

KEY STAGE 3

LOOK BEYOND YOUR WORLD

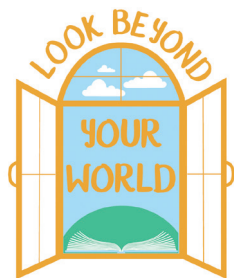


POWERFUL STORIES FOR INSPIRING MINDS

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FOR 2020

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

2020



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Introduction

Welcome to the 2020 edition of **Look Beyond Your World**.

Books can open up new worlds to children, enabling them to see and experience the lives of others, which may be very different from our own – or surprisingly similar. It's more important than ever in 2020 to nurture empathy and encourage understanding among children.

This Look Beyond Our World booklet has been updated for 2020 and contains information on eleven titles for Key Stage 3, each of which has a story to tell that is particularly relevant to our world today. Books pick children up and transport them somewhere different, and they may return from those journeys changed having learnt about body positivity, about finding the confidence to be yourself, about having a disability, about misogyny and about the many lives represented within these pages.

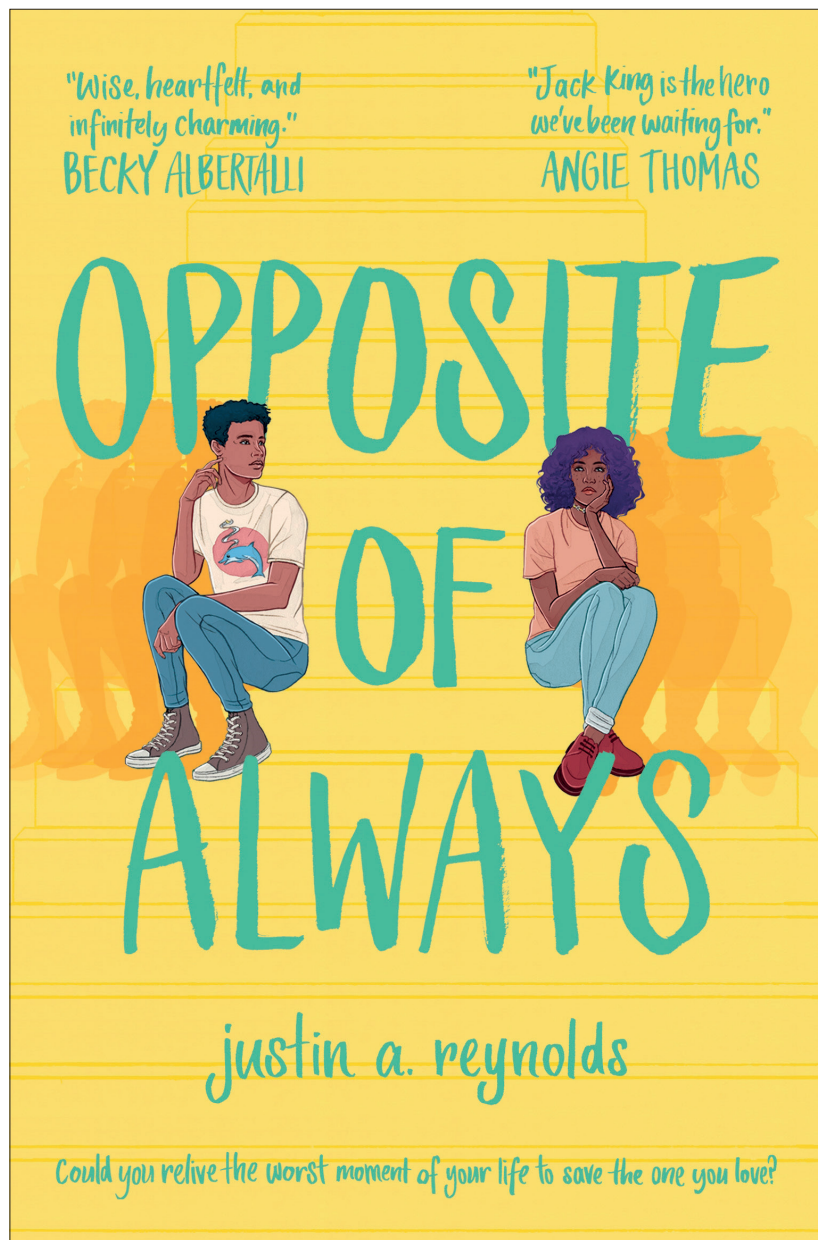
We are proud to share such important stories with our readers.

To help you open discussions around the experiences in these books, we have provided discussion notes for each book which we hope you will find useful.

Thank you reading and sharing them.

Samantha Smith

MCB Publisher for Fiction, Non Fiction, and Picture books



9781509870042 • 04.04.19 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK • MY5.8

Opposite of Always by JUSTIN A. REYNOLDS

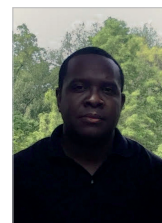
ABOUT THE BOOK

When Jack and Kate meet at a party, he knows he's falling – hard. Soon she's meeting his best friends and Kate wins them over as easily as she did Jack.

But then Kate dies. And their story should end there.

