know about the characters by the end of this chapter? Has anyone made any further assumptions about them based on the information given so far?</p> <p>Show visually on the map how these characters are linked to each other.</p>

continued →

<p>Reflection</p>	<p>Starting from the links drawn above, discuss the relationship between the characters. Focus on the following two questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ What do we learn about the main character from her place in that group? ➔ What do we know about the relationship between Samantha and her daughter?
<p>Development</p>	<p>Ask the group to continue to build up the character map as they read the book. Remind them to show the relationships with each other – relative, friend, work colleague, etc.</p> <p>As the story develops, more men enter the scene. In one way or another, they all turn out to be a disappointment.</p> <p>What does the reader learn about Samantha from her disastrous relationships, e.g. what is her self-image? Why does she so often choose unsuitable partners? Does she regard herself as a victim?</p>

Activity 3

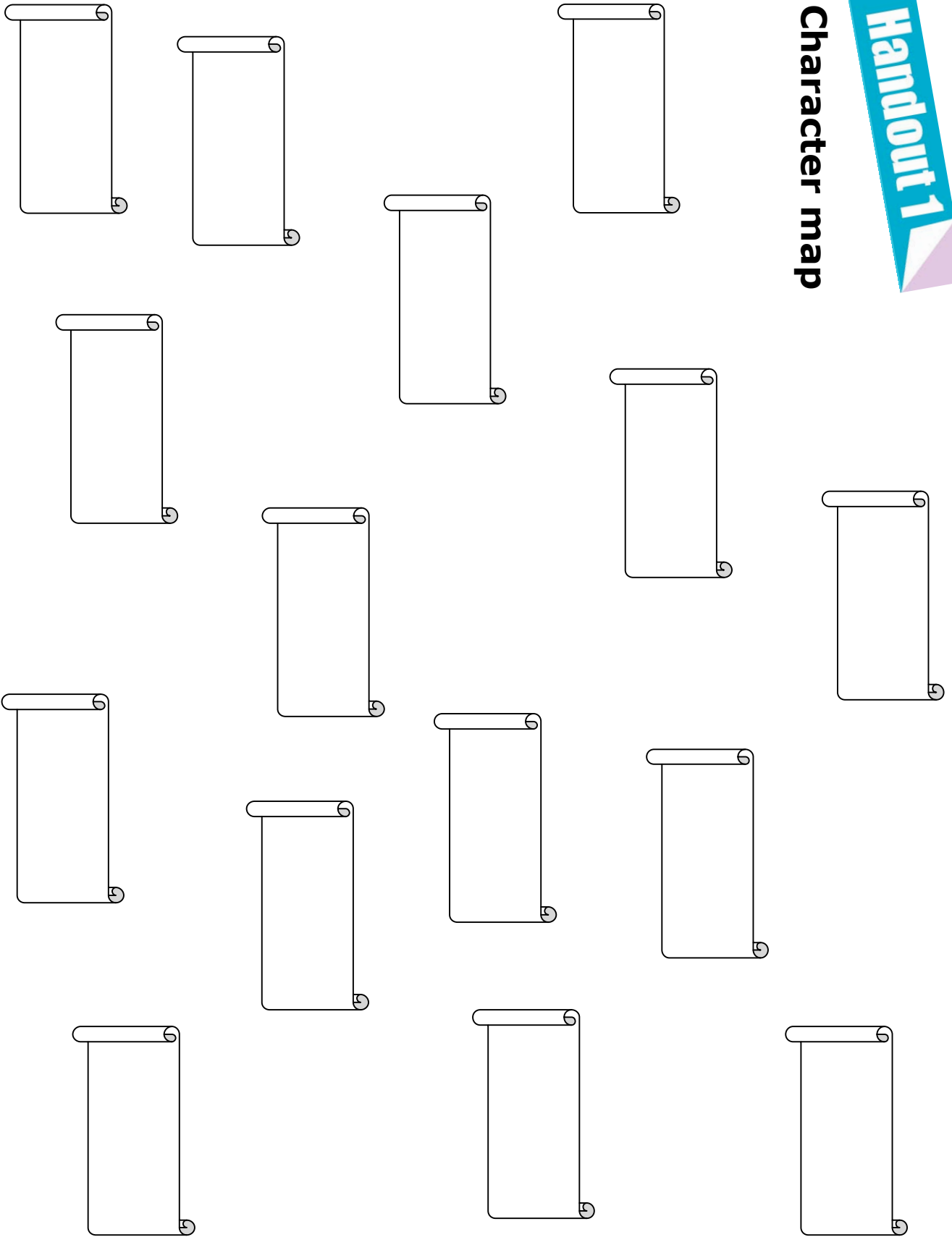
The joke's on...?

