

## Take 5: Ideas for Independent/Home Learning

### *The Bluest of Blues* by Fiona Robinson (Abrams)

#### 1. Explore it

Read the spread from the book below, exploring the text and the illustration:



Think about Anna and Father. What can you tell about them from the pictures and from the words on these pages? How would you describe each of them? What kind of a relationship do you think they have? How can you tell? What are they doing here? Do you think this is new to them? What do you understand by the word **'experimenting'**? How do you think their work can be both **'hard'** and **'exciting'**? Can you think of any other activities which can be described that way?

#### 2. Illustrate it

After you have read the spread a few times, take a pen or pencil and a bit of scrap paper. You can use the back of an old envelope or cereal packet; whatever is to hand.

We are told that, **'None of Anna's early photographs survive today'**. What do you think Anna and Father might have photographed? What kind of things do you think you would photograph? Make sketches of the kind of things they might have wanted to capture with their new technology. Remember, their own prints have faded, and everyone has their own ideas and imagines things their own way, so you can't be wrong!

To help you think what they might have chosen to capture with the new camera, ask yourself:

- Where do Anna and Father seem to live? When did their story happen? How do you know?
- What is the mood of the left-hand page and text describing it?

- What can you see in the pictures on the right-hand page that have not yet faded?

Share your drawings with family or friends or talk about what you have drawn with someone else:

- What do you and they like about your drawings? Do you agree?
- What have you chosen to draw and why?

### 3. Talk about it

- Read this passage, which comes a little later in the book, and is important for the way the story develops.

*'1842 The Bluest of Blues*

*'The gentleman opening the door to Anna and Father has wild hair and a boa constrictor draped around his shoulders. He is Sir John Herschel, the most famous scientist in England, and he shows them into his laboratory. While he is known as an astronomer, Herschel has a far greater passion for experimenting. He especially loves to test the effect of sunlight on chemicals. His work is essential to photography's development. Anna listens carefully as Sir John introduces his most recent discovery: the cyanotype print. This process does not need a camera, just two chemicals, paper, water, and strong sunlight. It is quick and simple, and the final image will never fade. Sir John explains that the prints will always be blue due to the chemicals used. He uses the process to make copies of his astronomy notes. But Anna, inspired, sees a different purpose for cyanotypes. She can't wait to get home and experiment.'*

- Were any of the words hard to understand? Look these up in a dictionary, if you have one at home, or on an online dictionary, such as <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>.
- Find and copy any words and phrases which show how exciting, unusual and important this evening was.
- Why do you think Anna is **'inspired'** and **'can't wait to get home and experiment'**? How do you think she might use Sir John's new technique?
- Think about the events of the evening. How do you think Anna might record them in her diary?

### 4. Imagine it

In the spread above, we found out that **'Anna is now acknowledged to be one of the first women in the world to take a photograph'**. Why do you think the author has chosen to share this with us? What do you know about equality between men and women in the past that might make this statement an important one to include? Have you ever done something new? What was it? How did it make you feel? How do you think Anna would have felt to be the first woman to do this? You could write down your thoughts, in character as Anna, reflecting on her achievements. If you have access to a computer, you could do some further research about Anna Atkins, her life and her achievements.

### 5. Create it

What are your hobbies and interests? Perhaps you like photography like Anna? Maybe you like animals, computer games, sports, arts and crafts, outdoor activities, cars or another kind of transport? Write about something that you are particularly interested in for someone else to read. You may choose to do this in drawing and writing, or on the computer if you have access to one. Think carefully about how to share what you know with someone who may not know anything about it. Give it to someone else in your home to read. What did they learn about your interest from reading it?