

# Scribblers Festival



*Teacher Resources*

**IDEAS FOR YOUR CLASSROOM**

**YEAR 3-5**

**FRIDAY 6 MAY 2022**

YEARS  
3 – 5  
06  
MAY

# FRIDAY



FESTIVAL MARQUEE  
SUBIACO ARTS CENTRE

## SIDELINED

9.50AM – 10.35AM

When a football injury prevents Blake from playing the sport he loves, the sidelines are no longer a place of rest and community but feel like the most isolating place of all. With more than 27 books in print, **Sally Murphy** is a masterful weaver of verse. Her latest novel, *Worse Things*, explores connections, what they mean and what happens when they are lost.

## CURRICULUM LINKS:

**English:** creating literary texts using realistic and fantasy settings and characters, how authors make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest.

**History and Geography:** migration to Australia, refugee experiences.

**Health and Phys Ed:** being healthy, safe & active, contributing to healthy & active communities, fundamental movement skills.

**Themes:** refugees, exclusion, belonging, death & bereavement, overcoming adversity, change, friendship, sport.

## THE TRAVELLING BOOKSHOP

10.45AM – 11.30AM

Books allow us to dream and imagine a place where anything is possible. Mim Cohen knows this more than anyone. She roams the world in a travelling bookshop with her dad, brother and a horse called Flossy, who leads them to the places where people most need the magic of a good book. **Katrina Nannestad** tells us about her new series *The Travelling Bookshop* and reveals the inspiration for her settings and the characters who live in them.

## CURRICULUM LINKS:

**English:** creating literary texts using realistic and fantasy settings and characters, literary features, viewpoints in literary texts, imagery, humour, experimentation and adaptation of ideas and stylistic features of selected authors.

**Geography:** similarities and differences between places in terms of their types of settlements and the diversity of people.

**Themes:** Family, identity, belonging, resilience, humour.

## WHAT ABOUT THAO?

12.15PM – 1.00PM

Vietnamese-Australian Thao has enjoyed being the only 'ethnic' kid in his small country town school, but the arrival of new kid Kadir changes that. From the author of *Thai-riffic* and *The Other Christy* comes a new funny and heartfelt story, *What about Thao?* In trademark style, **Oliver Phommavanh** captures the dilemmas of culture and belonging. Join him as he shares his new novel and discusses difference, friendship and identity.

## CURRICULUM LINKS:

**English:** respond to texts drawn from a range of cultures and experiences, experiment with language devices in texts, humour, point of view, stylistic features of authors.

**History and Geography:** migration to Australia, questioning and research, developing a variety of texts to communicate ideas.

**General Capabilities:** intercultural understanding, recognising culture and developing respect, interacting and empathising with others.

**Themes:** culture, belonging, friendship, identity, empathy.

# Scribblers Festival

4 – 8 MAY 2022

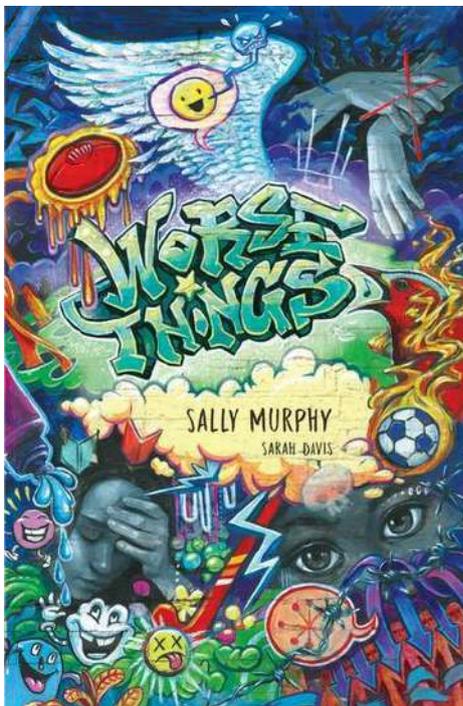
## Sally Murphy



Sally Murphy is an author, poet, speaker and educator, with a passion for writing, reading and speaking. Her life's goal is to write for, read with and speak to as many people as possible, and spread a passion for reading and writing to children and adults worldwide.

Sally is also a mum, granny, wife, daughter and friends. While this all sounds like a lot of things to be at once, she still finds time to play with her kids and grandkids, read books, walk on the beach, cook, clean and a million other things. She thrives on being busy.

Sally has a Doctorate in Creative writing, and is a qualified and experienced teacher, having taught all ages from preschool through to university level. Based in the South West of Western Australia, she loves to speak to audiences big and small, close to home or around the world.



## Worse Things

Walker Books

*Worse Things* is a story about connections, the ways they are made, and what happens when they are lost or illusive, from the award-winning author of *Pearl Verses the World* and *Toppling*.

*Worse Things* follows the lives of three main characters: Blake, an Aussie Rules football player who suffers a devastating injury; Jolene, a hockey player who hates the game and is grieving over the recent death of her father; and Amed, a soccer-loving, non-English speaking orphan who feels like an outsider since arriving in Australia after being raised in a refugee camp.

A touching and inspirational story about connections and the things that bind us all.

<http://sallymurphy.com.au/>

@scribblersfest | PO Box 443, Claremont WA 6910 | 08 9385 2200

Scribblers Festival is an initiative of  
FORM: Building a State of Creativity

**FORM.**  
building a state of creativity

Teacher  
Notes

# TEACHER NOTES

# WORDS THINGS

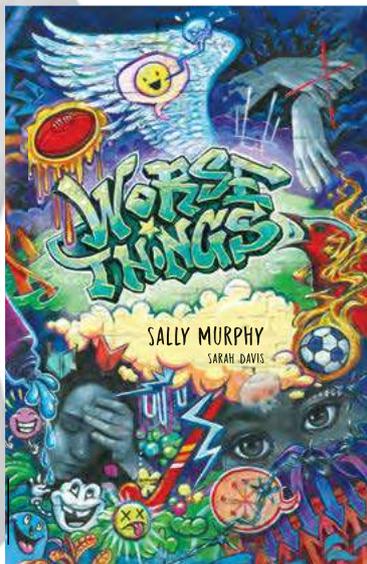
SALLY MURPHY

SARAH DAVIS

TEACHER NOTES BY  
LEONIE JORDAN

WALKER & BOOKS

# WORSE THINGS



*Worse Things*  
By Sally Murphy  
Illustrated by Sarah Davis  
9781760651657

From the award-winning author of *Pearl Verses the World* and *Toppling* comes a story about connections, the ways they are made and what happens when they are lost.