<p>Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ To consider the way jokes are used throughout the book. ➔ To reflect on the title and consider its relevance to the main character. ➔ To explore some of the 'relationship' issues developed through the story.
<p>Resources</p>	<p>Copies of <i>Woman Walks Into A Bar</i> Pens, paper, pencils</p>
<p>Activity</p>	<p>Humour is a constant theme throughout this book.</p> <p>Activity 1 alerted readers to its existence before they started reading and offered some ideas to encourage them to consider its importance. It was suggested that they could return to the activity when they finished the story to see whether their pre-reading predictions were realised.</p> <p>Ask the group to share their predictions. They can start in pairs or small groups and then convey their findings orally with the wider group. Are there any common strands or themes among the predictions that came true? Has this activity helped them to see why the author has used humour in the ways she has?</p> <p>This post-reading activity focuses specifically on the use of jokes and their relevance to the portrayal of the main character, Sam.</p> <p>Jokes are used in two distinct ways: 1) the play on the title recurs at the beginning of each of Sam's encounters with men, and 2) Sam's daughter Beth jots down jokes and leaves them in her mother's pockets to find when she goes out.</p> <p>Why do readers think Sam begins each encounter as if she is telling a joke? What does this reveal about how she views herself and her life?</p> <p><i>continued</i> ➔</p>

<p>Activity <i>continued</i></p>	<p>What purpose is served by Beth’s notes? What does this reveal about the nature of the relationship between mother and daughter? Whom do readers think is the more mature and why? (If readers have watched ‘Desperate Housewives’, they might like to think how Sam and Beth are similar to Susan and her daughter Julie). Invite the group to find examples in the story of ways in which Sam and Beth reverse roles.</p>
<p>Reflection</p>	<p>We have devoted a lot of time considering the wider uses of humour in writing. Ask members of the group to reflect on the title now that they have finished the book. Do they think it is an appropriate title? Do they think the joke technique has been effective? What are their reasons for their answers?</p>
<p>Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sam is furious with her friends for fixing her up with the man who was responsible for her original humiliation. Do members of the group think that Joy and Marie were right to arrange this blind date? Ask them to support their answers with passages from the book. → Sam’s relationship with Brendan is different from that with the other men in her life. She talks about herself openly, but she is afraid to let him know the nature of her feelings for him. When did readers realise that Brendan has feelings for Sam? Did they guess that he was John Smith? Do they think Sam and Brendan would have got together without the Internet? → After discussing these two points, do the group think that Internet dating has been beneficial to Sam? Has it helped her to change her view of herself?

Handout 1

Character map



Further development

Useful websites

Rowan Coleman's agent

www.davidhigham.co.uk

Publisher

<http://www.randomhouse.co.uk>

Extracts from other titles

First Choice books – available from local library

www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk

Other possible activities

Readers might like to select one or two of the characters from the book and write a personal advertisement as if they were that character, giving personal description and outlining the person they would like to meet, using a maximum of 35 words. This activity would work well in pairs.

What are the pros and cons of Internet dating and chat rooms or advertisements in newspapers and magazines? This topic could be explored as a debate or a written argument.

Read through some real 'personal' advertisements with the group. What seem to be the main personal features that people wish to describe to others? Are these facts or opinions? Can you really tell what a person is like just by reading their own view of themselves?

On a more technical level, readers could compile a glossary of the accepted shorthand for several common expressions used in personal adverts, e.g. 'gsoh', and test one another to see how easy they are to decipher.

Send in a review to First Choice

www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk.

More reading

March title	Author	ISBN
The Thief	Ruth Rendell	0091796865
Woman Walks into a Bar	Rowan Coleman	0099492288
Blackwater	Conn Iggulden	0091907039
Star Sullivan	Maeve Binchy	0752879545
Hell Island	Matthew Reilly	0330442325
The Book Boy	Joanna Trollope	0747582114
Don't make me Laugh	Patrick Augustus	1902934466
Someone Like Me	Tom Holt	1841494461
Screw It, Let's Do It	Richard Branson	0753510995
How to change your life in 7 steps	John Bird	0091907039
Chickenfeed	Minette Walters	0330440314
The Team	Mick Dennis with the Premier League	0552153729

May title	Author	ISBN
Danny Wallace and the Centre of the Universe	Danny Wallace	0091908949
Desert Claw	Damien Lewis	0099493535
Cleanskin	Val McDermid	0007216726
Name You Once Gave Me	Mike Phillips	0007216718
Grey Man	Andy McNab	0552154334
I Am a Dalek	Gareth Roberts/Dr Who	0563486481
Poison in the Blood	Tom Holland	0349119643
I Love Football	Hunter Davies	0755314700
Winner Takes All	John Francome	0755329481
The Dying Wish	Courtia Newland	0349119635
Secrets	Lynne Barrett-Lee	1905170300
The Corpse's Tale	Katherine John	1905170319

See www.quickreads.org.uk for information on these and future Quick Reads

See First Choice library booklist at www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk for mainstream books selected against criteria for their suitability for emergent readers

Audio version of the Quick Reads are available from W F Howes Ltd as part of their Clipper Emergent Reader programmes (www.wfhowes.co.uk/cep/)

Other publications for emergent readers include those from Sandstone Press (www.sandstonepress.com) and New Island's Open Door series (www.newisland.ie)

Adult Core Curriculum References

Activity 1

A funny thing happened

Rt/E3.2, 4, 7, 8
Rt/L1.1, .5

SLr/E3.1-.6

SLr/L1.1-.6
SLc/E3.1, .3

SLc/L1.1, .3,.4
SLd/E3.1-.3

SLd/L1.1-.3

Activity 2

Girls' night out

Rt/E3.1,.2, .4-.8
Rt/L1.1-.5

SLr/E3.1-.6

SLr/L1.1-.6
SLc/E3.1,. 3

SLc/L1.1, .3, .4
SLd/E3.1-.3

SLd/L1.1-.3

Activity 3

The joke's on...?

Rt/E3.1, .2, .4-.8
Rt/L1.1-.5

SLr/E3.1-.6

SLr/L1.1-.6
SLc/E3.1, .3

SLc/L1.1, .3, .4
SLd/E3.1-.3

SLd/L1.1-.3