

Scribblers Festival



TEACHER RESOURCES

IDEAS FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

YEAR 6-7

WEDNESDAY 5 MAY 2021

YEARS
6 – 7
05
MAY

WEDNESDAY



THE STUDIO
SUBIACO ARTS CENTRE

SESSION:

WHEN RAIN TURNS TO SNOW

9.50AM – 10.35AM

It's just another ordinary day at Lissa's house when a 13-year-old runaway arrives, holding a tiny baby. Who is Reed and why is he hiding in Lissa's shed? Drawing on an oeuvre of more than 25 books; **Jane Godwin** has turned her hand, in her compelling style, to *When Rain Turns to Snow*, a masterful meditation on contemporary issues for teens, including navigating social media, cyberbullying and the impact of secrets.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

English: symbolism, narrative perspectives, literary devices, humour

Digital technology: digital citizenship, cyber safety

Themes: peer pressure, bullying, friendship, family, social media exploitation, guilt, forgiveness

Science: sustainability, climate change, pollution

Health: the influence of peers & family

SESSION:

WHAT IF TEENS RULED THE WORLD?

10.45AM – 11.30AM

Well, what if? **Will Kostakis'** new fantasy duology set in Sydney explores this very question. Will is known for his authentic characters and whip-smart insights into teen identity. His fiction inspires young people to reflect on the world and their place in it.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

English: fantasy texts, characterisation, setting, personal responses to literature, literary devices, humour, visual language

Citizenship: direct action

Themes: identity

SESSION:

BFF IS MADDIE IN THE MIDDLE?

12.15PM – 1.00PM

Friendship, ethics, and growing up: big topics are skilfully handled by award-winning writer **Julia Lawrinson** in her new coming of age novel, *Maddie in the Middle*, which asks what would you do to protect a friend?

CURRICULUM LINKS:

English: literature in context, personal responses, point of view, evaluating texts, comprehension strategies, purpose, audience & structure of text types

Themes: friendship, ethics, peer pressure, self-esteem, family, mental health & wellbeing

Health: minimising & managing conflict, changing personal identities, peer groups

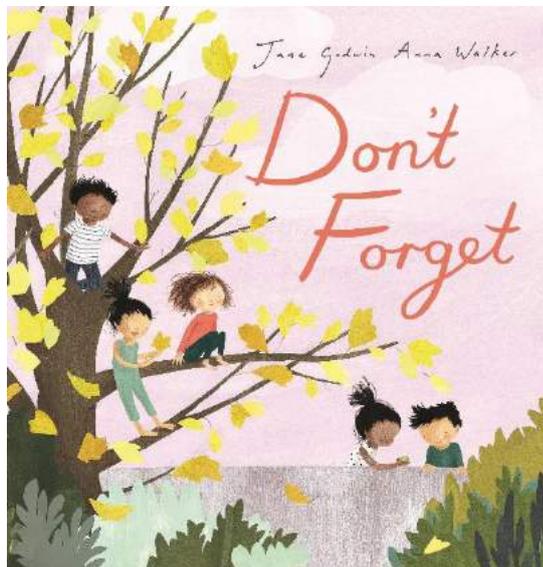
Scribblers Festival

3–9 MAY 2021



Jane Godwin

Jane Godwin is an Australian children's book publisher, and also the highly acclaimed author of over twenty books for children, across all styles and ages. Her work is published internationally and she has received many commendations, including the Queensland Premier's Award (Children's Books), the Aurealis Award and the Animal Welfare Award, and shortlistings in the CBC Book of the Year Awards, the Prime Minister's Literary Award, the New South Wales State Literary Award (Patricia Wrightson Prize) the YABBA Awards, the Speech Pathology Awards, The Family Award for Children's Books, and the Australian Book Industry Awards.



Don't Forget

Penguin Random House

A timely and uplifting picture book for 5+, reflecting on what's important for each of us to remember, from the creative team that brought us *All Through the Year* and *Today We Have No Plans*.

Don't forget to make your bed, and wear socks that fit your feet... Don't forget to care, to play, to run, to laugh...

Sometimes, we need to remember all the things we can do to be part of the world. Small things, like offering a smile. And bigger things, like hoping, dreaming, imagining...

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Jane Godwin

WHEN
RAIN
TURNS
TO
SNOW

TEACHERS RESOURCES

WHEN RAIN TURNS TO SNOW

by Jane Godwin

Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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INTRODUCTION

'Have you ever seen it when rain turns to snow?'

'No, I don't think so.'

'Sometimes it happens in Ballarat. It's like everything slows down,' he pauses, looks over at little sleeping Mercy, 'becomes soft. Quiet.' (p 79)

Lissa Freeman is alone at home when a young stranger turns up on the doorstep, carrying a baby. After refusing him entry she gradually becomes drawn into the mysterious mission on which Reed Lister has embarked. For Reed is on the run. He's been given the responsibility of looking after Mercy, the baby, by his addicted brother Eliot. And he has just discovered that he was adopted. Reed is searching for his birth mother, despite loving his adoptive parents, and somehow he has identified Lissa's mother as a possible candidate. Eliot has the same parents who love him but whom he has rejected. His baby Mercy has not been well treated and when he asks Reed to take her, Reed decides to find his lost mother and to take Mercy to her. To make matters more traumatic, Mercy isn't well, and neither teenager knows much about caring for a baby, but together they attempt to keep her safe.

Meanwhile, Lissa is also grappling with problems of her own. Their mum has a new friend in Troy, their dad is now living in China and is about to be a father again with his new wife Wendy. Lissa's best friend Hana has moved to WA and the mean girls at school are making Lissa's life a misery. Meanwhile, her brother Harry is dealing with a devastating secret of his own. And why does her mum lie about not knowing Reed? When Lissa discovers the real truth about her own birth, things begin to unravel. But happily Lissa and Reed form a bond which helps them both to resolve their personal crises. For in the course of this drama, Reed's appearance has stirred up untold histories in Lissa's family, and suddenly she is having to make sense of her past in a way she would never have imagined.

This is 'a beautiful and timely coming-of-age story about finding out who you are in the face of crisis and change'. It is also a love letter to the power of words, for the narrator, Lissa Freeman, absolutely loves language.

'I can't help thinking that Reed was sent from some kind of force in the world. That when we both needed each other, we were there. Neither of us knowing who we were, his discovery leading to mine . . . It makes no sense at all, it's like Bruce Springsteen coming on Troy's car radio just after we'd been talking about him. There's a word for that. Synchronicity. I like that word. I might put it on my list.' (p 268)

BEFORE & AFTER READING THE NOVEL

- Examine the lovely cover of the novel. What does it suggest about the novel's themes?
- After you have read the novel, examine the cover again: what does it suggest to you now?
- After you have read the novel, read about it in reviews and articles and use the notes below to examine the text more closely.

THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes relevant to curriculum topics (Studies of Society and Environment, Science and English Language and Literacy) might be identified in this novel:

STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT (SOSE)

FAMILIES, PARENTING & HERITAGE

KEY QUOTE: 'I don't believe a family is only about genetics. I found a new word in the dictionary. Family. It's a portmanteau word, like blog, and brunch, and labradoodle. A blend of friend and family. I've got the definition in my phone. "A group of people who are not related by blood but who constitute an intimate network and a sense of belonging." ' (p 266)

DISCUSSION POINT: This novel is about the many ways in which a family can be made. What constitutes a family?

DISCUSSION POINT: It is also about the secrets often kept about family origins. 'As the lift goes up, I wonder how well any kid ever knows their parents. All the things your parents don't tell you. All their lives before you, the mistakes they've made, the regrets they have. Stupid things they did when they were young, before everything could be recorded forever on the internet. Their fears for you, for them. What they really, truly believe about you.' (p 205) Does everyone have a family secret? Do parents routinely keep secrets from their children?

DISCUSSION POINT: Should adopted children be told by their parents at an early age? And what of children born via sperm donors or surrogate mothers?

DISCUSSION POINT: Parenting is a huge responsibility. Eliot has been an unfit parent to Mercy, as has Sienna. 'Reed slows down, turns to me as we walk. "You need to understand that, his place, it's not a good place for a baby. Each time I went since Mercy was born, I got more and more worried." ' (p 67) Reed rescues Mercy but many babies are not so fortunate. Did Reed act correctly in taking responsibility for the baby as he did?

DISCUSSION POINT: Parenting can also be an enormous challenge which leads to controlling behaviour: 'It's like they have some kind of rope that they're gripping, and they're praying that it'll hold, that they won't have to let go.' (p 135) Is parenting sometimes an act of desperate fear, as much as it is fuelled by love?