*When you're part of the team the sideline is a place of refuge of rest of reprieve. But when you're out of the team the sideline changes. Suddenly it's the loneliest place of them all.*

After a devastating football injury, Blake struggles to cope with life on the sideline. Jolene, a gifted but conflicted hockey player, wants nothing more than for her dad to come home. And soccer-loving refugee, Amed, wants to belong. On the surface, it seems they have nothing in common. Except sport.

A touching and inspirational story about the things that bind us all.

## Sally Murphy on writing *Worse Things*

This story came from watching my two sons play and umpire sport, and their resultant adventures with broken bones. I wanted to explore the frustrations of being left out of the sport you love, as well as other issues around sport. When I started writing, I found that the characters wanted me to really explore how sport can impact our sense of belonging. – and how that sense goes well beyond sport.

## Sarah Davis on illustrating *Worse Things*

Because Sally's verse puts us right inside the characters' heads, I wanted to avoid representing how they looked and instead to reflect their inner worlds – their emotions and preoccupations. Graffiti art was a great way to do this, since as a style it has a lot of energy and mixes realistic and symbolic images together. Throughout the book you can find symbols and motifs that echo the thoughts and experiences of Jolene, Ahmed and Blake.

## About the Author

SALLY MURPHY grew up loving books, babies and beaches, and nothing much has changed. Sally is a university academic, teaching teachers how to teach. Sally's Books with Walker Books include *Pearl Verses the World* (illustrated by Heather Potter) which won the children's book category for the Indie Book of the Year awards, 2009; was awarded Honour Book in the Younger Readers category, CBCA Book of the Year Awards, 2010; and won the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards, 2010, Best Book for Language Development, Upper Primary (8-12 years).



## About the Illustrator

SARAH DAVIS is a multiple award-winning illustrator, and associate art director for Walker Books Australia. She won the CBCA Crichton Illustration Award for her first picture book, *Mending Lucille*, in 2009, and since then has gone on to illustrate more than 40 titles, in a range of styles and genres. Sarah is also proud to be an ambassador for Room to Read.



## About the Author of these Notes

These resources were created by Leonie Jordan. Leonie is a former Secondary School English Teacher and Children's & Youth Librarian who has presented at the State Library of NSW on numerous occasions. She has worked for a number of publishing companies including Walker Books Australia and Allen & Unwin, and regularly reviews and creates test material for Educational Assessment Australia, writers of the NAPLAN, ICAS and GAT assessments.



## Level

- Primary: Years 4-6 / Ages 9-12

## General Capabilities

- Literacy
- Information and Communication Technology Capability
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding
- Intercultural Understanding

## Cross-Curriculum Priorities

Australia & Australia's Relationship with Asia – Organising Ideas OI.5-OI.8

	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
<b>ENGLISH</b>			
<b>Language</b>	ACELA1488 ACELA1489 ACELA1490 ACELA1491 ACELA1493 ACELA1496	ACELA1501 ACELA1504 ACELA1505 ACELA1508 ACELA1512	ACELA1517 ACELA1518 ACELA1520 ACELA1522 ACELA1525
<b>Literature</b>	ACELT1602 ACELT1603 ACELT1604 ACELT1605 ACELT 1606 ACELT 1607 ACELT1794	ACELT1608 ACELT1609 ACELT1795 ACELT1610 ACELT1611 ACELT1612 ACELT1798	ACELT1613 ACELT1614 ACELT1615 ACELT1616 ACELT1617 ACELT1618 ACELT1800
<b>Literacy</b>	ACELY1688 ACELY1689 ACELY1690 ACELY1692 ACELY1694 ACELY1695 ACELY1697	ACELY1698 ACELY1699 ACELY1796 ACELY1700 ACELY1701 ACELY1702 ACELY1704	ACELY1709 ACELY1816 ACELY1710 ACELY1711 ACELY1712 ACELY1713 ACELY1801 ACELY1714

Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian Curriculum ([www.australiancurriculum.edu.au](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au)). However, this is not an exhaustive list of Australian Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text. Information is current as of January 2020.



## Themes

A range of themes are explored in *Worse Things* including:

- Change
- Connection and belonging
- Exclusion and alienation
- Resilience/overcoming adversity
- Healing and recovery
- Family
- Parental expectations
- Friendship
- Death and bereavement
- Refugee experiences
- Sport

## Activities & Discussion Questions

Choose from the following questions and activities.

### Before Reading

- View the front cover of *Worse Things*. Based on the title and cover illustration, what do you expect the book will be about? What genre and tone will it have? Where might it be set? Who do you think the main character/s will be?

### After Reading

#### Plot

- Retell the story to a friend from memory. Then, look at the worksheet showing the symbols used at the start of each chapter. How does your retelling change? Do you include more information? Do you focus on things other than what happened; for examples, themes and mood?
- Create a graph or diagram depicting the main plot points of the story. Use different colours to represent the various characters and the points where their stories interconnect.

## Language Style & Structure

- American verse novelist Virginia Euwer Wolff said in a 2001 interview with *The Horn Book*: “Writing my prose in funny-shaped lines does not render it poetry.” In your opinion, what does make a piece of writing poetry?
- Choose a section from *Worse Things* and read it aloud, pausing at the end of each line. Then, reread the section, pausing only at commas and full stops as you would in a traditional novel. How does the story feel different when read in these ways?
- *Worse Things* is a verse novel, meaning it is written in free verse, a form of unrhymed poetry that tries to mimic how people speak. How would the novel have been different if Sally Murphy had used a traditional prose style (i.e. the book was written like a traditional novel)? Do you think you would have enjoyed the story as much? Why or why not? Why do you think verse novels have become so popular with young readers?
- A post on the Poetry Box blog which looks at two of Sally Murphy’s earlier books offers this definition of a verse novel: “You could think of it as one very long poem! But it is more than that. It is a story in the shape of a poem. Think of it as a very long story with line breaks (so the words don’t go to the end of the line). This gives the story RHYTHM! You might find lots of other poetry features as well (similes, metaphor, rhyme, alliteration, repetition).” Discuss this definition as a class. Is there anything you would add to it? (You may like to look at the full blog post at <http://nzpoetrybox.wordpress.com/2014/05/13/dear-sally-murphy-i-love-your-novels-in-verse/>)
- *Worse Things* uses a first-person narrative style (“I”) and free verse to tell the stories of the three characters. Choose a challenging experience from your own life and try recounting it in a similar style. Alternatively, you may like to choose a section from a prose novel you’ve read and rewrite it as verse. Try to experiment with some of the language techniques Sally Murphy uses such as metaphorical language and repetition.