Yet Kate's death sends Jack back to the beginning, the moment they first meet, and Kate's there again. Healthy, happy, and charming as ever. Jack isn't sure if he's losing his mind.

Still, if he has a chance to prevent Kate's death, he'll take it. Even if that means believing in time travel. However, Jack will learn that his actions are not without consequences. And when one choice turns deadly for someone else close to him, he has to figure out what he's willing to do to save the people he loves.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

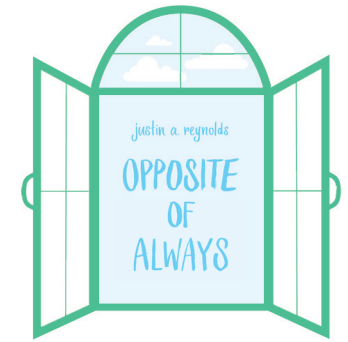
Justin A. Reynolds has been a pest control operator, night security guard, steel mill janitor, NASA intern, salesman of high-end faucet fixtures, and carpet-flooring installer. He was most recently a registered nurse, before trading his stethoscope for a pencil, but likes to think both instruments reveal the heart. He lives with his family in northeast Ohio, home to snow, Lake Erie, and the Cavaliers. *The Opposite of Always* is his first novel.

'One of the best love stories I've ever read.' Angie Thomas, bestselling author of *The Hate U Give*

COMING
JANUARY 2021:
FOREVER ENDS
ON FRIDAY

www.justinareynolds.com | [@andthisjustin](https://twitter.com/andthisjustin) | [@justinwritesya](https://www.instagram.com/justinwritesya)

Discussion Notes



- 1. I lost count after three dozen.** Jack lives the same six months over and over again. How do you think this makes him feel? How would you feel?
- Do you think there would be any benefits to living the same six months repeatedly? What would you do? Which six months would you choose to live?
- 3. She pinches my cheek. 'You're always welcome here, Jack. You're family.'** Families are important in the novel – discuss the different families represented. What does family mean? How does Jack's family compare to Franny and Jillian's?
- 4. 'Right now all I want is to enjoy a moment with you where I'm not the sick girl. Where you look at me the way you did when I wasn't wearing oxygen.'** Discuss the way in which Kate handles her illness. If you were sick, do you think you would tell people?
- Is Jack a hero? Discuss why you think so, or why he isn't.
- 6. And I can't tell you what we watch, only that we sit there for hours, and that at one point I increase the volume because there's something inside of me, the part that loves these two people, that knows Franny doesn't want me to hear his sobs.** Talk about Jack, Franny and Gillian's friendship. How do they each portray the importance of friendship?
- Discuss the ways in which Jack changes from his first meeting with Kate to his last?
- We read about the same (or very similar versions of) events four times. How does the author ensure that this doesn't feel repetitive to the reader? Did you have a favourite loop?





9781509852888 • 07.02.19 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK

Fierce Fragile Hearts by SARA BARNARD

ABOUT THE BOOK

Fierce Fragile Hearts is the stunning companion novel to Sara Barnard's YA bestseller *Beautiful Broken Things*, which was selected for the inaugural Zoella Book Club. It is about leaving the past behind, the friends who form your future, and learning to find love, in all its forms.

Two years after a downward spiral took her as low as you can possibly go, Suzanne is starting again. Again. She's back in Brighton, the only place she felt she belonged, back with her best friends Caddy and Rosie. But they're about to leave for university. When your friends have been your light in the darkness, what happens when you're the one left behind?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sara Barnard lives in Brighton and does all her best writing on trains. She loves books, book people and book things. She has been writing ever since she was too small to reach the 'on' switch on the family Amstrad computer. She gets her love of words from her dad, who made sure she always had books to read and introduced her to the wonders of second-hand book shops at a young age. She is the author of the bestselling *Beautiful Broken Things* and won the YA Book Prize for her novel *Goodbye, Perfect*.

