

Carmelien, 'Weelend'

Module IV: Weekend

Info Fay Weldon

Fay Weldon, born as Franklin Birkinshaw in Birmingham, England, in 1931, grew up in Christchurch, New Zealand. Returning to England with her mother and sister in 1946 after her parents' divorce, she attended a girls' school before studying Economics and Psychology at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. After her M.A. degree she moved to London and took up a position at the Foreign Office writing pamphlets as part of the Cold War effort. When she became pregnant she had to leave this job and worked in advertising to support herself and her son as a single mother. She started writing for radio and television and her first novel, *The Fat Woman's Joke*, was published in 1967. Over the course of her career Weldon wrote 31 novels, numerous short stories, plays, essays, radio and television scripts and became well-known as an outspoken, often controversial public figure. Weldon started out with a focus on the problems women face. Her aim was to make their voices heard and to question gender roles and power relations between the sexes. Later, she also addressed a wide range of other issues in her writing (among them Islam, rape, therapy, the role of the author). Although she saw herself as a feminist writer trying to promote social change, she was not afraid to criticize aspects of feminism that she disagreed with, always encouraging women to take responsibility for their own lives. She died in January 2023.



Comprehension  
1 Tick the correct answer and find a suitable quote from the text.

- a .The car has been packed for the weekend by ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ A Martin.  
☒ B Martha.  
☐ C the three children.  
☐ D Martin and Martha.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_
- b In Martin's view Martha should ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☒ A run the house herself.  
☐ B allow him to pay for the cleaning.  
☐ C pay for the cleaning lady.  
☐ D ask the children to do more housework.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_
- c Martha lost her driving license because she ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ A was caught speeding.  
☐ B hit another car.  
☐ C fell asleep at the wheel.  
☐ D was drunk.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_

Module IV: Weekend

- d Martin dislikes Martha's car and complains because it is ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ A small.  
☐ B full of stuff.  
☐ C not his.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_
- e When Martha says she does not like the way he speaks about the car, Martin ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ A gets angry.  
☐ B does not take her seriously.  
☐ C denies it.  
☐ D ignores her.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_
- f Returning to work after having had children Martha gets ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ A a new job at a different agency.  
☐ B her old job back.  
☐ C a better job at her old agency.  
☐ D a less well-paid job at her old agency.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_
- g Martin prefers women to be ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ A curvy with thin legs.  
☐ B tall with dark hair.  
☐ C skinny with long legs.  
☐ D boyish with round lips.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_
- h When having sex with Martin, Martha ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ A is passionate.  
☐ B rather enjoys it.  
☐ C feels under pressure.  
☐ D is indifferent.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_
- i Martin ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ A understands why Colin left Janet.  
☐ B cannot understand why Colin left Janet.  
☐ C criticizes Colin for leaving Janet.  
☐ D feels tempted by Colin's new wife.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_
- j Katie and Colin spontaneously arrive ... line: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ A after breakfast.  
☐ B late on Saturday morning.  
☐ C in the middle of the night.  
☐ D just before breakfast.  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_

**k** Running around in her nightdress Martha

feels ...

**A** reassured.**B** sexy.**C** carefree.**D** self-conscious.line: \_\_\_\_\_  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_**l** When Colin and Katie have noisy sex, Martha is bothered because she ...**A** envies them.**B** doesn't want to talk about it with Martin.**C** feels prudish.**D** doesn't want the children to hear them.line: \_\_\_\_\_  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_**m** When Martin asks Martha to wear more scent she ...**A** does it to please him.**B** thinks she does not have the time.**C** says she does not like it.**D** uses some of Katie's.line: \_\_\_\_\_  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_**n** Because of Katie, Colin ...**A** moves to a small flat.**B** pays his wife less allowance.**C** visits Martin only rarely.**D** sees his children more seldom than before.line: \_\_\_\_\_  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_**o** Martha's fusses a lot about her children. The children ...**A** take this for granted.**B** are happy about this.**C** are thankful for this.**D** resent this.line: \_\_\_\_\_  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_**p** When the others go for a walk on Sunday morning, they ...**A** leave a cold breakfast for Martha.**B** leave Martha with all the clearing up to do.**C** expect Martha to follow them.**D** promise to be back by ten.line: \_\_\_\_\_  
quote: \_\_\_\_\_**2** Create three more multiple choice questions for the final part of the story (l. 438 ff.) and test your classmates's understanding of the story.**Analysis****3 a** Work in three groups and re-read different passages from the text:

Group 1: l. 1 – l. 160

Group 2: l. 161 – l. 312

Group 3: l. 313 – l. 526.