- Interview a classmate about their interests and the type of books they like to read. Then, research verse novels on the internet and suggest three verse novels they might enjoy. For each book include the title, author, year it was published, the blurb and a brief explanation of why you suggested it for them.
- Read another verse novel by Sally Murphy or a different author. (A list of suggested verse novels for middle grade readers is provided at the end of these notes.) Draw a Venn diagram showing similarities and differences with *Worse Things* in terms of subject matter, themes, setting, language style, structure, character and point of view.
- Definitions are interspersed throughout the novel, with each word, its pronunciation, class and definition taking up a full page; for instance, “LONELY / [Lone\*ly] (Adj.) / To stand apart / sit apart / be apart / but not a part.” (p. 39) Locate all the definitions in the book. Although they are presented as they would be in a dictionary, do you think they are real dictionary definitions or that Sally Murphy wrote them herself? Why? If Sally Murphy did write them, how do they differ from a standard dictionary definition? Why do you think she has included them? Discuss the way these definitions create a sort of “word collage” similar to Sarah Davis’s illustration style.
- Write your own short story incorporating three definitions. Include two copied from the dictionary and one which you write yourself. Exchange stories with a classmate and see if they can work out which definition is yours and which are from the dictionary!
- People often describe events in terms of what they see. However, the opening section of the book (p. 9-11) focuses on sound, with Blake’s experience of being injured in the football game conveyed by what he hears around him. Think of a recent experience in your life. Write a poem describing this experience where you focus on a sense other than sight; i.e. sound, smell, touch or taste.
- Analyse the author’s use of language techniques such as metaphor (“his smile is plastered on for my benefit” p. 31), simile (“poems like gems / words like priceless pearls” p. 45), alliteration (“curios / to be collected / and coveted” p. 46-47), rhyme (“scoring / soaring” p. 35) and repetition (“I do not understand / this crazy game / ... I do not understand much at all.” p. 37) Work in small groups with each group allocated one section of the book to find examples in. Share these with the rest of the class.
- Sally Murphy plays with sentence structure throughout the book, alternating between long sentences, short sentences, single words and phrases, and using line breaks to shape rhythm and pace; for instance, “I score / again. / We win / again. / They hate me / again.” (p. 117) Photocopy a double-page from the novel. Using coloured highlighters or pencils, highlight each sentence in a different colour to the previous one. (You can just alternate between two colours if you prefer.) What do you notice about the way the sentence length varies?
- Colloquial language and idiom is used to establish the contemporary Australian setting and the age of the characters; for instance, “bludgers” (p. 54) and “It’s not his fault my life is crap” (p. 122) Is there any character who doesn’t use colloquial language? Why do you think this might be?

## Setting

- *Worse Things* is set in the NSW town of Cowan. Locate this town on a map.
- What words would you use to describe Cowan, based on the book? In what ways is Cowan similar and different to the place you live? How different is Cowan to Amed’s previous home?

## Character

- Which of the characters in the book do you empathise with most? Why?



- Discuss the way that the voices of the three narrators are both similar to and distinct from each other. Are there clues as to who is speaking, other than what they're describing? For instance, Jolene's sections are often structured in lists (p. 58-59) while Amed uses simple, formal language and fewer contractions ("You are at the middle of this" p.17)
- Choose one of the three narrators and write an additional section of the novel, to take place a year after the funeral. Think about ways you can recreate their voice through structure and language.
- Joy Alexander writes, "The most prominent feature of the verse-novel is voice; it is ideal for the audio-book." Working in pairs, choose a section of the novel to record as if you were making an audio book. Think about how you can use your voice to bring the character to life through pace, volume, expression and other vocal techniques. You may also like to use sound effects or music to add atmosphere.
- Write a monologue in the voice of a character other than Blake, Amed or Jolene. Some possible subjects could be Amed's aunt, Jolene's mother or Blake's football teammates. Perform your monologue to the class using at least one prop or piece of costuming to help establish your character.

## Key Themes

- Write a letter to Sally Murphy telling her what you learnt from the novel. You may like to send your letter to her via her publisher, Walker Books Australia.
- Create a mind-map depicting the main themes of the novel. Draw a picture or icon to represent each theme.
- Locate quotes to illustrate each of the themes. Use these to write an essay exploring the main ideas of the novel.

## Alienation and Exclusion

- "I watch / and I wait / for the day / when perhaps I will feel / that I belong here / in this strange town / in this strange land." (p. 26) In what ways do the three narrators each experience exclusion?
- "Now I'm just me. / But I'm not really sure who I am / without footy." (p. 133) Blake has to rediscover his identity without being a football player in the same way that Jolene must rediscover herself without her father and Amed must rediscover himself in a new country with a new family. What are some things that you consider central to who you are and would it difficult to be without?
- Amed refers to finding himself "kept separate again by the invisible fence of language." (p. 69) How does Amed's language serve as a barrier to belonging? In what way is this similar to what Blake experiences with his "broken wing ... flapping in a sling" (p. 77)?
- "You don't know / what it is like / to live with memories / darker than midnight. / You don't know / what it is like / to have nobody to talk to / about those memories." (p. 75) How does talking to people help with healing? With a friend, discuss a time when someone helped you to deal with something difficult.
- Amed says, "At school / there are many many books. / Rows and rows of shelves / in the library. / I would like to read them / absorb their stories / their lessons / but my English is poor / and I can barely / make out their titles. (p. 93 -94) How does Jolene's relationship with books differ from Amed's?
- Imagine that you had to move to a country where you didn't speak the language. What challenges might you face? What would you find most difficult about this?
- Research some of the challenges child refugees like Amed confront as they start life in a new country. Using the information you've found, create a poster promoting empathy for refugees.



- “People think your life is perfect. / They just presume. / Money / brains / possessions. / You have it all. / They don’t notice the aloof mum / or the absentee dad.” (p. 105) What does this reveal about the way we judge people we don’t know? Talk with a friend about a time when you’ve been judged by others. What was this like? Is there anyone you might be making assumptions about?

## Connection and Belonging

- Jolene says, “I belong here. / I’m myself here. / Cowan is home.” (p. 87) while Amed hopes “that Cowan / will not always seem so strange / and one day I will call it home.” (p. 147) How important is home in having a sense of belonging? What things make a place your home? In what ways does Cowan become Amed’s home by the end of the book?
- “We laugh together. / We sing together. / We can be quiet together / and no one thinks there’s anything / wrong with that.” (p. 102) Although Jolene is initially excluded by her hockey teammates, her friendship with Jia, Sasha and Daisy gives her a sense of belonging. Reread pages 102-103 then use this as inspiration for your own poem about why you love your friends or family.
- “We have no words for her today / but we are here / to show her she is not alone.” (p. 201) How do Sarah Davis’s illustrations complement the text to enhance this theme of connection?
- “Today he is struggling / with a compass and pencil / his arm in a splint / and I offer to help. / I’m not a cripple / he mutters / and I almost turn back to my own work / but instead I just say / I know. / But you’re making a mess of that. / And he lets me help / even says a grudging thanks / when we’re done.” (p. 134) In what ways do each of the characters help others in the novel?
- “The words / cannot express / my amazement / that such a book as this / exists. / Books for grown-ups / for boys like me / for people who

have no words / no voice.” (p. 154-155) Make a list of books in your school or public library that would be suitable for students such as Amed.