DISCUSSION POINT: 'De facto means in fact. Troy might not be married to Mum or anything, but in fact he's becoming her partner. De facto. Like no matter what someone says about something, you need to pay attention to the in fact part.' (p 111) The term 'de facto' marriage implies a relationship which is less traditional than marriage by ceremony, and yet this definition implies that it is just as legitimate. Is it?

DISCUSSION POINT: Nature or nurture? The novel suggests that our heritage is often a determinant in our development as much as our home environment. Although Reed proves to be the sensible, diligent student his adoptive parents had hoped their son Eliot would become, he is also obsessed with environmental issues, an interest which later proves to have been inherited from his mother, Melanie, who was an environmental activist. From your observation, which is strongest – nature or nurture?

DISCUSSION POINT: Lissa's childhood memories of Bruce Springsteen are discussed (pp 156–7). The final page also refers to him. 'You like him too? Which song's your favourite?' "'Born to Run". Which one's yours?' "'Growin' Up".' (p 273) What significance does Bruce Springsteen have in this novel? What does this final page suggest?

DISCUSSION POINT: Lissa hears from Sadie about the recognised step-parenting conventions, for example: 'First meeting – incidental drop-in, won't stay.' (p 30) How difficult must it be for a new partner to be observed in this cynical way?

COMING OF AGE & RITE OF PASSAGE

KEY QUOTE: 'He looks like a tiny man and he's all serious and sensible, but some of his ideas are like a little kid's, someone who doesn't understand the world very well at all. I'm probably like that too. I'm a good writer, but I don't get great marks because I don't follow the formula like in Naplan. And I read books about words that are meant for adults, but I can never think of the right words to say when I'm speaking. Maybe Harry, too. He's really smart at maths and actually all subjects at school, and he's great at footy, and he totally looks like a man. But he's not coping with something. What's happening to him that he has to write that list?' (p 69)

DISCUSSION POINT: Finding Melanie's grave (p 254) gives Reed the answers he has been seeking. He knows now that she is at rest, that he bears her name as his own, but more importantly that his adoptive parents chose to give him Melanie's surname as his Christian name even though they weren't prepared to tell a child of his origins. Does this discovery represent a turning point in his progress to adulthood?

DISCUSSION POINT: Lissa is going through a confusing time with her parents having divorced, her father living in China, her mother busy with her work, her brother suffering some sort of crisis, and as she is going through puberty as well. How does she mature in the course of this novel?

DISCUSSION POINT: 'I read that if you're my age and you like another guy, it could just be a stage. I read that like thirty times. A stage. I could wait for it to go away.' (p 75) How damaging is it for a young gay person to be told that they are just going through a 'stage'?

DISCUSSION POINT: 'Do you know? Can you guess what I'm about to tell you?' I take a breath. 'Is it that you think you might be gay?' (p 238) Harry's sexuality is a question left unanswered at the end of the novel. Why is this question left open-ended?

FRIENDSHIP, PEER GROUP PRESSURE & BULLYING

KEY QUOTE: 'A friendship group has a life,' says Mum. 'A beginning, a middle and an end. And individual friends, too. You know the old saying – a friend is for a reason, a season or a lifetime.' (p 124)

DISCUSSION POINT: Amber (and her acolytes Sadie and Poppy) are mean to Lissa, whose best friend Hana has gone back to WA, making her even more vulnerable. 'The originals are the ones who've been at the school since prep. I only came in Year Seven. Which makes me not an original. Hana wasn't an original. Sadie isn't one either, but she pretends to be. Amber is one of the originals. She's actually like queen of the originals.' (p 21) This description could apply to many schools where members of the 'in-group' victimise those considered less popular than they are. How can we avoid being drawn into such potentially damaging adversarial relationships?

DISCUSSION POINT: Lissa refers to 'the wit of the staircase', by which she means that when someone like Amber taunts her, she often finds no way to reply until after they have parted: 'What I should have said was, "I'm not upset about a piece of chewing gum, I'm upset because this is another small example of how you're a total B to me every day." You know what they call that? The wit of the staircase. It's like you think of the best thing to say when you're walking back down the staircase after an argument. I always have that. The wit of the staircase. And sometimes, I have no words at all.' (p viii) Discuss with students the power of words and how cruelty can be met with powerful words without resorting to abuse.

DISCUSSION POINT: There is a suggestion throughout the novel that Harry is bullied by the 'guys from footy' – they send him inappropriate pictures that will embarrass him, tease him for not having a girlfriend, and suggest that he has an STI because he doesn't like the public showers. Although he's good looking and good at footy, he's not really 'one of the guys', and this makes them uneasy. That's why Harry presumes the guys are playing some kind of awful joke on him, when the photos of Amber emerge – because they have been insidiously doing this kind of thing to him and he presumes it's escalated. Why do you think they behave this way towards Harry? Do they perhaps sense he is different from them? Perhaps they find this threatening?

SOCIAL MEDIA, BULLYING AND EXPLOITATION

KEY QUOTE: 'Mum, people your age don't get it, that's not the way the world works.' Harry sighs like an old man. 'Kids get destroyed on social media all the time.' (p 166)

DISCUSSION POINT: 'There's nothing I can do. What rule has been broken? Just stuff that adults talk about, like fairness, respect, truth – stuff that maybe used to happen, but people don't care about that anymore. The worst thing I could do is defend myself.' (p 62) Is social media really so lawless? What should adults do to prevent teenagers being damaged like this?

DISCUSSION POINT: 'There might be new laws in the future, but how will police arrest every bully on social? Anyone who shares something that isn't true? It's basically a huge uncontrolled experiment we're in. I don't know how, but change has to come from us.' (p 144) What can teenagers do to combat social media trolling like that inflicted on Harry?

DISCUSSION POINT: 'I think of what Ms Ritter, our English teacher, says: that we live in a post-truth world.' (p 242) Is there any such thing as a post-truth world?

DISCUSSION POINT: Creating fake identities online can also be dangerous as Amber demonstrates in trolling Harry. What might be the consequences of this activity, both for the sender and the recipient or recipients?

DISCUSSION POINT: Texting can also be dangerous as misunderstandings can easily arise. Lissa worries when Hana doesn't reply to her 'streak' and presumes she has cooled in her friendship. Such misunderstandings often lead to aggressive text exchanges. Invite students to discuss their experiences of this.

KEY QUOTE: 'You need to be careful when you start going out with guys, Liss. The way some guys talk about girls, how they rate them, how they have these competitions to see who can make out with the most girls over a footy season. They're always getting girls to send them nudes and stuff like that, then they show them around, sometimes they sell them. It's really off.' (p 163)

DISCUSSION POINT: Amber's behaviour is dangerous because she believes that flirting with the older boys will make her more attractive to them, whereas she actually makes herself far too available to some abusive behaviours. Discuss with students the need for mutual self-respect in relationships.

DISCUSSION POINT: Lissa has little confidence around boys which is why Harry warns her. Her lack of experience makes her vulnerable, as well. Discuss with students the protective mechanisms they need to develop in order to avoid exploitation.

DISCUSSION POINT: The #metoo movement, now a global movement, began on social media to raise awareness of and protest against the sexual harassment and sexual assault of women by men. Discuss how social media can become a powerful tool for women who might not otherwise have a voice and for those who are working to stop exploitation of women.

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss with students some examples in the book of the following: boys mistreating boys; boys mistreating girls; girls mistreating girls; girls mistreating boys.

ACCIDENTS OF FATE

KEY QUOTE: 'Like you crashed your car because you were texting. Or left a candle burning and your whole house burnt down. Or had a baby when you weren't old enough. Or kept a secret that would change everything. I wonder if that's what happens to some people? That they make a mistake they can't come back from.' (p 176)

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss with students how sometimes an accident can turn one's life around in unforeseen ways.

DISCUSSION POINT: What accidents of fate occur in the course of the action in this novel?

GUILT & FORGIVENESS

KEY QUOTE: 'I wanted that baby to know that I thought about him, I cared.' Reed puts his brownie neatly on the table. 'I know.' He stands up as if he's about to make a little speech. 'Thank you for giving me that opportunity.' Mum looks at Reed as if no one else is at the table. 'I wanted to be forgiven.' (p 267)

DISCUSSION POINT: Fiona's lifelong sense of guilt has largely been hidden from her children. How destructive is guilt? How does one overcome it?

DISCUSSION POINT: Who else in this novel feels guilty and why?

SCIENCE

CLIMATE CHANGE

KEY QUOTE: 'Sometimes the smog worries me, makes me think of climate change, and that maybe in the future days will always look like this. Like in China, there's terrible smog.' (pp 6–7)

DISCUSSION POINT: Both Lissa and Reed express concerns about climate change. Invite students to research this subject.