'This book is exquisite.' Holly Bourne, bestselling author of *Am I Normal Yet?*

ALSO AVAILABLE



COMING
APRIL 2021:
**DESTINATION
ANYWHERE**

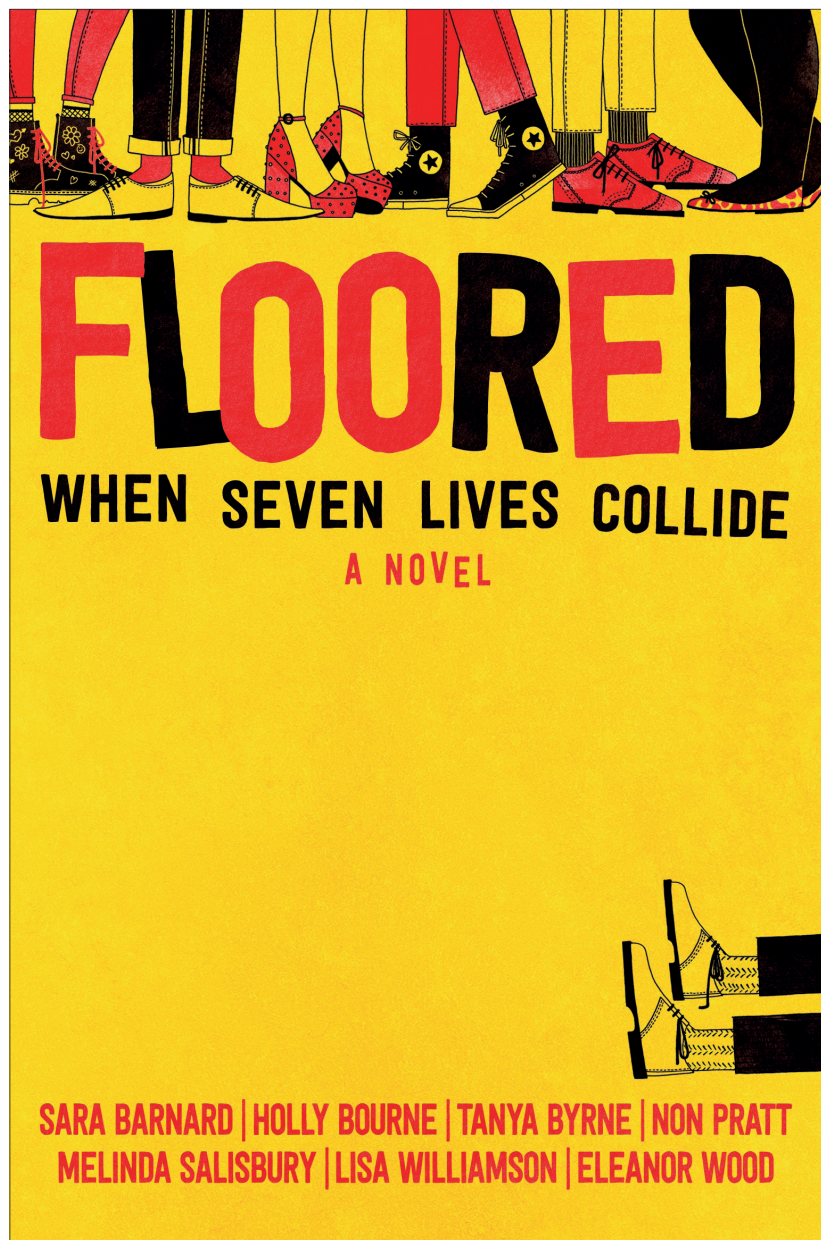
[@saramegan](https://twitter.com/saramegan) | [@saramegan87](https://www.instagram.com/saramegan87)

Discussion Notes



- 1. This time around, I'm going to be so much better.** Do you believe that people can change? Discuss why this might be harder for some people than others.
- 2. It's expensive, being poor.** Discuss the author's representation of poverty in the novel – did you realize anything from Suzanne's experience?
- 3.** Suzanne has learned coping methods for her anxiety and panic attacks. Do you know anyone who suffers from anxiety? How does it affect their lives?
- 4. I'm not ashamed of where I am in my life. I may not have the usual trappings of a nineteen-year-old but I've survived things that felt impossible, and that matters a lot more than what's on my CV.** Do you think there is a pressure for young people to go to University? What other options are available?
- 5.** Caddy and Rosie argue about whether Suzanne should sue her parents – what do you think you would have done in Suzanne's position?
- 6. Dilys has taken my hand, which would be weird if I hadn't just spilled my heart out to her.** Discuss the author's portrayal of intergenerational friendships/relationships. Compare Suzanne's relationship with Dilys to those she has with Matt, Sarah and her parents. What makes a good relationship, romantic or otherwise?
- 7.** Discuss the author's decision to include the characters' text messages and Facebook interaction in the narrative. How did these elements affect your reading of the book?
- 8. Rosie, for her part, calls every day that week.** Discuss the importance of friendship and family during transitional periods like moving away, starting university or a new job.





9781509862306 • 12.07.18 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK • UY 5.2

Floored by **SARA BARNARD, HOLLY BOURNE, TANYA BYRNE, NON PRATT, MELINDA SALISBURY, LISA WILLIAMSON, ELEANOR WOOD**

ABOUT THE BOOK

When they got in the lift that morning, they were strangers.

Sasha, who is at the UK's biggest TV centre desperately trying to deliver a parcel; Hugo, who knows he's by far the richest – and best-looking – guy in the lift; Velvet, who regrets wearing the world's least comfortable shoes to work experience; Dawson, who isn't the good-looking teen star he was and desperate not to be recognized; Kaitlyn, who's slowly losing her sight but won't admit it, and Joe, who shouldn't be there at all, but who wants to be there the most.

And one more person, who will bring them together again on the same day every year . . .



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sara Barnard is the author of *Beautiful Broken Things*, *A Quiet Kind of Thunder*, *Goodbye*, *Perfect* and *Fierce Fragile Hearts*. **Holly Bourne** is the author of *Am I Normal Yet?*, *The Places I've Cried in Public*, *Soulmates*, *The Manifesto on How to Be Interesting*, *The Spinster Club* series and *It Only Happens in the Movies*. **Tanya Byrne** is the author of *Heart-Shaped Bruise*, *Follow Me Down* and *For Holly*. **Non Pratt** is the author of *Trouble*, *Remix*, *Unboxed*, *Truth Or Dare* and *Giant Days*. **Melinda Salisbury** is the author of *The Sin Eater's Daughter*, *The Sleeping Prince* and *The Scarecrow Queen*. **Lisa Williamson** is the author of *The Art of Being Normal* and *All About Mia*. **Eleanor Wood** is the author of *My Secret Rockstar Boyfriend* and *Becoming Betty*.