- “Football? I ask / holding the ball towards him. / Come?” (p. 186) Sport is an important way that people in the novel connect without language. What are some other ways that people from different cultures can connect?
- As a class, discuss the sports that different class members play. What do they enjoy about these sports? Make a chart showing the popularity of each sport.
- Create a mobile symbolising how the different characters in the book are connected.

## Change/Healing and Recovery

- “I loved him, you know. / Almost as much as I love you. / Those words. / Those words from my heartless mother / are what it takes / to release the dam. / My tears flow. / They flow for my dad. / They flow for my mum. / They flow for me. / Mum cries too / and at last we are together.” (p. 189-190) Losing her father enables Jolene to develop a closer, more authentic relationship with her mother. What are some other ways that characters in the book experience growth or positive change as a result of their suffering?
- “There are worse things in life / than a grumpy mum. / I look over at Mum / waiting alone near the car. / A dead dad is one of them.” (p. 173) Each of the characters in the book is confronted with their own “worse thing”, and not only survives the experience, but is expanded or strengthened by it in some way. What are some of the things you worry about happening in your life? How does the book help you deal with these fears?
- Coping with change is one of the key themes of the novel. Think about some difficult changes you’ve experienced in your life; for instance, changing school, moving house, the death of a pet or family member or getting a new sibling. Choose one of these changes and design a



pamphlet which aims to help other young people who may be going through a similar experience. Arrange your ideas in short sections such as “Background information”, “Tips for coping” and “Where you can learn more”. You may even like to include your own experiences as a case study or real-life example.

## Family

- Discuss the way each character’s relationship with their family changes over the course of the novel.
  - Read pages 58-59 where Jolene’s list of things she would rather do than play hockey is contrasted with her list of things her mother would prefer her to do (nothing). Are there any ways you feel your parents want different things for you then you want for yourself?
  - Jolene says of her father, “I want to tell him / I need help too / ... but I never do. / He’s too busy saving the world / to save me.” (p.128-129) How is her relationship with her father different to her relationship with her mother? In what ways is it similar?
  - “She looks at the framed photograph on her lap. / In it there are two smiling faces – hers and mine. / It was time it was framed, I say. / We must have a family photo on display.” (p.197 -198) How do Amed and his aunt grow as a new family throughout the novel?
- Photocopy the front cover. Use arrows and labels to identify different parts of the cover and explain how these relate to the story. Remember, not all of the cover elements relate to events that happen in the book: some of them could be symbolic or suggest the setting or mood.
  - Create an alternative cover for the novel. Present your cover to the class, explaining how you used visual elements such as colour, contrast, composition, framing, font and symbolism to engage readers and convey the key ideas.
  - A visual symbol or icon is used at the start of each chapter. For instance, chapter 1 begins with the image of a lightning bolt. Discuss the way these symbols relate to the written story.
  - Throughout the book, the three protagonists come to be associated with different symbols: Blake with a bird, Amed with an eye and Jolene with a book. Why do you think Davis has chosen each of these symbols?
  - Choose another book you have enjoyed reading and create symbols to represent each of the characters. Present these to the class and explain why you have chosen them.
  - Examine the illustrations which accompany the written text, discussing Davis’s style and use of visual techniques. How do these illustrations support the text? Do they expand or introduce any ideas that the written text doesn’t?

## Visual Literacy

- Sarah Davis uses a collage style on the book cover, incorporating elements of street art/graffiti, charcoal sketches, cartoons, colour illustration, symbols and naïve or representational art. Discuss the composition of this cover. What things do you notice first and what do you notice only when you look closely? Why do you think this is? Consider such elements as size, positioning, colour and style.
- Choose one section of the novel and illustrate it in your own style.



## Additional Resources

### Information on Sally Murphy

- Sally Murphy's website: <http://sallymurphy.com.au>
- An interview with Sally Murphy: <https://australianchildrenspetry.com.au/2015/03/04/interview-with-sally-murphy/>
- Sally Murphy discusses why she writes "sad" novels: <http://readingforaustralia.blogspot.com.au/2014/05/why-so-sad-by-sally-murphy.html>
- Sally Murphy discusses why and how she writes verse novels: <https://australianchildrenspetry.com.au/2014/09/18/in-verse-why-and-how-i-write-verse-novels/>

### Children's Poetry Websites

- Australian Children's Poetry: <https://australianchildrenspetry.com.au/>
- Poetry4Kids: <http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/poetry-writing-lessons/>
- Poetry Box: <https://nzpoetrybox.wordpress.com/>
- Poetry for Children blog: <http://poetryforchildren.blogspot.com/>
- Red Room Poetry: <https://redroomcompany.org/>

### Quotes on Verse Novels

The following quotes may be useful for teachers to think about when discussing verse novels with students. Source information for each quote is provided in the section below

- "... an emergent typical verse-novel house-style can be identified. The entire story is told in the form of non-rhyming free verse. Very often each section is less than a page in length and only rarely more than two or three pages. Usually each of these sections is given a title to orientate the reader, which may indicate the speaker, or contextualise the content, or point to the core theme. The form lends itself to building each section around a single perspective or thought or voice or incident." - Joy Alexander
- "One of the things that particularly appeals to me is the surrounding white space on a page. It helps set up the poem, it allows space for impact, and a poem can even dance on the page as word placement spills over, up and down the page. For me, this is where a single poem or line on a page can stop me in my tracks and the white space allows me as the reader, to pause and connect with the narrator of the poem. There is a beauty in this form. Authors using this form know how important the last line of a poem can impact the reader. It can and often does pack a punch so hard that as readers we stop, unable for a moment to go on, while we take in what we have just read." - Desna Wallace
- "The verse novel must, in fact, do double-duty, having all the elements of both genres. This means a verse novel must have the music and imagery that we find in poetry and at the same time character development and story structure of a novel. Verse novelists must write good poetry and a good story, and they must combine the two seamlessly in order for the verse novel to work." - Gabriela Pereira

### Further Information on Verse Novels for Children and Young Adults

- \*Note: Some of the novels discussed deal with challenging themes and may be more suitable for older readers.