DISCUSSION POINT: This novel refers to the Wombat State Forest protests in the 2000s (p 244) in which Reed's birth mother was involved. Invite students to find out more about this protest and to relate it to today's environmental concerns.

DISCUSSION POINT: Debate the pros and cons of environmental protests.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Study the writing style employed in this narrative, and examine the following sub-topics:

NARRATIVE PERSON, NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE & TENSE

DISCUSSION POINT: This first person account gives us Lissa's view of the action. Imagine how differently any scene in the novel might be viewed if seen from Harry's perspective? Or from their mother's?

SYMBOLISM

DISCUSSION POINT: Rain and snow are obviously key symbolic ideas in this novel. What does the title suggest symbolically?

DISCUSSION POINT: What other symbolism did you notice in this novel?

LITERARY DEVICES

ACTIVITY: Find examples of the use of literary devices in this novel, using the table below to identify examples.

Simile	'stakes for the garden up against the house like leaning wooden soldiers.' (pp 3–4)
Metaphors	
Personification	
Other	

DISCUSSION POINT: Lissa considers the sound of words (pp vi and vii) and how they make her feel. Discuss with students words that have particular resonance for them emotionally.

ACTIVITY: Lissa also discusses 'homophones' (p 3). Read more about this topic and ask students to come up with a number of examples.

ACTIVITY: Lissa mentions 'contronyms' (p 39). Read more about this topic and ask students to come up with a number of examples.

ACTIVITY: Lissa loves words and mentions several interesting ones, eg 'kvetching' (p 6) 'saudade' (p 157), 'solastalgia' (p 241) and 'synchronicity' (p 268). Ask the class to come up with a favourite word which is not commonly used and which others may not have heard of.

ACTIVITY: The chapters in this novel are all one-word titles, and are words which are particularly resonant, such as Reed, Mist, Fleeting, Forgive, Mercy, Serendipity, Earthfall, Joy, Splashdown, Move, De Facto, Lullaby, Solstice, Alone, Surrender, Saudade, Fathom, Authority, Forsaken, Truth, Infinity, Synchronicity. This could be seen as another list of Lissa's favourite words as each of them is intriguing in meaning; each of them is explained in the context of that chapter. Invite students to write a definition for some of these chapter titles.

ACTIVITY: Lissa also includes several lists – of things about Hana to make a poem (p 47); Harry's list (pp 60–1); 'Things I Don't Know' (p 95); 'Questions I don't know the

answers to' (p 223); 'Things I've learnt about people' (p 270). Invite students to create a list of things which they've discovered in reading this novel.

HUMOUR

Activity: Identify techniques by which humour is provoked. Add quotes to the following table:

Sarcasm	
Irony	
Exaggeration	
Black Humour	
Other	

STRUCTURE

The structure of the story can be analysed in terms of key narrative features used to engage the reader's attention and to shape the work:

a) *The novel is told chronologically with first a brief introductory chapter entitled 'Reed' (pp vii and viii) before the following Chapters which fall into Parts headed Tuesday, Wednesday etc to Monday, and then short sections entitled 'Three Weeks Later', 'Six Months Later', 'Five Years Later'. So most of the action takes place in one week.*

DISCUSSION POINT: What effect does this condensed time frame have on the action?

b) *Between the chapters in this novel there are short lyrical poetic pieces of prose in italics, which act as commentary on what has come before.*

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss any one of these pieces and what it suggests. How does it link the chapter before with the one which follows?

c) *Strong beginnings and endings to chapters are another way of structuring a narrative, for example:*

Beginning: 'A Lone. Solo. Lonely. Alone. So many ls and os. Wow.' (Ch 13, p 172)

Ending: 'We should have told you this a long time ago . . .' (Ch 12, p 170)

DISCUSSION POINT: Which other opening or closing sentence was particularly gripping, in your opinion?

d) *Suspense is always a key to any narrative's structure.*

DISCUSSION POINT: What elements of the story created suspense for you?

SETTING

DISCUSSION POINT: Description in setting can be evoked via a complex range of literary devices. *Read this passage:* 'Two parrots with their speedy clockwork wings make a bright green blur through the trees. Even though we live in the suburbs, there are a lot of birds around. From our deck you see parrots, those colourful ones that dart and swoop and have a chirpy call, and the myna birds that are smaller but more aggressive, and the magpies with their warbling song. We used to sometimes see a tawny frogmouth or even a kookaburra, but I haven't seen one of them for a while. There are lots of gum trees but you can hear the traffic hum on the main road not far away. So it's quiet, but not truly quiet. I've lived here my whole life. This was the first house Mum and Dad bought, and then when he left, we stayed.' (p 28) What devices are used in this description?

ACTIVITY: Invite students to write a similar passage observing the place they live in, using such devices.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS: Lissa Freeman and her mother Fiona and brother Harry; Reed Lister; Troy, her mother's new friend.

MINOR CHARACTERS: Lissa and Harry's father Nick and wife Wendy and their twin babies Coco and Clementine; Lissa's best friend Hana (whom we only meet via texts); Lissa's frenemies Amber and Sadie and Poppy; Jan and Peter Lister, Reed's parents; Eliot, Reed's brother; his partner, Sienna and baby Mercy; Grace the netball coach; Lorraine, Amber's mother.

ACTIVITY: Read Lissa's description of Reed; '*Sadie would say... like a little man.*' (p 12). What does it tell you about him? What devices are used to paint a picture of him? Invite students to write a description of a character like this.

ACTIVITY: Draw up a character chart and find key quotes which give a clear picture of any of these characters, and isolate events that demonstrate their natures. Then write a brief character study of each person.

QUESTION: Which character was most intriguing and why? Which character would you like to have heard more about?

WRITING TASKS

ACTIVITY: Write a diary entry by Reed about his first meeting with Lissa.

ACTIVITY: Write a poem in ballad form describing Reed's journey with Mercy.

ACTIVITY: Write a letter as if written by Hana to Lissa about her first few weeks in WA.

VISUAL LITERACY

ACTIVITY: Create a graphic novel interpretation of an incident in the novel. [See **Bibliography.**]

ACTIVITY: Design a new cover for this book.

ACTIVITY: Create a book trailer for this novel. [See **Bibliography.**]

FURTHER QUOTES FOR DISCUSSION

1. 'You think mercy means kindness, like compassion. But I looked it up and it's a bit different from that. Have mercy. It's more like kindness to someone you have power over.' (p 39)
2. 'But sometimes the language I'm using to read them is different from the language that they speak.' (p 42)
3. 'It's all the same to them, just stuff to talk about. Stuff they've seen on Insta. Screenshots from Snapchat, from private Insta stories. Stuff people said about other people. They don't care if it's true or not. It's just stuff.' (p 45)
4. '*When you're a little kid, you can make mistakes like taking something that wasn't yours, or saying something mean, or lying to your parents about how many biscuits you'd eaten. But those things won't change your life. Then when you're older, you can make a mistake that you can't come back from.*' (p 88)
5. 'I like going to Mum's work, and not only because of the hydrotherapy pool. I like seeing my mother as a person out in the world, separate from me and Harry.' (p 106)
6. 'Once there's no respect for laws, for basic fairness, justice, for honesty, where are we at?' (p 167)
7. '*Every bit of a person's hate, or anger, or jealousy can go public now. Be anonymous. Have power. And no one can afford to make a mistake, not even a small one. But don't we all make mistakes?*' (p 227)
8. 'Or did I somehow feel what Dad always knew? Like, even though I was a little kid, I'd captured something in the air, sensed it deeply, in a way I couldn't understand. The wisdom of everything everywhere around me. 'Hey, maybe your donor is Bruce Springsteen!' says Reed.' (p 249)
9. 'So Troy has his own past. Even though he seems to look at things in a straightforward, simple way, says it's easy to be well, his life has still been complicated. It's like everyone has a hidden history.' (p 251)
10. 'And that made me think. Hurt is an adjective as well as a verb. Like, hurt people hurt people.' (p 264)

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

1. **Compare this novel to other young adult novels** which deal with similar issues such as adoption or social media bullying. [See **Bibliography**.]
2. **Design a poster to advertise this book.**
3. What other **title** might this book have had?
4. **Debate any of the topics** covered in these notes, or suggested by the novel.
5. Locate and study **poetry** which deals with the feelings explored in this novel, for example read popular performance poet Steven Herrick's verse novels. [See **Bibliography**.]