[@saramegan](#) |
 [@holly_bourneYA](#) |
 [@NonPratt](#) |
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[@lisa_letters](#) |
 [@eleanor_wood](#) |
 [@tanyabyrne](#)

Discussion Notes



1. Compare the characters' first meeting to their final meeting at the end of the book. How have the friendships grown? Discuss the various relationships between the characters.
2. Each character was written by a different author. Do you think this helped or hindered the story? Did you enjoy that the characters only met once a year? What are the benefits and negatives of this compared to a linear plot?
3. Which character changed the most through the story and why?
4. Family is really important for each character. How do these relationships differ? How do they influence the characters?
5. Where do you see the characters after the story ends?
6. Who was your favourite character? Why?
7. **But now I'm losing my sight, and that means, apparently, I can't be a hairdresser or a beautician.** Why is it important to have someone with Kaitlyn's struggle sit against the other characters in the novel?
8. Examine how the issues of class, sexuality and disability are tackled in *Floored*.



BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SEX AND THE CITY*
CANDACE BUSHNELL

Put a little colour on your face. Shave your legs. Don't wear too much make-up. Don't wear short skirts. Don't distract the boys by having a body. Don't be one of those girls who can't eat pizza. You're getting the milkshake too? Whoa. Have you gained weight? You aren't skinny. Disappear. You can't be a feminist. Don't take up too much space. It's funny, but don't hog the spotlight. You have a lot to learn. Don't be a doormat, but God, don't be too bossy. Be chill. Be easygoing. Be on the guys. Don't be a feminist. Support the feminist. Don't get angry. Don't be cold. Don't get desperate. Let this idea. Don't blame him for trying. Don't walk away. Don't worry so much. You can do anything. You can be whatever you want to be! Don't forget to smile!

**RULES FOR
BEING A
GIRL**

NOW SHE KNOWS THEM...
SHE CAN BREAK THEM

AND KATIE COTUGNO

9781529036084 • 16.04.20 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK

Rules for Being a Girl by CANDACE BUSHNELL

ABOUT THE BOOK

Marin is a smart, driven, popular girl – she's headed to the prestigious Brown University when she graduates and has a brilliant career as a journalist ahead of her. Especially in the eyes of English teacher Mr Beckett. He spends a lot of time around Marin, and she thinks it's harmless . . . until he kisses her.

No one believes Marin when she tells them what happened, so she does the only thing she can: she writes an article called 'Rules for Being a Girl' for the school paper to point out the misogyny and sexism that girls face every day. As things heat up at school and in her personal life, Marin must figure out how to take back the power and rewrite her own rules.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

From Katie Cotugno and author of *Sex and the City* Candace Bushnell comes this fierce and feisty exploration of feminism: standing up, speaking out and rewriting the rules.

© Anna McGuire



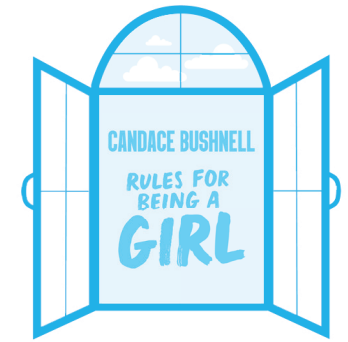
Candace Bushnell is the critically acclaimed, international bestselling author of numerous books, including *Is There Still Sex in the City*, *Sex and the City*, *Summer and the City*, *The Carrie Diaries*, *One Fifth Avenue*, *Lipstick Jungle*, *Trading Up*, *Killing Monica* and *Four Blondes*. *Sex and the City*, published in 1996, was the basis for the HBO hit series and two subsequent blockbuster movies. *Lipstick Jungle* became a popular television series on NBC, as did *The Carrie Diaries* on the CW. *Is There Still Sex in the City* is currently in development as a TV series with Paramount.



Katie Cotugno is the *New York Times*-bestselling author of messy, complicated, feminist love stories. She studied Writing, Literature and Publishing at Emerson College and received her MFA in Fiction at Lesley University. Katie is a Pushcart Prize nominee whose work has appeared in *The Iowa Review*, *The Mississippi Review*, and *Argestes*, among others. The great loves of her life include child's pose, her little sister, and mozzarella and honey sandwiches. She lives in Boston with her husband, Tom, and her dog, Avon.