- Joy Alexander, *Children's Literature in Education* Vol. 36 No. 3, "The Verse-novel: A New Genre": [www.longwood.edu/staff/miskecjm/381verse.pdf](http://www.longwood.edu/staff/miskecjm/381verse.pdf)
- Sherryl Clark, *Australian Children's Poetry*, "How to Read A Verse Novel": <https://australianchildrenspoetry.com.au/articles/how-to-read-a-verse-novel/>
- Kelly Jensen, *Bookriot*, "100 Must Read YA Novels in Verse": [bookriot.com/2016/03/22/100-must-read-ya-books-in-verse/](http://bookriot.com/2016/03/22/100-must-read-ya-books-in-verse/)
- Kirkus Reviews, "Novels in Verse for Children": [kirkusreviews.com/lists/novels-verse-children/](http://kirkusreviews.com/lists/novels-verse-children/)
- Gabriela Pereira, *diyMFA*, "What is a Verse Novel?": <https://diymfa.com/reading/what-is-a-verse-novel>
- Sonya Sones, *SonyaSones.com*, "Some Novels in Verse": [sonyasones.com/imreading/novelsinverse.html](http://sonyasones.com/imreading/novelsinverse.html)
- Melissa Taylor, *Imagination Soup*, "14 Novels in Verse (That Get Kids Reading)": <https://imaginationsoup.net/12-novels-in-verse-that-get-kids-reading/>
- Sarah Tregay, "List of Middle Grade Novels in Verse": <https://www.sarahtregay.com/middlegrade.html>
- Desna Wallace, *The Sapling*, "Verse Novels for Children & YA": [thesapling.co.nz/single-post/2019/11/14/Book-List-Verse-Novels-for-Children-and-YA](http://thesapling.co.nz/single-post/2019/11/14/Book-List-Verse-Novels-for-Children-and-YA)
- Kathryn Apel, *On Track*
- Katherine Applegate, *Home of the Brave*
- Jeannine Atkins, *Finding Wonders: Three Girls Who Changed Science*
- Sherryl Clark, *Farm Kid\**
- Sherryl Clark, *Motormouth\**
- Sherryl Clark, *Sixth Grade Style Queen (Not!)\**
- Sharon Creech, *Hate That Cat*
- Sharon Creech, *Heartbeat*
- Sharon Creech, *Love That Dog*
- Andrea Davis Pinkney, *The Red Pencil*
- Steven Herrick, *Naked Bunyip Dancing\**
- Steven Herrick, *Pookie Aleera is Not My Boyfriend\**
- Karen Hesse, *Aleutian Sparrow*
- Karen Hesse, *Witness*
- Karen Hesse, *Out of the Dust*
- Marilyn Hilton, *Full Cicada Moon*
- Ron Koertge, *Shakespeare Bats Clean Up*
- Ron Koertge, *Shakespeare Makes the Playoffs*
- Thanhha Lai, *Inside Out and Back Again*
- Lorraine Marwood, *Ratwhiskers and Me\**
- Lorraine Marwood, *Star Jumps\**
- Sally Morgan, *Sister Heart\**
- Hugh Montgomery, *The Voyage of the Arctic Tern*
- Sally Murphy, *Pearl Verses the World\**
- Sally Murphy, *Roses are Blue\**
- Sally Murphy, *Toppling\**
- Betsy Rosenthal, *Looking for Me*
- Eileen Spinelli, *Birdie*
- Eileen Spinelli, *Dancing Pancake*
- Caroline Starr Rose, *May B.*
- Jacqueline Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming*
- Jacqueline Woodson, *Locomotion*

## List of Suggested Verse Novels for Middle Grade Readers

- Kwame Alexander, *Booked*
- Kwame Alexander, *The Crossover*
- Kathryn Apel, *Bully on the Bus*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Worse Things Plot Activity

The pictures below are used at the start of each chapter in the novel.

Complete this activity in pairs.

1. Retell the story of *Worse Things* from your memory (that is, without referring to the pictures).
2. Now, tell the story again using the pictures as a guide. Is your second telling different? In what way? Do you remember more? Do you focus on things other than plot, such as theme or mood?



# Scribblers Festival

4 – 8 MAY 2022

## Katrina Nannestad



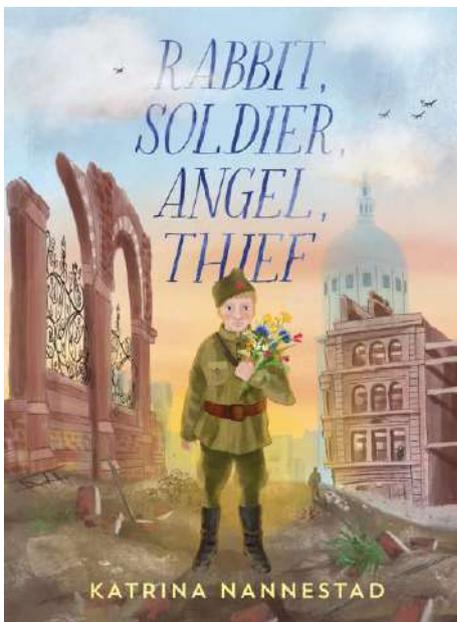
Credit: Rebecca Rocks

Katrina Nannestad is an award-winning Australian author. Her books include the CBCA-shortlisted *We Are Wolves*, *The Girl Who Brought Mischief*, the Travelling Bookshop series, the Girl, the Dog and the Writer series, the Olive of Groves series, the Red Dirt Diaries series, the Lottie Perkins series, and her latest historical novel *Rabbit, Soldier, Angel, Thief*.

Katrina grew up in country New South Wales, in a neighbourhood stuffed full of happy children. Her adult years have been spent raising boys, teaching, daydreaming and pursuing her love of stories. Katrina celebrates family, friendship and belonging in her writing. She also loves creating stories that bring joy or hope to other people's lives. Katrina now lives on a hillside in central Victoria with her husband, a silly whippet called Olive and a mob of kangaroos.

## Rabbit, Soldier, Angel, Thief

Harper Collins



[www.katrinanannestad.com](http://www.katrinanannestad.com)  
[@katrina\\_nannestad](https://twitter.com/katrina_nannestad)

Award-winning writer Katrina Nannestad transports us to Russia and the Great Patriotic War and into the life of Sasha, a soldier at only six years old ...

Wood splinters and Mama screams and the nearest soldier seizes her roughly by the arms. My sister pokes her bruised face out from beneath the table and shouts, 'Run, Sasha! Run!'

So I run. I run like a rabbit.

It's spring, 1942. The sky is blue, the air is warm and sweet with the scent of flowers. And then everything is gone. The flowers, the proud geese, the pretty wooden houses, the friendly neighbours. Only Sasha remains.

But one small boy, alone in war-torn Russia, cannot survive. One small boy without his home cannot survive. What that small boy needs is an army.

From the award-winning author of *We Are Wolves* comes the story of a young boy who becomes a soldier at six, fighting in the only way he can - with love. But is love ever enough when the world is at war?