CONCLUSION

This is a heart-wrenching account of two teenagers in a search for the truth in their families and in their own lives. Reed's discovery that he is adopted has turned his life upside down, but in attempting to find his birth mother he uncovers another secret in Lissa's life. The story is told with elegance and grace and is imbued with the author's love of language which makes each page a eulogy to language, and the novel a tribute to its power to overcome adversity, to restore hope and contentment, and to form bonds with others.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jane Godwin is the highly acclaimed and internationally published author of many books for children and young people, across all styles and ages. Children's Publisher at Penguin Books Australia for many years, Jane was the co-creator with Davina Bell of the Our Australian Girl series of quality historical fiction for middle readers. Jane's books include her novels *Falling From Grace* and *As Happy as Here* and picture books *Go Go and the Silver Shoes* (illustrated by Anna Walker), *The Silver Sea* (with Alison Lester and patients at the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne) and *Watch This!* (with designer Beci Orpin and photographer Hilary Walker). Jane is dedicated to pursuing quality and enriching reading and writing experiences for young people, and spends as much time as she can working with them in schools and communities and running literature and writing programs. For further information see: janegodwin.com.au

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Poetry:

- Hall, Leanne 'Engaging poetry for kids & teens' *Readings blog* <https://www.readings.com.au/news/engaging-poetry-for-kids-and-teens>
'Poetry for 'Teens' *Poets.org* <https://poets.org/poetry-teens>
'Teens' *Poetry Foundation* <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/teens>

Other Non-Fiction and Website Teaching Resources:

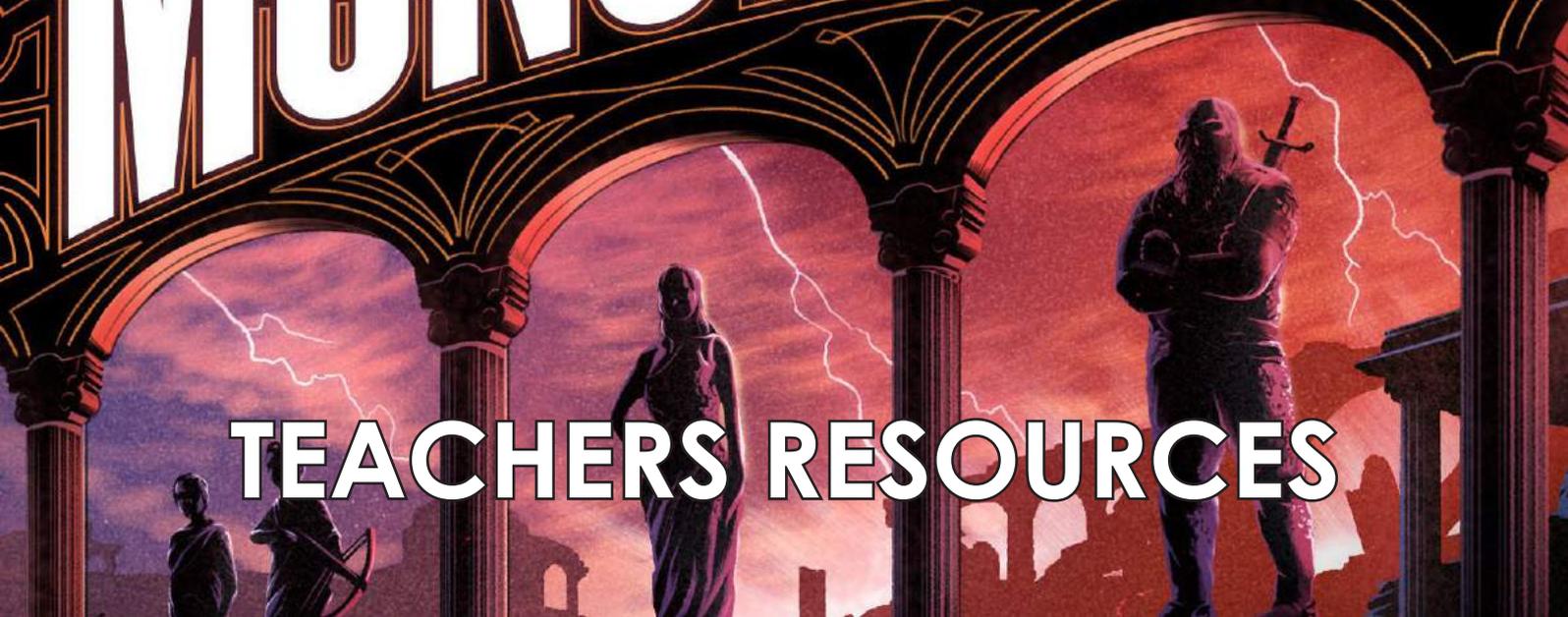
- 'Book Trailers' *Insideadog* <<http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/book-trailers>>
'Book Trailers for Readers' by Michelle Harclerode
<<http://www.booktrailersforreaders>>
'Book Trailers – Resources: Ipswich District Teacher Librarian Network'
<<http://idtl.net.au/book-trailers.php>>
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates *justified text* writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. Her publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005* (co-edited with Craig Munro) (UQP, 2006). In 2011 she was recipient of the CBCA (Qld) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award, in 2012, of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award.



WILL KOSTAKIS
MONUMENTS



TEACHERS RESOURCES

WILL KOSTAKIS MONUMENTS

Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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INTRODUCTION

'The gods built the world and now we have the power to change it,' he says. 'Think of all the injustices we can set right and the inequalities we can repair. People will listen to us. We're gods.' (p 174)

When Connor Giannopoulos discovers Darroch, a Monument (or god), in a 'sanctuary' or secret chamber under his posh private high school, Charlton Grammar, he doesn't have any idea how much his life is going to change forever. It turns out that immortality and strength beyond his wildest dreams is a bit more responsibility than he had bargained for.

Sixteen-year-old Connor is trying to avoid his ex-best friend, Olly, when he stumbles upon a trapdoor to the chamber. But when Sally Rodgers breaks into the same secret chamber looking for an ancient being, things take an unexpected turn . . . and Connor's life will never be the same again.

Along with the mysterious Sally and, later on, his new friend Locky, Connor discovers the Monuments – gods who have been buried for generations – who created the world and hid themselves away from humanity to keep everyone safe. But now they're exposed and vulnerable, and Connor isn't sure who, himself included, can be trusted with the knowledge and the power these gods have. To make things worse he discovers that Sally has a secret agenda and has lied to Darroch about the danger he's in.

Layers of history merge in this novel about a contemporary teenager's personal family and friendship history, and his encounter with the Monuments, a group of gods whose history must be appeased. Via complicated plotting, the novel reels you in to its emotional core. For this is in fact a deeply felt tribute to the power of family, and particularly to the grandfather whom Connor feels he has abandoned. Via the intervention of his new powers he is able to redeem himself and to move forward in the knowledge that he has paid tribute to a life worth celebrating.

Connor has also learned the value of true friendship and to trust his own instincts in dealing with a series of challenges. He's learned to tackle his problems rather than to avoid or run away from them. His future looks a lot more confident and he knows now that he's up for any challenge that might confront him.

Monuments is the first book in an exciting new duology from YA star Will Kostakis.

BEFORE & AFTER READING THE NOVEL

- Examine the cover of the novel. What does it suggest about the novel's themes?
- After you have read the novel, examine the cover again: what does it suggest to you now?
- After you have read the novel, read about *Monuments* in reviews and articles and use the notes below to examine the text more closely.

THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes relevant to curriculum topics (Studies of Society and Environment, and English Language and Literacy) might be identified in this novel:

STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT (SOSE)

FAMILY TIES

KEY QUOTE: 'They are already here. Life is wondrous like that,' Jivanta says. 'You are your parents. You grew from them. You are every lesson they taught, every story they told and every secret they shared. Wherever you go, you carry them with you. But know that ultimately the path is yours. Do not let your attachment to them lead you somewhere you do not want to go.' (p 158)

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss the quote above in relation to Connor's relationship with his divorced parents.

DISCUSSION POINT: 'I don't know what makes me think of Pappou, but I do. It must be Darroch's vibe. He has the air about him of someone who's been around a long time. His words have weight. I could never understand the things Pappou would tell me, but judging by the way my distant cousins flocked to him for advice, his words had weight too. Once, anyway.' (pp 39–40) What can we learn from our elders? Discuss Connor's statement here and compare to students' experiences with their grandparents.

