# Task for *Five Bells* by Gail Jones

## Structure of Chapter 1

| Ellie | James De Mello | Pei Xing | Catherine |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Circular Quay: she loved even the sound of it.* | *James de Mello was obstinately unjoyful* | *She loved the elevated train* | *Dropped her ticket* |
| *The train swung in a wide arc* | *He glanced at the leathery hands of the old woman* | *(A vitality… a collective spirit)* | *Careful now sweetheart, she heard a voice say to a child* |
| (the Bridge climbers) | *So much of the past returns he thought, lodged in the bodies of others.* | *A young man guiding his small daughter … wholly innocent* | *Some scrap of memory had been stirred* |
| *Ellie gawked as a child* | *The train swung in a wide arc* | *(Ice cream from Aristos)* | *Petal life extended… a bowl of blown roses*<br><br>*(Opera House)* |
| *She remembered something from her school days: Janus* | *A child squealed and he felt an elemental flinch of annoyance* | *She saw the future …Death was swooping towards him* | *(Sounds of accents)* |
| (the sound of the didgeridoo) | *White teeth* (Opera House) | *Even as a child she had known things, seen death* | *Light pouring from the heavens…a new pleasure* |
| *democratic throng* | *At an Easter show long ago… Death was like that… in ivory triangles* | *Homeless Mary now lost* | *(Thinking of the lover she had left)* |
| *moon white fan of chambers* (Opera House) *Futurism- Marinetti* | *Why he wondered now does time shudder in this way?* | *(Ferry ticket)* | *Bridge, water harbour, ferry* |

| *Unmediated joy was unfashionable… Ellie's heart opened* | *His gaze was listless remote* | *Jade white … unexpected harmony* (Opera House) | *How did Australians cope with all this light?* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *A child sounded a squeal* | (The crowd was a) *collective…indistinct* | *Saw herself from the inside … time-travelling across the water* | *Her mother's sad face* |
| *Ellie felt herself at the intersection of so many currents of information. Why not be joyful?* | *Every sound was amplified* | (Her mother) | (Job offer) |
| *she was breathing in light* | *The traditions of the dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living.* (Marx) | *Selves had blended and fled … I have lived many lives* | Climbers on bridge |
| | | *Mozart sounded* | (Circular Quay), *turning on the curve of lost time and unbidden recurrences* |

If we examine the table above we see that the characters are each introduced separately but there is pattern to their stories.

Use different colours to code the different parts of the introduction so you can see the organisation of the ideas.

1. Use different colours for: memory, Opera House references, sounds, emotions, the child.
2. How are the crowds perceived by each character? What does this reveal about the character?
3. What kind of memory does each character have? You may want to go to the text for more information, as the table is just a brief outline to show the flow of the text.
4. Which words are repeated?
5. Why do you think some sentences are repeated?

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## Activity

The table above comes after reading and re-reading to look for links and patterns that in turn give clues of what the story is about.

Understand your thought processes:

As we read, we store words and ideas and when we re-encounter them, they trigger a response of recognition that 'this has already been seen in the text and is therefore important'. For example, 'As I read the first chapter my mind recognised some phrases that were repeated ("the train swung in an arc"), I perceived that each character began at the same place, I noted that past memories were evoked by different triggers and I also saw that the senses were constantly being evoked. Once I noted this I asked myself: "Why? Why is the author connecting and then disconnecting the characters? What does she want us to see about their lives? What is the bigger story that is taking place?" Constructing a structure table of some of the patterns I have perceived is one way for me to make sense of the text so that I can see where it is heading and what is important. In doing this, I may have missed something others will think is important but this becomes the basis for my interpretation of the text.'

Herbert Simon in "Literary Criticism: A Cognitive Approach" explains this process of meaning-making:

> *Meanings are evoked. When a reader attends to words in a text, certain symbols or symbol structures that are stored in that reader's memory come to awareness. (In psychology we might say, more ponderously, "having been noticed, the symbols are activated or transferred from long-term to short-term or immediate memory") ... the processes that bring meanings, or components of meaning, into attention.*

> *The process that underlies evocation is recognition. Words in the text serve as cues. Being familiar (if they are not familiar, they will not convey meaning), they are recognized, and the act of recognition gives access to some of the information that has been stored in association with them – their meaning (*Feigenbaum and Simon*, 1984). Recognizing a word has the same effect as recognizing anything else (a friend on the street). Recognition accesses meaning.*

A cognitive approach can be applied to each chapter to locate meaning. As the text is re-read more patterns will be seen and more meaning is made.

## Task

Work in groups on a different chapter each. You need to read the chapter at least twice in order to perceive the patterns that are taking place. Look for repeated words or phrases that link the characters. Consider how each character's story emerges, what triggers memory, how time is being used. Then begin the process of compiling a table like the one above with a selection of what you think is important.

## Summing up

Write a paragraph on the structure of the introduction and the way Jones engages the reader.