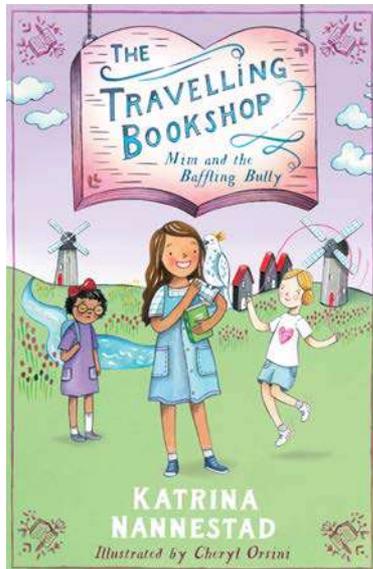
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building a state of creativity

# Classroom Resources



**ISBN:**  
9780733341656

**NOTES BY:**  
Bec Kavanagh & Jemma Myors

**PUBLICATION DATE:**  
August 2021

## The Travelling Bookshop (Book 1): Mim and the Baffling Bully

Katrina Nannestad; illustrated by Cheryl Orsini

### BOOK SUMMARY

The right book might just change your life...

Mim Cohen roams the world in a travelling bookshop, with her dad and brother and a horse called Flossy. Flossy leads them where she will, to the place where they're needed most... the place where the perfect book will find its way home.

Now Mim has arrived in a pretty Dutch village where she meets Willemina, a kind and gentle child, who is being bullied by a girl named Gerda.

Mim knows they're here to help Willemina. To change her life. To make her strong and brave and happy.

If only Dad would find her the right book. If only he would stop giving everyone else the wrong book!

From the beloved author of *The Girl, the Dog and the Writer in Rome* and *We Are Wolves* comes an enchanting series for young readers.

### KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ACELA1462
- ACELA1464
- ACELT1589
- ACELT1590
- ACELT1593
- ACELY1667

### THEMES

- Family
- Belonging
- Identity
- Resilience
- Humour

**Recommended Ages:** 7+

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# Classroom Resources

## Classroom Activities

1. Katrina Nannestad has said that, 'The dream of a travelling home has stuck with me over the years – a bus, a balloon, a barge, a horse-drawn caravan, a caboose at the back of a train.'
  - What would your dream home be? Think big – it could be anything, anywhere!
  - What would you fill it with?
  - Who would live there with you?
  - The Travelling Bookshop has a special kind of magic around books and language. What special magic would your dream home have?
  - Draw a picture of your dream home from the outside and a map of what it looks like on the inside.
2. Mim knows that the right books in the right hands can change lives, because books are magic. Bring a book to class that has changed your life.
  - Share your favourite part of the book with the class and talk about why it's so special to you.
    - When did you first read it?
    - How did it make you feel?
    - What else was happening in your life at the time?
    - Is there someone in your class who you think would benefit from reading the book?
3. Mim collects words, turning them this way and that until she finds the right way to look at them to discover something new. 'Worms away', from the label on the box used to bully Willemina, becomes a sign for earthworms on holiday.
  - What is special about the words Mim collects? Why does she choose those particular words?
  - Find some words around the house and bring them to class – you might find words on labels or boxes, or in the newspaper. Try to find words that are interesting or meaningful to you.
  - Put everyone's words together into a hat and shake them up. Everyone in the class will now draw two words out of the hat (no peeking!) and write a story inspired by them.
  - What does Nat collect? Gerda? Does Willemina collect anything?
4. Why does Gerda pick on Willemina?
  - Does this make it okay?
  - What are three other things Gerda could have done to express what she was feeling?
5. Nat's act of kindness – when he offers Willemina his tutu to replace her worm-encrusted skirt – makes Willemina's day. How does her mood change when he gives her the tutu?
  - Share three acts of kindness that you've performed recently.
6. Mim makes a list of the things that make her happy.
  - What are five things that have made you happy today?
  - Do you think Willemina is happy?
  - What about Gerda? Why?
  - What does Mim's dad say about unhappy people?
  - What book would you give to someone feeling unhappy to help them? Why?

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# Classroom Resources

7. It seems like Mim's dad plays with Mim and Nat instead of teaching them, but they actually learn about many important things. List some of the different concepts Mim and Nat learn while playing with their father.
  - Design a lesson that seems to be just about having fun and playing, but actually teaches children an important maths or science concept.
8. Throughout *The Travelling Bookshop: Mim and the Baffling Bully*, the author gives us so much imagery that it's easy for us to picture what it's like to be in a small town in the Netherlands, even if we haven't been there.
  - List all of the Dutch elements that the author tells us about (don't forget all the different kinds of food!).
  - Which three elements do you think she has described the best? What techniques has she used?
  - Imagine that you are describing your classroom to someone who has never seen a school before. Select the five elements that you think are most important to being able to imagine a classroom, and write descriptions of them using at least two different kinds of imagery in each one.
9. At the end of the novel, Willemina writes Mim a letter, thanking her for being such an amazing friend. Write a letter to someone you care about, thanking them for being your friend and explaining what it is that makes them someone you're happy to have in your life.

## About the Author & Illustrator

Katrina Nannestad is an award-winning Australian author. Her books include *We Are Wolves*, *The Girl Who Brought Mischief*, *The Girl, the Dog and the Writer* series, the *Olive of Groves* series, the *Red Dirt Diaries* series, the *Lottie Perkins* series and *Bungalow Creek*. *We Are Wolves* is shortlisted in the 2021 CBCA Book of the Year Awards. Katrina grew up in country New South Wales in a neighbourhood stuffed full of happy children. Her adult years have been spent teaching, raising boys, perfecting her recipe for chocolate-chip bickies and pursuing her love of stories. She now lives near Bendigo with her family and an exuberant black whippet called Olive. Learn more at [www.katrinanannestad.com](http://www.katrinanannestad.com)

Cheryl Orsini is the much-loved illustrator of *The Fairy Dancers*, *The Tales of Mrs Mancini* and *The Magic Bookshop*. She has illustrated more than thirty children's books, and her work regularly appears in magazines and exhibitions. For more, visit [www.cherylorcini.com](http://www.cherylorcini.com)

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# Scribblers Festival

4 – 8 MAY 2022

## Oliver Phommavanh



Oliver is Thai-Australian writer for children and a stand-up comedian. Oliver has worked as a primary school teacher and now spends his time writing and sharing his writing passion with kids and engaging them with humour. His first book for upper primary, *Thai-riffic!* was published to critical acclaim. More recent titles include *Don't Follow Vee* and *Brain Freeze*, and his latest book, *What About Thao?* is due for release in May 2022.