DISCUSSION POINT: Connor hasn't visited Pappou for a year but on the night that Darroch dies he finds himself near the Sacred Heart Nursing Home. He later time travels and spends years by his bedside. Discuss the two quotes below and what they suggest about his and his mother's feelings for his grandfather:

'Pappou's inside somewhere. Mum made sure I saw a lot of him growing up. He was a god to her and I think she wanted him to be the same for me. He knew everything.' (p 97)

'All this time, I thought we just forgot about him. We were too busy. That's not the truth – we stopped visiting on purpose. He was a god to Mum and that's how she wanted to remember him, how she wanted me to remember him. But the memories I've made these past six years aren't bad. Sure, Pappou's changed a lot since I was a kid, but he's still my grandfather. And nobody deserves to be ignored because they might be painful to remember. Pappou was there when I entered this world and I should try my hardest to be there when he leaves.' (pp 248–249)

DISCUSSION POINT: 'That's what she meant by considering this a rebirth – abandoning everything I know, everyone I care for. The idea feels terrifying and terrible. The full weight of it presses against my chest. The picture of my life made infinitely better by being a god is replaced with that life vanishing entirely. I'll be hidden in some underground sanctuary like the others forever. I can't breathe.' (p 104) Connor realises how much he cares for his family when confronted by the prospect of never seeing them again. Discuss with students how they would feel in Connor's situation.

SEXUALITY

KEY QUOTE: 'The gown starts with a sweetheart neckline – for some reason Mum was surprised when I came out of the closet – and the white fabric crosses over at the front and then falls from her waist to the floor.' (p 59)

DISCUSSION POINT: 'I wasted too much time thinking there was a part of me I couldn't telegraph, that I shouldn't share. I would rework that.' (p 173) Locky's admission to Connor is typical of how some young people are forced to hide their real feelings in fear of others' judgments. Why should 'coming out' be so difficult?

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss with students the honest and open attitudes that Connor and Locky have towards their sexuality.

MORALITY

KEY QUOTE: 'You lied to him, and then you asked me to tag along! Have you ever read a religious text? Gods do not take kindly to betrayal.' (p 65)

DISCUSSION POINT: Alek laments his personal failure: 'I neglected to tell her that she would die when I received those notes. I could have woken her to warn her, but I didn't. I was ashamed – those notes were proof that I would fail her. She had entrusted me to be her Guardian. It was my duty to keep her safe and I didn't.' (p 200) How difficult can it be to live up to one's sense of duty?

DISCUSSION POINT: A lot of Connor's decisions are founded on his morals and beliefs. What moral qualities does he evince in this novel?

DISCUSSION POINT: This novel is about teenagers being asked to take on extraordinary powers and the personal conflict between responsibility for the welfare of others and one's individual wants and needs. Is it, therefore, a metaphorical account of the same dilemma faced in ordinary life?

GRIEF

KEY QUOTE: 'She lost both parents, and now that she can't resurrect them, it's like she's lost them again. I can't even begin to imagine what that feels like, and I tell her so.' (p 265)

DISCUSSION POINT: How does Sally's grief over the loss of her parents fuel the quest she has enlisted Connor in?

DISCUSSION POINT: Connor's mother feels guilty for not visiting her father, but aren't her actions really driven by her grief over his decline?

FRIENDSHIP

KEY QUOTE: 'This is my first friend divorce, so forgive me if I'm doing it wrong.' (p 1)

DISCUSSION POINT: This novel begins and ends with Connor's feelings about his now ex-best friend, Olly. The adventures he embarks upon show him both that he has his own inner strength and that true friendship is very different from the nostalgic affection he has for Olly. Discuss the evolution of childhood friendships as we experience young adulthood.

DISCUSSION POINT: Apart from the romantic attraction between them, what makes Locky such a good friend for Connor?

PRIVILEGE VERSUS LACK OF PRIVILEGE

KEY QUOTE: 'The whole concept of a debutante ball is so old-fashioned, so ELC. I always feel like I've had to step into a wardrobe to get here,' he says. 'Every posh school has this Narnia vibe – they're fantasy worlds that are trapped in the past, where the magic is money and I'm just a mortal. I never feel like I belong.' (p 81)

DISCUSSION POINT: 'South of the Harbour Bridge, ELC girls are renowned for their dizzyingly rich parents, hyphenated surnames and allergies to travelling south of the Harbour Bridge. The campus must be pretty close to paradise with a name like Eden. Somewhere beneath it, there's a god waiting to be discovered.' (p 52) What aspects of private schooling does this novel question?

DISCUSSION POINT: When Connor and Locky visit Greater Western High School they are visiting the antithesis of what Charlton Grammar and Eden Ladies' College are in terms of physical facilities and attitudes. What hints are there about the differences between them?

DISCUSSION POINT: Read other novels that question some of the attitudes promoted in private schools, eg. Alice Pung's *Laurinda* (2014) or Fiona Wood's *Cloudwish* (2015).

COMING OF AGE & RITE OF PASSAGE

KEY QUOTE: 'Locky wished he could remix parts of his life, do them over and make them better. Here I am, in the past and I can't change a thing. There's only one timeline and all of my experiences are set in stone.' (p 241)

DISCUSSION POINT: Both Connor and Locky are maturing, although the latter is two years older. How do they each develop or change in the course of this novel?

DISCUSSION POINT: 'I'll be the first to admit I love the sound of my own voice. I'm always itching to say something, to fill in any silence with my cleverness. But it's different with Locky – I'm compelled to ask him questions and listen. I love the sound of his voice too.' (pp 125–6) Is learning to listen to the views of others an essential part of growing up?

DISCUSSION POINT: 'There is no peace in running. I see that now, at the end. A life spent running is not one lived.' (p 94) Connor learns to overcome his personal fears when he is confronted by much larger ones. Can seemingly ordinary people find resources of bravery when confronted with uncommon challenges?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Study the writing style employed in this narrative, and examine the following sub-topics:

NARRATIVE PERSON, NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE & TENSE

DISCUSSION POINT: This novel is told in the first person, present tense voice of Connor. How might it have changed had it been written in third person? Choose a passage and try to rewrite it in that way.

SYMBOLISM

DISCUSSION POINT: The gods each have a natural element attached to their powers, eg. fire, ice etc. What other symbolism did you identify in this novel?

LITERACY DEVICES

ACTIVITY: Find examples of the use of literary devices in this novel, using the table below to identify examples.

Simile	<p>'the woman – a human-sized corsage with a voice like sharpening knives – assesses their attire and makes last-minute adjustments.' (p 67)</p> <p>'He looks like the guys on the packaging for underwear value packs and I look like a skinny soft serve that's a little melted.' (p 207)</p> <p>'The man – dressed like the midpoint between a lumberjack and hipster barista' (p 67).</p>
Metaphors	
Personification	
Other	

HUMOUR

DISCUSSION POINT: Humour throughout the novel is conveyed by employing literary devices such as exaggeration and sarcasm, eg. 'Prefects are incentivised with gift vouchers and co-curricular credits, so the school has an army of pubescent monsters willing to improve their standing by throwing younger kids under the bus. There's no appealing to a prefect's better nature – it's impossible to compete with the allure of a gift voucher.' (p 16) Identify humorous techniques used in this novel, and add relevant quotes to the following table:

Sarcasm	'Finn's smile fades. "That was a Guardian? No wonder we're in strife."' (p 219)
Irony	'I never pegged myself for the type to make grand sacrificial gestures, and yet here I am, grandly sacrificing.' (p 217) 'No, that was confidence, not foresight. We will step back through the portal and close it, trapping him here to die.' (p 227)
Satire	'Larissa Pung,' she says, shaking my hand. 'I'm the founder and de facto leader of the Monument Guardian Support Group. I'm Finn's Guardian, and obviously a bit of a fangirl – hence the blue.' (p 116) 'She found Tash, Aiden's Guardian, and Bevan, Darroch's. The three of them now meet on the first Tuesday of every month – for smoothies on the beach or hikes or rock climbing.' (pp 116–7)
Exaggeration	
Black Humour	
Other	

STRUCTURE

The structure of the story can be analysed in terms of key narrative features used to engage the reader's attention, to shape the work, and to develop themes:

a) *Strong beginnings and endings to chapters* are one way of structuring a narrative, for example:

Beginning: 'I wake up with a start – doona bunched by my feet, fitted sheet drenched with sweat.' (Ch 10, p109)

Ending: 'She tells me the date: 31 March 2014. It's six years ago.' (Ch 22, p 236)

DISCUSSION POINT: Which other opening or closing sentence was particularly gripping, in your opinion?

b) *Suspense is the key to any narrative's structure.* This contains many '*twists in the plot*', for example:

'I'm having trouble wrapping my head around all this. "Why exactly are you looking for the Monuments if they're not in danger? You're a Guardian, you're supposed to protect them."' (p 63) OR the revelation that Sally's next door neighbour Grace is actually her mother (p 236) is another 'twist'.