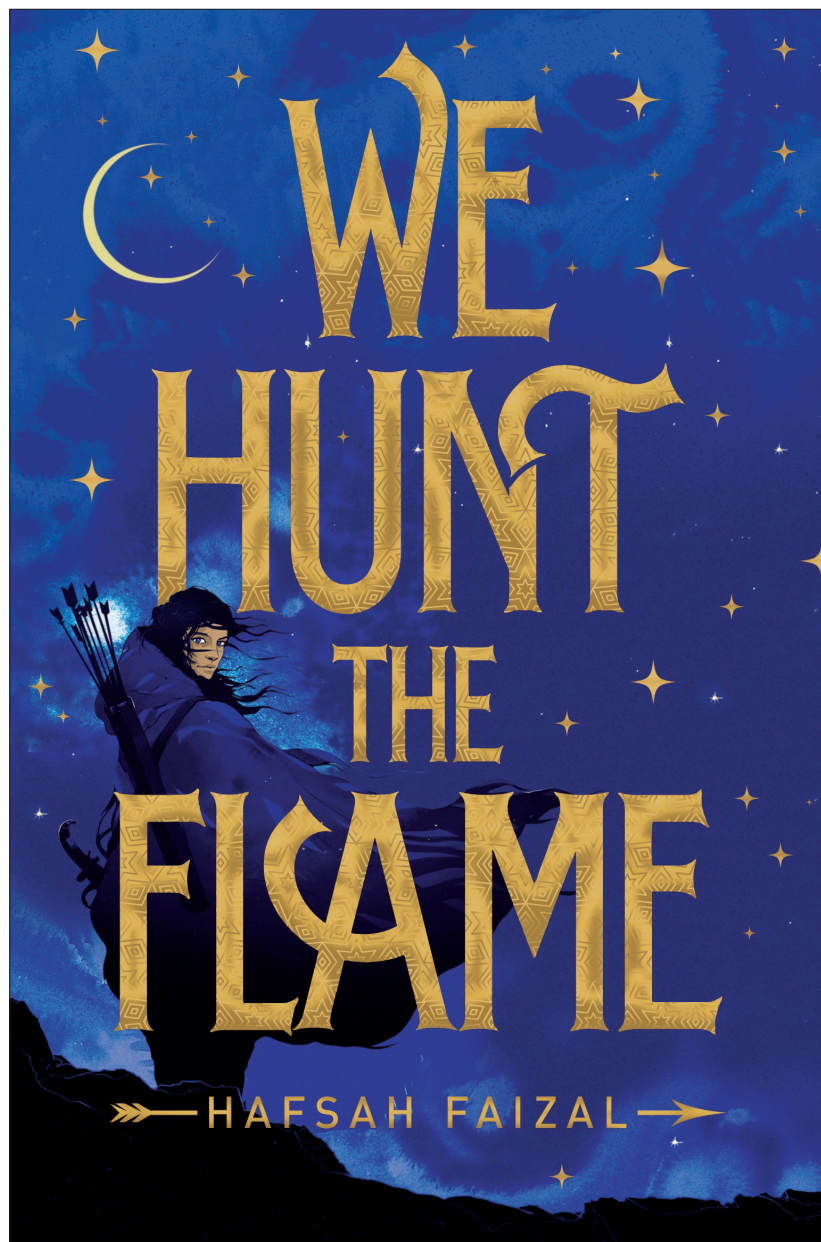
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www.katiecotugno.com | [Twitter](#) @katiecotugno | [Instagram](#) @katiecotugno

Discussion Notes



1. **It feels like there are all these double standards for guys and girls [...] in life, I mean, but especially in high school.** Discuss the everyday sexism that occurs in the book. Do you think this applies to society in general?
2. **‘Obviously I believe you about what happened, but are you sure he didn’t just, like . . . get confused by your vibe, or whatever?’** What do you think of Marin’s friends’ reaction to Bex kissing her? How does the friendship between Marin and Chloe develop?
3. **‘You write some weird article and start acting like a total psycho and . . . what? Turn into some crazy feminist?’** Examine the role of feminism in the novel. Do you think some people have negative reactions to the word feminism?
4. **It starts before you can remember. You learn, as surely as you learn to walk and talk, the rules for being a girl.** Marin sees her sister Grace worrying about what people will think of her glasses. How young do you think girls start to learn the ‘rules’ and how does this affect them? How do you think we could change this?
5. **‘I ruined your dream? [...] You tried to ruin my life, Marin.’ For a moment I’m totally stunned. “I—what?” [...] ‘My God,’ he says, ‘you are so spoiled. Everyone in this school is spoiled, but especially you.’** Bex stops Marin getting into university as he’s an alum there. Examine the role of privilege in the novel especially in the case of Bex.
6. Do you think *Rules for Being a Girl* is a relevant book for our time with regards to the #MeToo movement?
7. **It’s like now that I’m looking for inequality, I’m seeing it everywhere, categorizing a thousand great and small unfairnesses everywhere I go. Why didn’t I really see this before?** Why do you think Marin didn’t see the injustices before? Do you think her pointing out the inequalities will help others to see the daily sexism?
8. Have you read any of the books Marin chose for her feminist bookclub? Which book would you choose if you held a feminist book club?





9781529034097 • 08.08.19 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK

We Hunt the Flame by HAFSAH FAIZAL

ABOUT THE BOOK

Nobody knows that Zafira is the Hunter. Forced to disguise herself as a man, she braves the cursed forest to feed her people. If she is exposed as a girl, all of her achievements will be rejected.

Nasir is the infamous Prince of Death, assassinating those foolish enough to defy his autocratic father, the sultan. If he refuses he will be punished in the most brutal of ways.