## What About Thao?

Penguin Random House

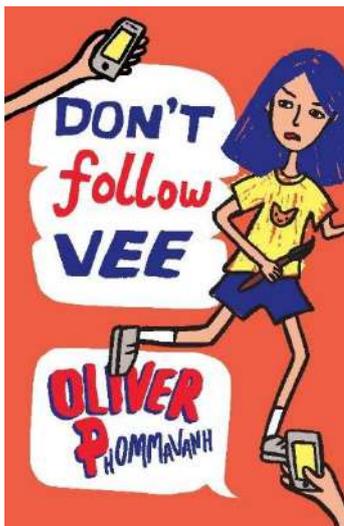
The next middle-grade novel for 10+ from the author of *Thai-riffic*, *Con-nerd* and *The Other Christy* about a Vietnamese-Australian boy in a small country town who has enjoyed being the only 'ethnic' kid at his tiny school – until Kadir arrives...

In his signature style, Oliver creates a fabulously diverse and heartfelt duo in Thao and Kadir and their sometimes hilarious and sometimes heart-wrenching dilemmas of culture and belonging in a remote rural community. Throw in some slam poetry and it might just end in a lifelong friendship and a whole lot more understanding.

## Don't Follow Vee

Penguin Random House

100,000 followers on Instagram - a young girl's dream, right? Wrong! Please DON'T FOLLOW VEE!  
*Another hilarious tale from the fabulously crazy Oliver P!*  
I'm not on social media, but everyone knows all about my life - from birth - thanks to Mum's Instagram, *The Chronicles of Vee*. It used to be a bit of fun, but when we got to 100,000 followers, Mum's started to take it way too seriously.



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# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary to lower secondary  
(Years 5-7)

## CONTENTS

1. Plot summary 1
2. About the author 2
3. Author's inspiration 2
4. Characters 2
5. Themes and activities 3

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English; Science; Humanities & Social Sciences; Technologies; the Arts; Health & Physical Education.
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Information & Communication Technology Capability; Critical & Creative Thinking; Personal & Social Capability; Intercultural Understanding.
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Asia & Australia's Engagement with Asia.

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- A great starting point for a critical discussion about the place and influence of social media in our lives.
- To promote discussions about our own identity and how we perceive and express that.
- To promote discussions about our changing relationships with our parents and friends as we grow and change.

## THEMES

- Use of social media
- Identity
- Friendship
- Family

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia and  
Oliver Phommavanh

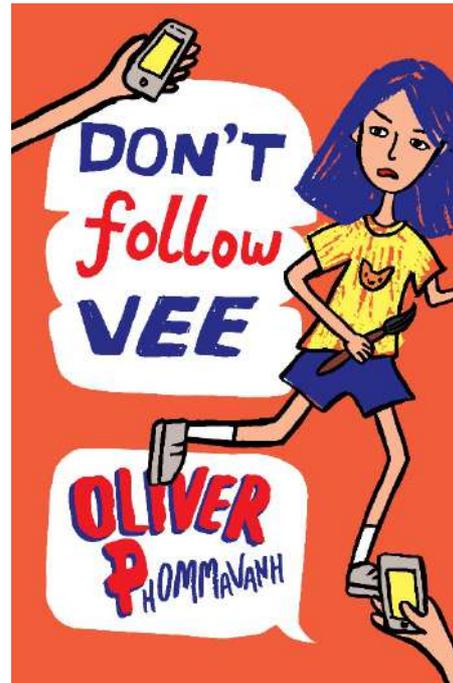
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9780143505747 (paperback);  
9781742538570 (ebook)

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## Don't Follow Vee Oliver Phommavanh

## PLOT SUMMARY

*I'm not on social media, but everyone knows all about my life - from birth - thanks to Mum's Instagram, The Chronicles of Vee. It used to be a bit of fun, but when we got to 100,000 followers, Mum's started to take it way too seriously.*

*My mission?*

*Stop my mum posting everything about my life.*

*How?*

*1. Become Anti-Vee and make my life unfollowable.*

*2. Make Mum's life more exciting than mine so she posts stuff about herself instead.*

*Easy, right?*

*That is, until Anti-Vee becomes more popular than the real Vee. Can I ever make Mum cool enough to start her own Instagram or am I doomed to have everyone following me forever?!*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Oliver is a young Thai-Australian writer for children. He has featured in school sessions and on panels at the Sydney Writers' Festival among many other appearances at festivals and writing events, plus in blogs. He has worked as a primary school teacher and a stand-up comedian, and now spends his time writing and sharing his writing passion with kids and engaging them with humour.

Oliver's first book, *Thai-riffic!*, drew much from his own life growing up as a Thai-Australian, and he has continued to focus on kids from different cultural backgrounds, dealing with the everyday fun and worries of school and family in his books *Con-nerd*, *Super Con-nerd*, *Punchlines*, *Thai-no-mite*, *The Other Christy*, *Natural Born Loser*, *Don't Follow Vee*, and *Ethan* in the *Stuff Happens* series.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Oliver says:

You would think that Instagram and social media would be my major starting point for this story.

But at its core, *Don't Follow Vee* is about embarrassing parents who love sharing their kids' lives with everyone. You may know it as 'sharenting'. Growing up, we were one of the first families in my neighbourhood with an actual video camera and a stills camera. My parents would shoot hours of videos of my sister and me. My mum has five thick photo albums of baby Oliver. There were plenty of photos of me naked. And my Mum didn't mind showing them to relatives, friends, and if she had the chance, random strangers!

Major embarrassment.

These days, sharenting is much more widespread because of cameras on mobile phones and social media. You can track a child's life from their birth and see them grow, month by month, day by day – all on their parent's Facebook or Instagram account.

It got me thinking, Facebook is a decade old now, so I'd imagine there would be kids who have their own lives up there for the world to see. I wonder how do they feel about that? What happens when they grow up and want to start their own profile someday? Can they ask their parents to take down those baby and childhood photos?

This dilemma is faced by Matty B, one of the characters in *Don't Follow Vee*.

I wanted to take this story further with Vee, who not only has her whole life up on her Mum's Instagram account, but has her real life revolve around creating good social media. Vee's Mum is always talking about

followers, taking Instagrammable photos and brainstorming ideas with Vee about what to post. It may be a little cynical, but I'd imagine that being an Instagram star requires a lot more thought than people realise.

I also wanted to explore Vee's close relationship with her Mum. They may be a team, but Vee feels like Mum needs to get out more and actually have her own life. Vee feels that her mum can be suffocating at times. I had a blast writing about this daughter and mother relationship.

Finally, there's the social media angle of this story. I've been visiting schools for years now and I can see the impact of social media on the kids. A lot of them want to be YouTubers. Some of them have already started their own channels. They consume so much content through YouTube these days so they know about Twitch (people who stream themselves playing video games). A few kids may be too young for Instagram or Facebook, but they are still interacting online through playing video games or chatting through other messaging apps. A friend is only a text away.