DISCUSSION POINT: Which other plot details were particularly suspenseful?

c) *Structure can also be used to cement themes in a work.* For example, this novel begins and ends with Connor at the top of a building, in chapters which 'bookend' the novel in terms of thematic development. He begins on the roof at Charlton Grammar:

Ch 1: 'I tape the packet of almonds back inside the bell. While I'm up here, I look over to the city again. In however many years, when I'm in one of those skyscrapers, Charlton Grammar will be a speck in the distance. I'll have new friends and a new life. I won't remember the taste of the glue we used in kindergarten, and this won't hurt as much. I'm sure of it.' (p 17)

He ends in the boardroom on the sixty-fourth floor of a skyscraper:

Ch 27: 'The wall is all window. Sydney stretches out for miles, an incomplete connect-the-dots of roads and blinking lights. I try to find Charlton Grammar and a memory elbows its way to the front of my mind – me, six years ago, staring out at the city from the top of Founders Block.' (pp 276)

DISCUSSION POINT: How has Connor changed from where he begins, to where he ends, in these two sections?

SETTING

DISCUSSION POINT: Description in setting can be evoked via a complex range of literary devices which can 'suggest' without overtly outlining the writer's meaning. Read these two passages and identify what the description suggests about Greater Western High

School, and a local park: 'I pull up a pixelated satellite image of GWHS on my phone. The school is bounded by a fence of black bars that are twice our height and just far enough apart that I can squeeze a hand holding a phone through. I angle the screen upwards and ask them to point out the crypt.

'From above, the school resembles a snowflake on a concrete slab. There's a white building at its centre – the boarding school that became the public school – with demountable classrooms attached to accommodate growing enrolment numbers. They were probably intended to be temporary and now stretch the meaning of the word; their white paint has splintered and their supporting beams have rusted over.' (p 130)

'There's a small park tucked between two near-identical houses, like a third one was bulldozed to make way for it. With some play equipment, a single wooden bench and a patch of grass barely larger than your average nature strip, it's a park that's doing the absolute least.' (p 262)

DISCUSSION POINT: Which location in this novel was most vividly described for you?

DISCUSSION POINT: Setting can also give an indication of the lives of characters, for example, when Connor travels back in time he describes his own house: 'I step over the threshold and the layout's completely different. The Great Furniture Halving of 2015 and the Great Extension of 2016 haven't happened yet, so there's more crammed in less space. The old kitchen is tucked in the corner where Mum's ergonomic workstation is set up in 2020.' (p 240) What does this tell you about his family?

GENRE

DISCUSSION POINT: This is in part a **contemporary rite of passage novel** exploring teenage sexuality, family relationships and friendship. But it is also an **adventure**, and a **fantasy** in which the characters are engaged in an epic quest which includes time travel. The conventions of these three genres are merged in a very humorous and yet also thoughtful way: 'Look, it's easy to romanticise the idea of time travel, but if we boil it down to its essence, what is it? One minute you're standing between two commercial dumpsters behind a discount chemist, relishing the heady aromas of bin juice and decaying meat products, and the next you're still in an alleyway, the smells are still weird, only now it's 1938.' (p 201) Discuss the tropes of these three genres and how the author has employed them in this novel.

DISCUSSION POINT: Fantasy relies on the creation of a credible secondary world, eg. The Guardians speak a language called 'Wren' (p 118) but can understand and speak human language as well.

- Sally explains the Monuments in detail (pp 34–5).
- Darroch describes his fellow Monuments: 'Jivanta is wise, far wiser than me. She is the mother of all that live and breathe in this world, the creator of life. Nuo has a sharp wit and no patience for fools. She is loyal, reliable, but prone to cheating when one turns their back on her during a contest. Aiden is fiery and sometimes reckless. He is driven by his passions whereas Finn is calmer, more measured,' Darroch says. 'We are an unconventional family, and as dangerous as Movements are, it will be wonderful to see them again.' (p 40)

- Sally describes how they came to Australia: 'We can find out for you, don't worry,' she adds. 'The Guardians who brought the Monuments to Australia were Cottle, McLean, Miller, Orwell and Tyrell. Jasper Orwell was my however-many-greats great grandfather. He was the one who decided to put the Monuments under schools. He believed education could make gods of us all. Tash had to research her ancestry; she's a Cottle. Bevan's a Tyrell. That was easy because his surname is still Tyrell. You're either a Miller or a McLean. And you're the last Guardian.' (p 118)
- Connor and Locky are able to travel through time.

What other aspects of this 'secondary world' were revealed in the novel?

CHARACTERS

Major Characters: Connor Giannopoulos (narrator); his mother; Pappou (Constantine, his grandfather); Sally Rodgers (a fake Guardian); Darroch (a Monument/God); Lachlan/Locky Joy (Connor's new friend); Jivanta (a Monument/God); Aidan (a Monument/God); Finn (a Monument/God); Alektos (Jivanta's son and Guardian).

Minor Characters: Ms Rowsey; Pete, a pizza delivery guy (a Hound); debutantes and their partners at Eden Ladies' College; Nina and Casey (Greater Western High School students); Violet Olsen-Smythe (Locky's friend); Larissa Pung (Finn's Guardian and founder and de facto leader of the Monument Guardian Support Group; Grace and Travis (Sally's parents); and Olly (Connor's childhood friend).

ACTIVITY: Draw up a character chart and find key quotes which give a clear picture of any of these characters, and isolate events that demonstrate their natures. Then write a brief character study of the person using the quotes and events to illustrate the points made in your summary.

DISCUSSION POINT: Which character was most intriguing and why? Which character would you like to have heard more about?

DISCUSSION POINT: The dialogue in this novel is imbued with very contemporary language and references, eg. 'I try social media, because if I've learnt anything from grown adults uploading five-minute videos about their bowel movements, it's that there's nothing humans won't share in the hope of going viral. Surely some loose-lipped protector of the gods is sharing secrets and using hashtags appropriately.' (p 113) How well does this novel reflect contemporary teenage language and behaviour, in your opinion?

WRITING TASKS

ACTIVITY: Write a diary entry as if written by Locky about meeting Connor.

ACTIVITY: Imagine another Monument with special powers. Give him/her a name and write a brief description of how this god looks and acts.

ACTIVITY: This is the first book in a duology. Imagine what might happen in the second book? Write a synopsis for that novel.

VISUAL LITERACY

ACTIVITY: Create a graphic novel interpretation of an incident in the novel. [See **Bibliography.**]

ACTIVITY: Design a new cover for this book.

ACTIVITY: Create a book trailer for this novel. [See **Bibliography.**]

FURTHER QUOTES FOR DISCUSSION

1. 'My experience with gods is limited to the Greek Orthodox church services my grandparents dragged me to as a kid, the names Mum takes in vain, and the photos our school rowing champion Brent Ahmadi uploads online with the hashtag #god.' (p 38) What does Connor's joke suggest about the role of religion in contemporary teenage life?
2. 'There is an appreciation for all things that only comes with the knowledge that life will definitely end.' (p 107)
3. 'Sometimes,' Jivanta says, pushing off the lounge chair, 'it is best to pass on power to those who do not want it.' (p 107)
4. Locky says to Connor: 'The dream is to be the first Aboriginal person to lead the country, but that's a depressing dream.' (p 127) Then he explains what he means. Discuss.
5. 'Movements are interesting times,' he tells me. 'Yes, every second we are aboveground, we are in danger, but we are also *alive*.' (p 154)

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

1. **Compare this novel to other young adult novels in which the characters travel through time.** Create a class display of other books in which time travel occurs. [See websites under **Bibliography** below.]
2. **Read other fantasy novels in which a young protagonist is given some extraordinary power or destiny** and compare to this one, eg Jessica Townsend's *Nevermoor* (2017) and *Wundersmith* (2018). Create a class display of other books in which such powers are gifted to a character(s).
3. **Design a poster to advertise this book.**
4. What other **title** might the book have had?
5. Locate and discuss **poetry that deals with teenage sexuality** using websites such as: 'Gender and Sexuality: Poems for Teens' *Poets.org*
<<https://poets.org/text/gender-and-sexuality-poems-teens>>

CONCLUSION

‘We are gathered here to commemorate the life of Alektos, son of Jivanta,’ I begin, and as soon as I have, I realise this is my chance to right a wrong and give the other gods a proper farewell. ‘We also pay our respects to Darroch, Jivanta, Finn, Nuo, and Aiden, not so much. I don’t know where gods go when they die, but I hope you’re at peace.’

We stand over Alek, and it really sinks in that the Monuments have left the world to us. We are the new gods.

I feel Locky’s hand grip mine. I reach out to grip Sally’s.

I’m not at all certain that we can defeat the rebel gods, and I think that means we just might.’ (p 280)

So ends this novel with a promise of more to come in a sequel. Will Connor, Locky and Sally be able to defeat the rebel gods, and finish the job that the Monuments began?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Will Kostakis is an award-winning author for young adults. As a high school student, Will won *Sydney Morning Herald* Young Writer of the Year for a collection of short stories. His first novel, *Loathing Lola*, was released when he was just nineteen, and his second, *The First Third*, won the 2014 Gold Inky Award. It was also shortlisted for the Children’s Book Council of Australia Book of the Year and Australian Prime Minister’s Literary Awards. *The Sidekicks* was his third novel for young adults, and his American debut. It was included in the IBBY Honour List 2018.