Both are legends in the kingdom of Arawiya – but neither wants to be. And when Zafira embarks on a quest to restore magic to her suffering world, Nasir is sent by the sultan on a similar mission: retrieve magic and kill the hunter. But an ancient evil stirs as their journey unfolds, and the prize they seek may pose a threat greater than either can imagine . . .



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hafsah Faizal is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *We Hunt the Flame*, and the founder of IkeyDesigns, where she creates websites for authors and beautiful goodies for everyone else. When she's not writing, she can be found designing, deciding between Assassin's Creed and Skyrim, or traversing the world.

Born in Florida and raised in California, she now resides in Texas with her family and a library of books waiting to be devoured.



COMING
MARCH 2021:
WE FREE THE
STARS

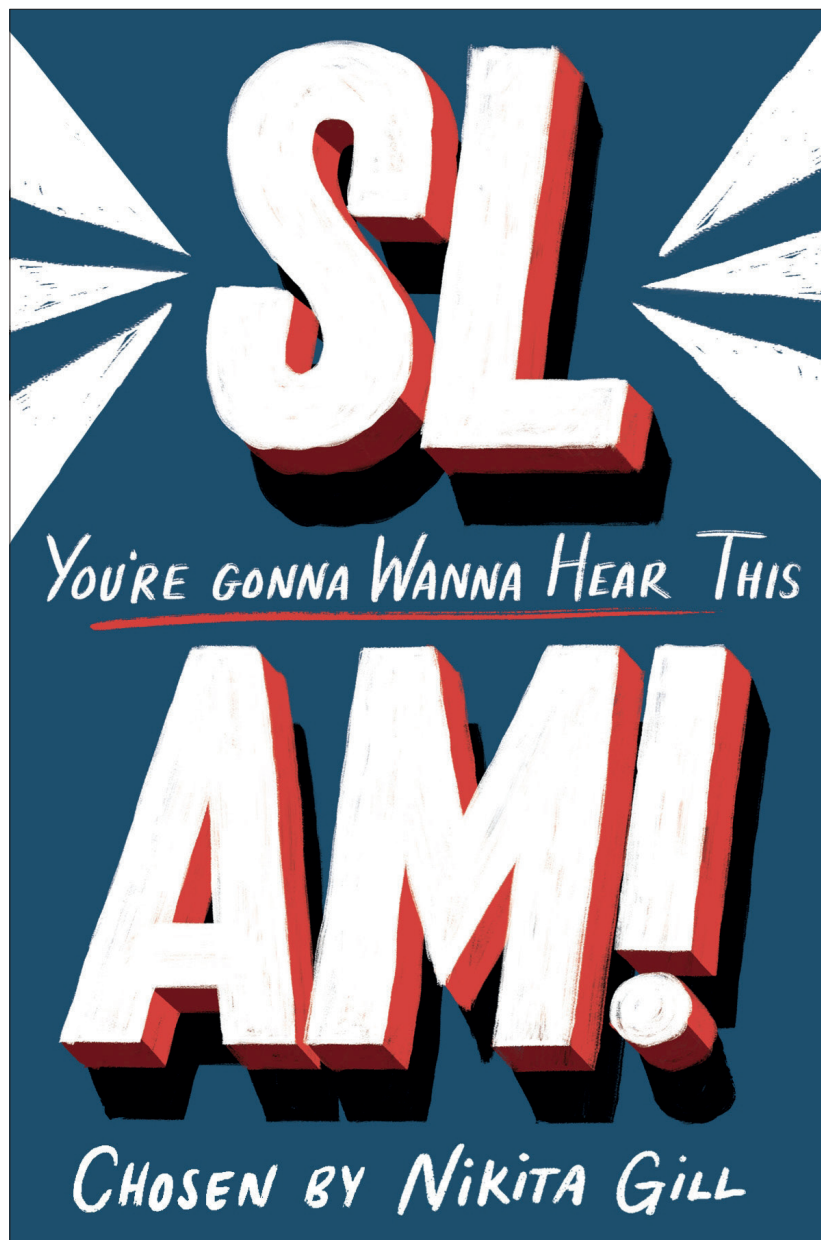
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Discussion Notes



1. *We Hunt the Flame* is set in a world inspired by ancient Arabia. What elements of world-building did the author use to set it here? Did you enjoy the world?
2. **Had the Sisters been men, Arawiya would still have magic. Had the Sisters been men, the caliphates would not be cursed.** Examine ways in which the society of Arawiya is portrayed as patriarchal. How does Zafira subvert this?
3. Compare the way in which Nasir and Zafira each individually view their romantic relationships. What are the similarities and what are the differences?
4. **We may not trust one another completely, but it is important we carry on as a zumra. It is important to remember that everything and everyone has the capacity for both evil and benevolence.** Discuss the friendship between the group and how it develops on their quest.
5. **When she met his eyes and flashed her smile and spoke in her lilting accent, he wasn't heir of Arawiya, hashashin, and Prince of Death. He was a boy.** Discuss how and why Nasir changes over the course of the novel. Do you think Zafira changes as much?
6. **Pieces of Baba were scattered throughout their house—his boots, his favorite cup—because Zafira couldn't bear to get rid of them.** Discuss Zafira's relationship with her family.
7. **Something else beckoned from the darkness, enticing her. Growing with her every visit. It was as if a thread of her heart had snagged in the forest and was trying to reel her back in.** Discuss the magic of the Arz. How does it relate to the terrors the group faced on their quest in the Sharr?
8. Did you like the ending of the novel? What made you like or dislike it? Did you agree with the group's decision to leave Altair? Do you have any thoughts on what might happen in the sequel, *We Free the Stars*?





