A Love for Life  Penny Hancock

Summary

The story is set in Cambridge, England. The protagonist, Fanella, an editor, visits her friend Teresa, in distress. Fanella, unable to have children, had intended to adopt a child with her partner Steven, but he has left her. The autumn term begins – Rod, a primary school teacher bids goodbye to his beautiful wife Leah. At school, he talks to Teresa, mother of Timothy, to try to avoid a confrontation with a disgruntled parent. Later Rod regrets the fact that Leah does not want children.

Fanella learns it is possible to adopt, despite being single. Teresa persuades Fanella to talk to the children in Rod’s class about children’s books. Though suspicious of Teresa’s motives, she agrees. The talk is a success and Fanella feels attracted to Rod, who tells her that he has written some children’s stories himself. She encourages him to send the stories to her.

Later, Fanella learns from Teresa that Rod is married to a beautiful woman. Disappointed, she puts her energies into preparing for the social worker’s visit which will judge her suitability as an adoptive parent. Without a partner, Fanella finds the visit is an ordeal. She has to wait for the decision.

Near Christmas, Teresa and Fanella go to see Timothy’s school play. Meeting Rod again arouses the same feelings in Fanella, but after seeing Rod’s wife, she knows he is unattainable. Meanwhile, Fanella is delighted to be approved for adoption. Eventually Fanella is able, on a trial basis, to take on Ellie, a five-year-old girl with behavioural problems.

In the spring, Teresa gives a dinner party where Fanella meets Mark, a colleague of Teresa’s husband. She agrees to a date, which is a success, and Fanella invites him for dinner. Ellie starts school in Rod’s class; he is unfazed by Fanella’s warnings about the girl’s behaviour.

A parent accuses Rod of child abuse. His headteacher has to suspend him at once. Rod and Fanella arrange another meeting. This time they talk about personal matters, and he kisses her. Later, Teresa warns her not to get involved with him. Fanella meets up with Mark once more along with Ellie, Teresa and Timothy. Fanella realises he cannot empathise with children. Later, outside her house, Fanella tells him it is all over. Meanwhile, Leah tries to rescue the relationship with Rod, who needs time to think. He drives to Fanella’s street, only to observe Mark’s final kiss, which he misinterprets.

The accusation against Rod is withdrawn and he is reinstated. Fanella’s adoption of Ellie is finalised. Ellie requests a celebratory party, and secretly invites Rod. Fanella is overjoyed to see him again, and they declare their love for each other. The story ends with an idyllic family scene – Rod, Ellie and Fanella, who is delighted that she is now pregnant.

Before reading

1–3. Student’s own answer.
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Check your reading

Chapter 1
1. 1 b, 2 e, 3 d, 4 a, 5 c

Chapter 2
1. a T, b T, c F, d T, e F, f F

Chapter 3
1. c, e, b, a, d

Chapter 4
1. Teresa realised Fanella was in love with Rod but advised her to find someone single and available. Fanella felt nervous about the social worker’s visit. She explained to the social worker that she wished to adopt an older child so she could continue working/to work. Also, she had thought deeply about the problems that adopting a child would bring. Afterwards, Fanella thought the visit would have been easier if Steven had been there. She now had to wait for the social worker’s decision.

Chapter 5
1. 1 d, 2 a, 3 e, 4 f, 5 b, 6 c

Chapter 6
1. a Norma
   b Ellie
   c Fanella
   d Teresa
   e Fanella
2. Student’s own answer.

Chapter 7
1. a Mark
   b Rod
   c Ellie
   d Fanella
   e Mark
2. Student’s own answer.

Chapter 8
1. Mrs Grey, the headteacher, explained to Rod that Dan’s mother had accused him of trying to hurt her child. Although Mrs Grey did not believe the accusation, Rod had to be suspended from school, and he knew that his reputation would be damaged. The children were disappointed to see Rod leave school. At home, Leah didn’t seem to be happy/pleased to see him and Rod was shocked when she asked if he had harmed the boy.

Chapter 9
1. a T, b T, c F, d T, e F, f F

Chapter 10
1. e, a, f c, d, b

Chapter 11
1. 1 d, 2 e, 3 a, 4 b, 5 c

Chapter 12
1. a Fanella
   b Leah
   c Rod
   d Mr Simpson
   e Leah

Chapter 13
1. Mark was preparing dinner at Fanella’s house. Ellie said she didn’t like fishcakes, so Fanella told her to say so politely. After an argument with Mark, Fanella sent Ellie to her room. Ellie threw/smashed her plate on the floor. Mark said that Ellie needed discipline, and told Fanella to ignore her. Later, while Mark was kissing Fanella, Ellie came downstairs; she had been crying. Fanella encouraged Ellie to be friendly to Mark, but Mark seemed to be unable to communicate with a child.
Worksheet
Answer Key
Level 6

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Chapter 14
1. a F, b T, c T, d F, e F, f T

Chapter 15
1. a Teresa  
b Fanella  
c Mark  
d Ellie  
e Mark  
f Fanella  
2. Student’s own answer.

Chapter 16
1. 1 b, 2 d, 3 a, 4 e, 5 c

Chapter 17
1. f, c, e, a, d, b

Chapter 18
1. Student’s own answer.
2. Student’s own answer.