For the longest time, I avoided wanting to use Instagram or Facebook in *Don't Follow Vee* because it might quickly date the book (hello MySpace) But I think it's safe to say, bar something drastic, or the end of the world, that Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and insert the next big thing, are here to stay.

I was also wary of not wanting to preach to my readers about online awareness and the proper use of social media. I think the kids get enough of that kind of stuff at school, plus it's self-explanatory in the story without spelling it out. I wanted to set *Don't Follow Vee* in a world where social media and technology is a given, and fully integrated into kids' lives. Some of the little things like when Aaron talks about 'screen dollars' are borrowed from my own observations of how parents deal with their children when it comes to screen time and gadgets.

## CHARACTERS

### Vee

Veronica Lee (Vee) is a confident girl who is self-aware of her unique situation, being a minor Instagram celebrity. She's also had to learn to be resilient, after years of being hounded by kids who want a shout out or have a few seconds of fame. She is quite cautious about being associated with anyone's online account, not wanting to blur the lines between her real life and online persona. As a result, Vee is guarded about parts of her life, especially things that belong in her vault. She is proud to have things that none of her followers know about.



Vee enjoys calligraphy and playing games like most kids.

I based part of Vee's personality on one of my university friends, also named Vee (ha!). She's kind and a little cynical, with a snappy attitude, so I thought it would be a perfect fit for the book Veersion.

### Vee's Mum

Vee's Mum, Lynda, is a bubbly person who adores Vee (a little too much sometimes) and is just as witty as her daughter. In the story, Vee's Mum started a blog with some funny posts about being a single mother, which led to Instagram. She has an ordinary job but dreams of doing Instagram full-time, like her other Insta-mum idols. Vee's Mum falls into the category of an 'everyday Insta-mum', so she knows she can't compete with the ones who look like supermodels or travel around the world. She's very precious about what she posts and can become obsessed about each post, measuring her own happiness by how many likes she gets.

All of Mum's interests, like cooking and singing, are pushed aside for *The Chronicles of Vee* (except when she cooks for Vee). She doesn't have many friends outside of work, which is something that Mum wants to address.

### Annabelle

Annabelle Murphy is Vee's bestie, and one of the few friends in Vee's inner circle. Annabelle is shy and meek, always happy to go along with the flow. She loves making slime and watches slime videos on YouTube all the time. Annabelle gets her positivity from her parents, who have cheesy quotes all over their fridge.

### Bryan

Bryan is one of Vee's old primary school friends, and has always been around her life. He has an uncanny obsession with burgers, posting burgergrams on his Burger Bryan Instagram account. He is trying his best to be kind to everyone in the burgerlover community, but has to deal with a troll who is closer to him than he thinks.

Bryan is basically me as a burger fan and burgergrammer. It was easy writing about how Bryan sets up his burgergrams and how he rates his burgers, because that's what I do on a weekly basis. I've been lucky to be a part of a caring burger community online, so it's definitely something that anyone can start on their own.

### Matty B

Matty is Bryan's good friend and also helps him with his burgergrams, having access to Burger Bryan's account. Matty is facing his own battles, as he's getting teased by his classmates because of his mum has all his

baby photos up on Facebook. Matty has his own plan to get revenge on his mum by posting all of her old childhood photos online.

### Emily and Hassan

Emily was one of the most popular kids back in Vee's old primary school, and has continued that into her first year of high school with her trendy fashion posts and being quite active on social media. She is always annoying Vee in real life, with snarky comments. Emily would do anything to be in Vee's position and can't stand Vee for not taking advantage of her fame.

Hassan is a gamer who streams online, and is one of many of Vee's classmates who wants a shout out to her or plug for more followers. Hassan gets himself in trouble often, thanks to his big mouth.

## THEMES AND ACTIVITIES

### Use of social media

#### Activities

- Discuss how you use social media and technology in everyday life. How many hours per day do use technology?
- Compare the rules of using technology at school and home. Do you agree with them? What would you change?

### Identity/Real life and online persona

#### Activities

- Create a Venn diagram of Vee in real life and online. Is Vee being herself online? Would you be yourself online? What parts of your life would you keep away from social media?
- Discuss: why would people pretend to be someone else online?
- Vee has a vault where she keep her precious possessions. What kind of things would you put in your own vault? (Be as specific or as general as you like)
- Why is Vee so determined to keep things out of her online persona?
- Do you have an obsession like Bryan's burgers or Annabelle's slime-making? Would you ever go on Youtube or online for it? Design a fake YouTube, Instagram account or website on paper about your obsession/interest.
- Start a blog or diary/journal about your interests and post/write about something over the course of the study.



- Vee's Mum has Trysday Fridays where Vee tries something new. What kind of things would you try for the first time? What is something that you would never, *ever* do? Track how Mum feels about the fun run over the course of the book. What changes her mind?

## Friendships

### Activities

- Compare how friends have interacted with each other over the years. Create a timeline of communication methods and uses. From letters and telegrams to the home phone, mobiles, chat programs and social media.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using phones and gadgets to communicate with friends?

## Families

### Activities

- How do your families embarrass you? Create an 'embarrometer' where you list and rate some moments on a scale of 1 (not so embarrassing) to 10 (major embarrassment).
- Discuss how your family share photos and videos online. Would you feel like Matty and be embarrassed about having baby photos up?
- Vee comes up with a list of things that annoy her Mum. Make a list of things you sometimes do that are annoying for your parents or family. Make the same list about things your parents or other family members sometimes do that you find annoying.
- Have a family meeting and suggest you all do the exercise above. Without showing or discussing them with each other, try each week to stop doing one annoying thing on your list. Come back together after a month and talk about how it went.



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Don't Follow Vee	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143505747	3-6	\$16.99		
Natural Born Loser	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143505730	3-6	\$16.99		
The Other Christy	Oliver Phommavanh	9781760890933	3-6	\$16.99		
Thai-riffic!	Oliver Phommavanh	9781760890568	3-6	\$16.99		
Thai-no-mite!	Oliver Phommavanh	9781760890926	3-6	\$16.99		
Con-nerd	Oliver Phommavanh	9781760890896	3-6	\$16.99		
Super Con-nerd	Oliver Phommavanh	9781760890919	3-6	\$16.99		
Punchlines	Oliver Phommavanh	9781760890902	3-6	\$16.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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<p>NAME: _____</p> <p>SCHOOL: _____</p> <p>ADDRESS: _____</p> <p>STATE: _____</p> <p>POSTCODE: _____</p> <p>TEL: _____</p> <p>EMAIL: _____</p> <p>ACCOUNT NO.: _____</p> <p>PURCHASE ORDER NO.: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>PLEASE SEND ORDER FORMS TO YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION SUPPLIER.</p>
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# Scribblers Festival



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