9781529028300 • 03.09.20 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK

SLAM! You're Gonna Wanna Hear This by NIKITA GILL

ABOUT THE BOOK

Collected by international poetry sensation Nikita Gill, *SLAM! You're Gonna Wanna Hear This* is a joyful celebration of the ground-breaking poets making their voices heard in the spoken word scene. Empowering, inspiring and often hilarious, SLAMs are a platform for well-known and emerging talent from all walks of life where every style of poetry has a home.

With poets such as Raymond Antrobus, Sophia Thakur and Dean Atta guest starring alongside up-and-coming poets, this is the perfect introduction to world of modern poetry. Each poet will introduce their poem, tell you a little bit about themselves and give you a tip for preparing brilliant performance poetry.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nikita Gill is a British-Indian writer and poet living in the south of England. With a huge online following her words have entranced hearts and minds all over the world. She is a passionate advocate for poetry in all forms and her collection of rewritten *Fierce Fairytales* along with her latest book of poetry *Wild Embers* have taken the world by storm.

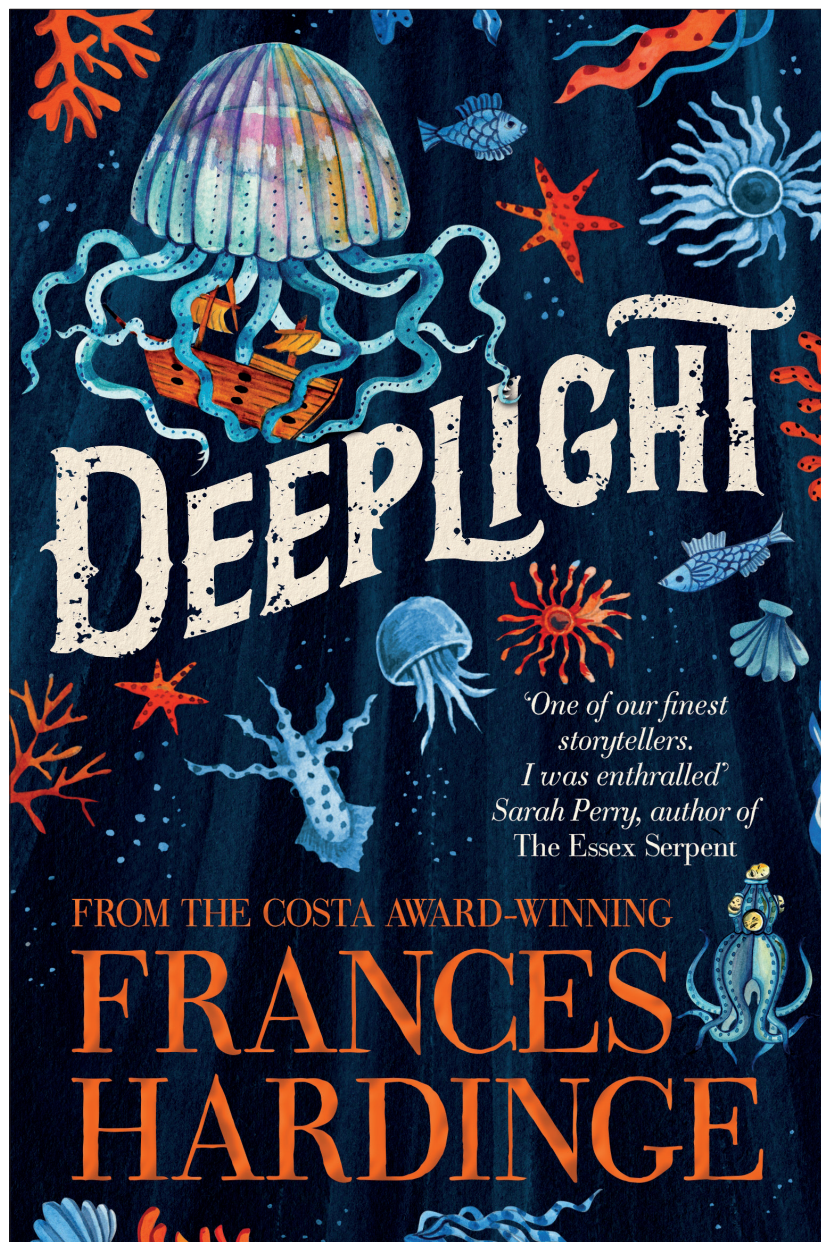
[@ankgill](https://twitter.com/ankgill) | [@nikita_gill](https://www.instagram.com/nikita_gill)