List and compare the things Martin and Martha do for the family and their friends.

**Martin****Martha****b** State what this tells you about their relationship.**4** Martha often worries about things Martin says because she suspects an implied message.**a** Look at the examples below and write down what Martin might actually mean.**What Martin says ...****What Martin might mean ...**

‘... you ought to get Mrs Hodder to do more. She takes advantage of you.’ (l. 28)

– The house is not clean enough.  
– Martha is not coping with all the housework.  
– Martha is not handling the staff well.**A** ‘Pork is such a dull meat if you don’t cook it properly.’ (l. 167)–he’s dissatisfied with her cooking  
–he is satisfied with the meal despite the difficulties of making it**B** ‘... did you net them properly? Be honest now.’ (l. 169)

martha didn’t work the chesse right

**C** ‘... we really ought to get the logs stacked properly. Get the children to do it, will you?’ (l. 175)martha should get the kids to build the bonfire  
martin doesn’t want to build it

## What Martin says ...

**D** 'He can't go around like that, Martha. Not even Jasper.' (l. 177)

**E** 'Don't fuss, darling. You always make such a fuss.' (l. 181)

**F** 'Martha makes a lovely omelette' (l. 223)

**G** 'Don't do it tonight, darling.' (l. 231)

**H** 'Colin's my best friend. I don't expect him to bring anything.' (l. 281)

**I** 'Youth's catching ... It's since he found Katie.' (l. 311)

**J** '... why isn't he wearing shoes?' (l. 313)

**K** 'Don't drink too much.' (l. 352)

**L** 'Martha, do they have to eat that crap?' (l. 356)

**b** Analyse the way Martin communicates to get his intentions across.

**5** Examine Martha's attitude to her family and friends, to herself and her life in general.

**6** Contrast the couples' two cars. State what they tell us about their drivers.

**7 a** Compare the female characters in the story.

**b** State which of the women comes closest to Martin's idea of femininity and why.

**8** Explain the last sentence of the story.

**9** Examine the author's use of narrative perspective (→ Info box, p. 63).

## What Martin might mean ...

the clothes don't look good  
jasper doesn't look good

martha is too stressed  
martha is stressing him too much

he likes her food

she should go to bed and not work at night

## Info Narrative perspective

The narrator of a story can be a character of the story, or a nameless voice that tells the story without taking part in it. A **first-person narrator** refers to him- or herself as 'I' and tells the story from their own point of view. First-person narration is always connected with a limited point of view. Alternatively, a story can be told in the **third person**. In this case, the narrator is a nameless voice that doesn't belong to the plot. The narrator may, however, have a **limited point of view**, i. e. the narrator only knows and sees what one particular character knows and sees (single-character point of view). In a longer text, the narrative perspective may jump from one character to another (**multiple-character point of view**). In traditional novels, the narrator is often an independent voice that stands above the action and thus has an **unlimited point of view**.

## Beyond the text

**10 Speaking** On the following day, Martha and her daughter talk.

Act out their dialogue.

**11 Writing** Re-write a part of the story from another character's perspective (e.g. one of the children, one of the guests, Martin). Present your stories in class and discuss in what way this changes the story.

**12 Writing** What might happen if the story took place today and Martha was the breadwinner of the family and Martin took care of the household? Re-write (a part of) the story, then present your texts to class and compare them.

**13 Speaking** At some stage, Martha has had enough and considers a divorce. She talks to a family lawyer. Act out their dialogue.

**14 a** Discuss what might happen if ...

- Martha quit her job?
- Martin lost his job?
- Martha met someone else?

**b** Imagine other scenarios in which the power balance between Martha and Martin might shift. Describe what might happen.

**15** If a good fairy came in the night to take away all Martha's problems, what would change? How would Martha behave? What would she notice? How would the people around her react? Make a list and explain your ideas.

**16** Find an image to illustrate the story. Justify your choice in a short text.

**17** Women are complicit in a system in which men have power over women. Discuss.

**18** Martha has both, a family and a career. Would you consider her a modern, emancipated woman? Give reasons.

**19** Authors have the opportunity and a responsibility to instigate change. Discuss.