See his website for further information <http://willkostakis.com/>

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‘Booklist: Time Travel Reads for Teens’ *The Hub* April 6, 2016

<<http://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/2016/04/06/booklist-time-travel-reads-for-teens/>>

'Gender and Sexuality: Poems for Teens' *Poets.org*
<<https://poets.org/text/gender-and-sexuality-poems-teens>>

'Popular YA Time Travel Books' *GoodReads*
<<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/ya-time-travel>>

OTHER NON-FICTION AND WEBSITE TEACHING RESOURCES:

'Book Trailers' *Insideadog*
<<http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/book-trailers>>

'Book Trailers for Readers' by Michelle Harclerode <<http://www.booktrailersforreaders>>

'Book Trailers – Resources: Ipswich District Teacher Librarian Network'
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Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates *justified text* writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. Her publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005* (co-edited with Craig Munro) (UQP, 2006). In 2011 she was recipient of the CBCA (Qld) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award, in 2012, of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award.

WILL KOSTAKIS REBEL GODS

Reading Questions

Connor, Locky and Sally have inherited not only the Monuments' powers, but also their problems – now the new gods must face an ancient threat, all while coming to terms with their immortality and responsibilities.

Rebel Gods is an action-packed and riveting fantasy adventure, but it is also a story about family, friendship and identity. Despite the fantastical premise, Rebel Gods is fundamentally about what it means to be human.

Below are some discussion points from this book.

Power

Connor, Locky and Sally react to inheriting the Monuments' powers in different ways. How would you feel about inheriting a great power? Which Monuments' power would you like to have?

Discuss power and the potential for corruption. Consider Locky's speech in particular: 'No single person ought to decide what *better* is because, eventually, we all lose sight of it' (p 208).

Making your voice heard

Young adults are more involved in politics than ever before. Discuss the importance of listening to young voices.

Locky's rainbow-grass miracle is an act of vandalism. Do you think it was the right thing to do?

Families

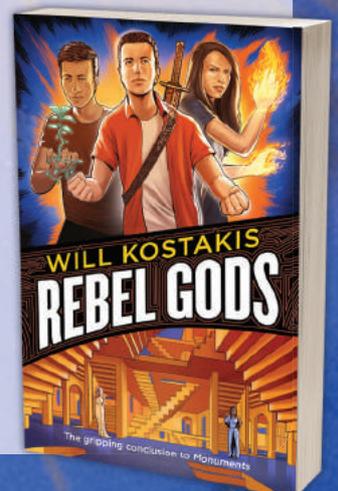
Connor is often worried that he will not be up to the task before him, but his love for his family and friends gives him courage. What motivates Locky and Sally in this book?

Connor's mum uses the simile 'a child is like an olive tree' (p 77) to describe watching Connor grow up. Can you think of another simile to describe families? Can you identify two other similes used in Rebel Gods?

Good and Evil

Do you believe the rebel gods are 'evil'? Sally and Locky disagree on the plan to stop the rebel gods – whose plan would you have followed?

Agapi and Fóvos are the gods of love and fear; which do you think is more powerful?



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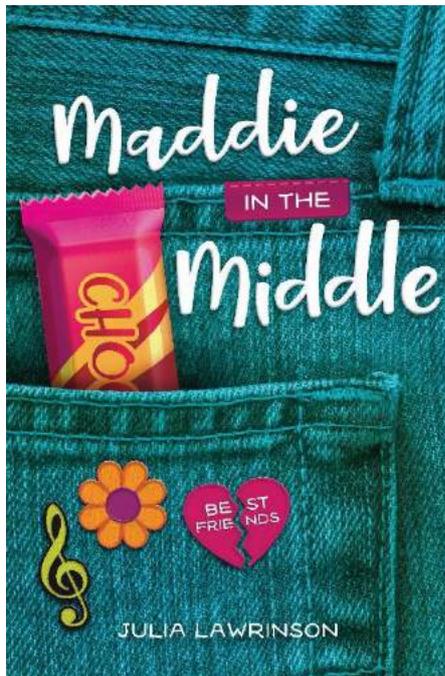


Julia Lawrinson is an award-winning writer of books for children and young adults. She hails from Perth and, despite leaving school at 15, has a PhD in writing and a Bachelor of Laws with distinction. Julia has worked in a range of organisations, from the arts to parliament to health. She has presented at schools, workshops and conferences across Australia, and in Singapore, Indonesia and the USA, and loves meeting her audience and encouraging reading, learning and curiosity.

Her books are about friendship, family and the occasional Jack Russell. She loves the ocean, reading, dog parks and the word serendipity.

Maddie in the Middle

Fremantle Press



Maddie Lee is in year six. Her best and oldest friend Katy is busy with school duties and music and scholarship plans, and Maddie feels lost and lonely. Then a new girl starts at school. Maddie wants more than anything to become friends with her. And she does. But Samara's friendship comes at a high price, with consequences Maddie could never have imagined.

'[Maddie in the Middle] also raises the problems that many teens face – how to fit in, how to be a good friend and how to find independence but also follow the rules. This is a coming-of-age book for tweens and would be a great conversation-starter for parents.' - Reading Time

'This is a compelling story of friendship, growing up and family. The characters are all very realistic and the feelings and emotions expressed through the story are very relatable.' - Lamont Books.

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MADDIE IN THE MIDDLE

JULIA LAWRIKSON

ISBN (PB): 9781925815931

YEAR LEVEL: Y5–8

ABOUT THE BOOK

Maddie Lee is in year six. Her best and oldest friend Katy is busy with school duties and music and scholarship plans, and Maddie feels lost and lonely. Then a new girl starts at school. Maddie wants more than anything to become friends with her. And she does. But Samara's friendship comes at a high price, with consequences Maddie could never have imagined.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julia Lawrinson is an award-winning writer of books for children and young adults. She hails from Perth and, despite leaving school at fifteen, has a PhD in writing and a Bachelor of Laws with distinction. Julia has worked in a range of organisations, from the arts to parliament to health. She has presented at schools, workshops and conferences across Australia, and in Singapore, Indonesia and the USA, and loves meeting her audience and encouraging reading, learning and curiosity. Her books are about friendship, family and the occasional Jack Russell. She loves the ocean, reading, dog parks and the word serendipity.

THEMES

- Coming of age
- Self-esteem
- Friendship
- Family
- Juvenile crime

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y5–8 English

Y5–8 Health and Physical Education (mental health and wellbeing)

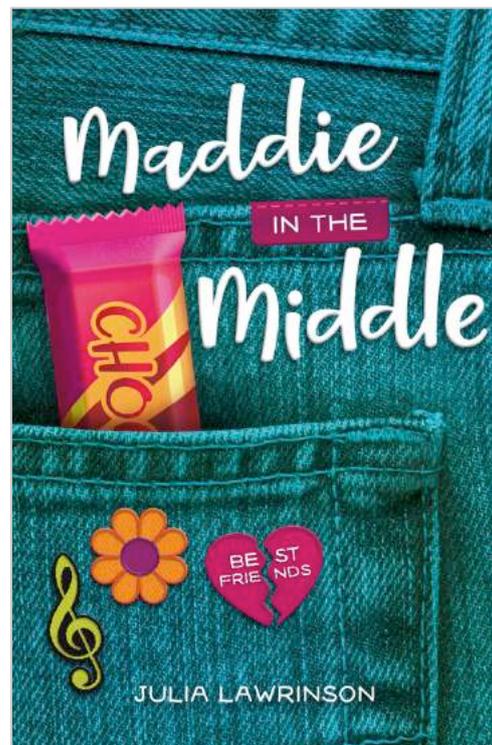
USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: <https://julialawrinson.com.au>

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Compare and contrast the characters Maddie and Katy – what adjectives would you use to describe each? How would you describe the dynamic of their friendship?
2. Do you think Maddie is jealous of Katy or Samara? Have you ever felt jealous of a friend? How did you work through this emotion?
3. What does the term 'popular' mean to you? Why do you think Maddie wants to be friends with the 'popular' crowd? Do you think it's important to be popular? Why/why not?
4. *Do your best, help the rest, put your spirit to the test!* (p. 13) What does it mean to 'put your spirit to the test'? Give an example of when you've had to do this.
5. After Maddie agrees to help Samara shoplift, Samara captions a photo of Maddie as 'true friend'. Do you think Samara is a 'true friend' in return? What is your definition of a 'true friend'?
6. Do you think Maddie made a good decision to help Samara shoplift? Is it fair of Samara to ask Maddie to take the blame if they get caught? What would you have done in Maddie's position?



7. *You'd do the same thing, wouldn't you? You'd lie to help your friend?* (p. 10) Have you ever told a lie? How did it make you feel? Did the truth come out in the end? What is the difference between a lie and a 'lie by omission'? Is one worse than the other or can both be equally damaging?
8. *On the one hand, I am proud that I am helping. On the other, I know it is wrong. Some days, I am sure that the helping outweighs the stealing. Other days, I'm not.* (p. 134) What is an 'ethical dilemma'? Have you ever been in a situation when you were unsure what the right thing to do was? How did you resolve this situation?
9. Do you think Maddie regrets shoplifting and lying to her friends and family? Give evidence from the text. It is often said that 'smart people learn from their mistakes'. What does Maddie learn from her friendship with Samara and her experience with the juvenile justice system? Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast her character at the beginning and the end of the novel.
10. Have you ever done something you later regretted? What did you learn from your mistake? Why is it important not to dwell on past regrets and instead to focus on making better choices in the future?
11. What are the potential punishments for minors who commit theft in Australia? What is a juvenile detention centre? Maddie's father warns her: *People with criminal records get treated differently to other people.* (p. 167) How and why might they be treated differently? Do you think this is fair?
12. How are the themes of friendship, family and self-esteem portrayed in the book? What other themes stood out to you? What message/s did you take away from the story?

Creative writing

1. *Mirror Maddie's creative writing class:* Each student writes one word on a slip of paper and puts it in a class box marked 'Creative Writing Prompts'. The teacher draws out a new topic each week, with students taking twenty minutes to compose a short story, poem or dialogue on this topic.
2. Read Maddie's response to the writing prompt 'hair', entitled 'Ode to a Hairdryer', on p. 38. What do you think the poem is about? How might it relate to the situation with her mum? What might the hairdryer symbolise?
3. *Alternate endings:* How might the story have evolved differently in the three twists below? Choose one and rewrite the final chapters of the story. Then swap your answer with a partner.
 - a. Maddie had refused to help Samara steal and instead confided her concerns about her new friend's family to her dad.
 - b. Maddie was honest with the police about Samara's involvement when they were caught shoplifting.
 - c. The judge reviewed the footage of Maddie and Samara's multiple offences and decided to sentence them to a juvenile detention centre instead of community service.
4. *Diary entry:* How do you think Samara feels when Maddie takes the blame? Scared? Guilty? Angry? Anxious? Write an imaginative diary entry from her point of view. Why do you think she eventually changes her mind and defends Maddie in court?
5. *Continue the story:* Will Maddie accept her place at Lakelands alongside Katy and Samara? How will their friendship be tested during their first term of high school? Write the next two chapters of *Maddie in the Middle* from the point of view of Samara, Katy or Maddie.
6. *Short story:* Write a short story about a lie that goes wrong for the lead character.

Debate

1. In groups of three, debate for/against the validity of the claim: *It's okay to lie to help a friend.*

Do My Best campaign

1. Maddie starts a Do My Best campaign at the start of the new school year. She sets goals such as being more organised and being disciplined with her homework and clarinet practice. Design your own Do My Best campaign: what are some areas you would like to improve upon (e.g. organisation, punctuality etc.)? Choose two practical goals and create an action-plan to help you achieve them.

Mental health

1. *Clever Katy. Mysterious new girl. And me. Plain, old, ordinary me. Even if I do my best, how am I ever going to be somebody special, somebody important, somebody who matters?* (p. 25) What does the term 'self-esteem' mean? Everyone has different qualities that make them unique – what are some of the things you are good at or enjoy? What makes you special? Why is it important not to compare ourselves to others?
2. *Paper chains:* Each student randomly selects the name of a class member. They then write a note to that student describing something they admire about them. Connect all the strips to make a class paper chain to read and display.
3. *Acrostic poem:* Write an acrostic poem spelling out your name. Each line should describe something that makes you special. Display the poems around the classroom.

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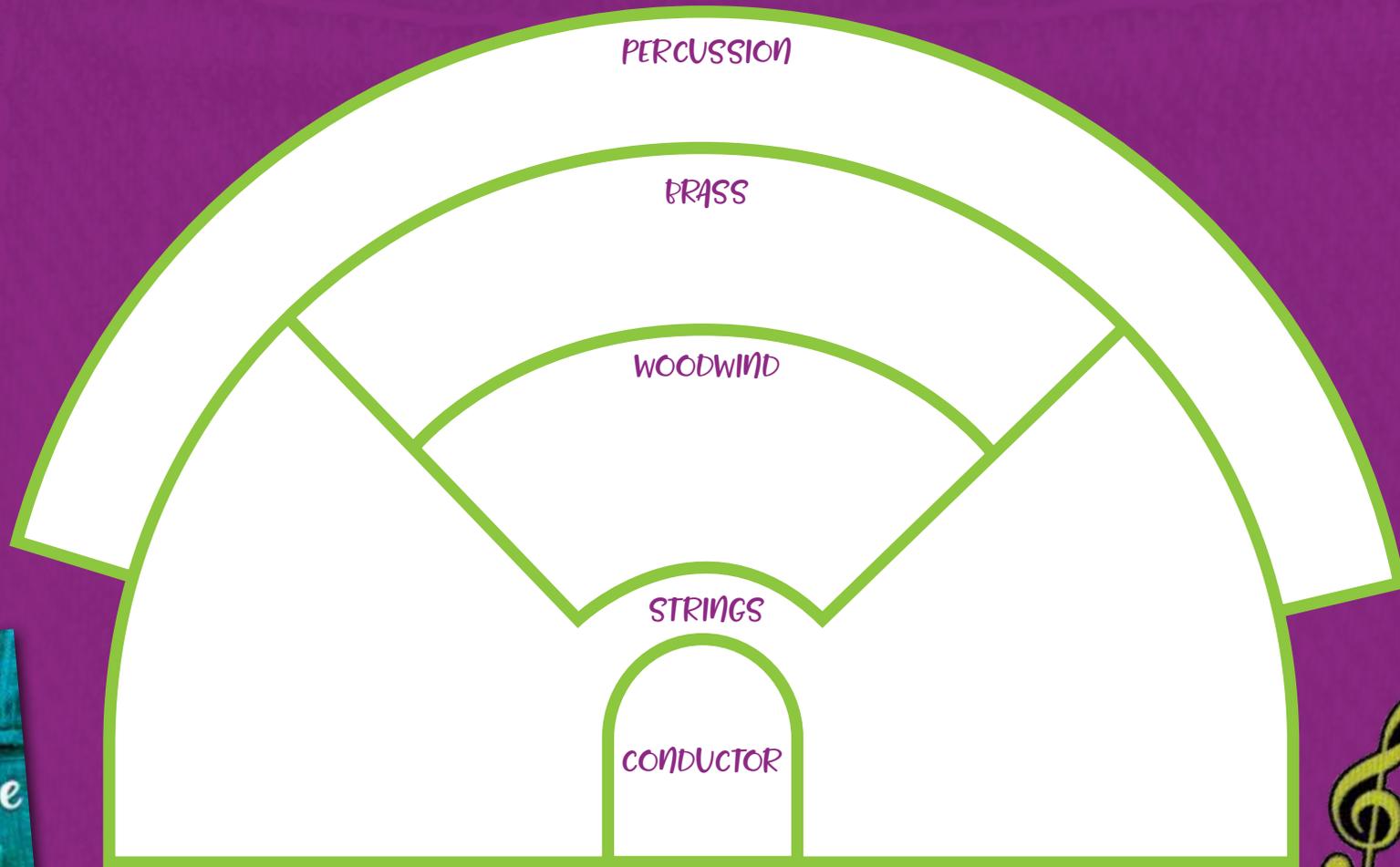
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Where does each instrument sit in an orchestra?

Maddie and Katy used to be best of friends, but now they're drifting apart. So when new girl Samara comes along, Maddie sees a chance to make a new best friend. But Samara has a secret, and soon Maddie is drawn into something she knows is wrong, but she desperately wants to help her new friend.

Maddie gets caught in the middle of a rivalry between Katy and Samara in music class, in which Katy plays the flute, Maddie plays the clarinet and Samara plays the piano. Organise the musical instruments below into their instrument families - brass, woodwind, strings or percussion - and write them in the correct section of the orchestra.



Bass drum

Bassoon

Cello

Clarinet

Cowbell

Double bass

Flute

French horn

Piano

Saxophone

Timpani

Trombone

Trumpet

Tuba

Viola

Violin

Xylophone





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