Discussion Notes



- 1. Walk into a room and ask anyone for their definition of poetry. No two people will be able to give you the same answer.** What is your definition of poetry? Why do you think it's so hard to define?
- Had you encountered performance-based poetry before reading *SLAM! You're Gonna Wanna Hear This*? Is it different from your previous experience of poetry?
- 3. Poetry gives you the freedom to make up your own rules.** Discuss how you think this is true. Do you think the poets in the book used different layouts in their poems to different effect?
- 4. This book is a manifesto for change in many ways.** Do you agree with this, why or why not? Do any of the themes strike you as calling for change?
- What are the different ideas of home that the poets convey in the first section of the book? What factors do you think make a person feel like they are at home in a country?
- One of the poets, Shagufta Iqbal, advises writers to **'be honest and vulnerable with your work'**. Do you think writing requires vulnerability? Do you think poetry necessitates it more than other forms of writing?
- Did you have a favourite theme or poem in this collection?
- Do you have any ideas or tips on how to be more confident when performing poetry? What would make you and the audience feel more at ease?





9781509897568 • 02.04.20 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK

Deeplight by FRANCES HARDINGE

ABOUT THE BOOK

The gods of the Myriad were as real as the coastlines and currents, and as merciless as the winds and whirlpools. Now the gods are dead, but their remains are stirring beneath the waves . . .

On the streets of the Island of Lady's Crave live 14-year-old urchins Hark and his best friend Jelt. They are scavengers: diving for relics of the gods, desperate for anything they can sell. But there is something dangerous in the deep waters of the undersea, calling to someone brave enough to retrieve it.

When the waves try to claim Jelt, Hark will do anything to save him. Even if it means compromising not just who Jelt is, but what he is . . .



© David Levenson

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frances Hardinge spent her childhood in a huge old house that inspired her to write strange stories from an early age. She read English at Oxford University, then got a job at a software company. However, by this time a persistent friend had finally managed to bully Frances into sending a few chapters of *Fly By Night*, her first children's novel, to a publisher.

Macmillan made her an immediate offer. The book went on to publish to huge critical acclaim and win the Branford Boase First Novel Award. Known for her beautiful use of language, she has since written many critically acclaimed novels, including *A Skinful of Shadows*, *Verdigris Deep*, *Cuckoo Song*, and the Costa Award-winning *The Lie Tree*.

ALSO AVAILABLE



www.franceshardinge.com | [@FrancesHardinge](https://twitter.com/FrancesHardinge)

Discussion Notes



1. **Stories were currency.** Discuss the importance of stories in society and for Hark in particular.
2. Frances Hardinge crafts a whole new world in the Myriad. What parts of this did you find most interesting?
3. Sailors are sea-kissed within the novel and have different ways of communicating. How has society adapted to allow everyone to communicate? Discuss how the novels deals with disability.
4. **All his life, there had been a current dragging Hark back to Jelt, over and over. He had never been able to fight it.** Examine the complicated friendship between Hark and Jelt.
5. Selphin is one of several strong female characters within the book. Did the chapters from her point of view help you to understand her character better? Why do you think Frances Hardinge included these chapters?
6. How did Hark develop through the novel? Do you think he was the hero of the story, why or why not?
7. **He had always lived in a godless world, and yet . . . everyone he knew had grown up with a lurking pride in their island's 'patron' god. Their remembered might was yours, somehow. People both fear and adore the gods.** Why do you think people still want to worship the gods and hold onto them? Do you think the gods are intrinsically tied to the people's sense of identity? Do you think sailors still try to collect godware due to reverence or greed?
8. Discuss the role that poverty plays in the book and how it influenced Hark's life.





9781509874071 • 24.01.19 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK

Kick the Moon by MUHAMMAD KHAN

ABOUT THE BOOK

Fifteen-year-old Ilyas is under pressure from everyone: GCSEs are looming and his teachers just won't let up, his dad wants him to join the family business and his mates don't care about any of it. There's no space in Ilyas' life to just be a teenager.

Serving detention one day, Ilyas finds a kindred spirit in Kelly Matthews, who is fed up with being pigeonholed as the good girl, and their friendship blows the social strata of high school wide open. But when Kelly catches the eye of one of the local bad boys, Imran, he decides to seduce her for a bet – and Ilyas is faced with losing the only person who understands him. Standing up to Imran puts Ilyas' family at risk, but it's time for him to be the superhero he draws in his comic-books, and go kick the moon.

© Sarah Blackie



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Muhammad Khan is an engineer, a secondary-school maths teacher, and now a YA author! He takes his inspiration from the children he teaches, as well as his own upbringing as a British-born Pakistani. He lives in South London and has an MA in Creative Writing from St Mary's. His debut novel *I Am Thunder* won the Branford Boase First Novel Award, the 2018 Great Reads Award and a number of regional awards.

Amrit Birdi is a No.1 bestselling comic book artist, best known for illustrating Joe Sugg's *Username: Evie* series. He and his team have delivered comic art, concept design, storyboards and commercial illustration for international brands and publishers such as Netflix, Square Enix, SKY, Porsche, Universal, Hachette, Pepsi Co, ITV, Ubisoft, Nike, Warner Bros and Titan Comics.

ALSO AVAILABLE



COMING
MARCH 2021:
MARK MY
WORDS

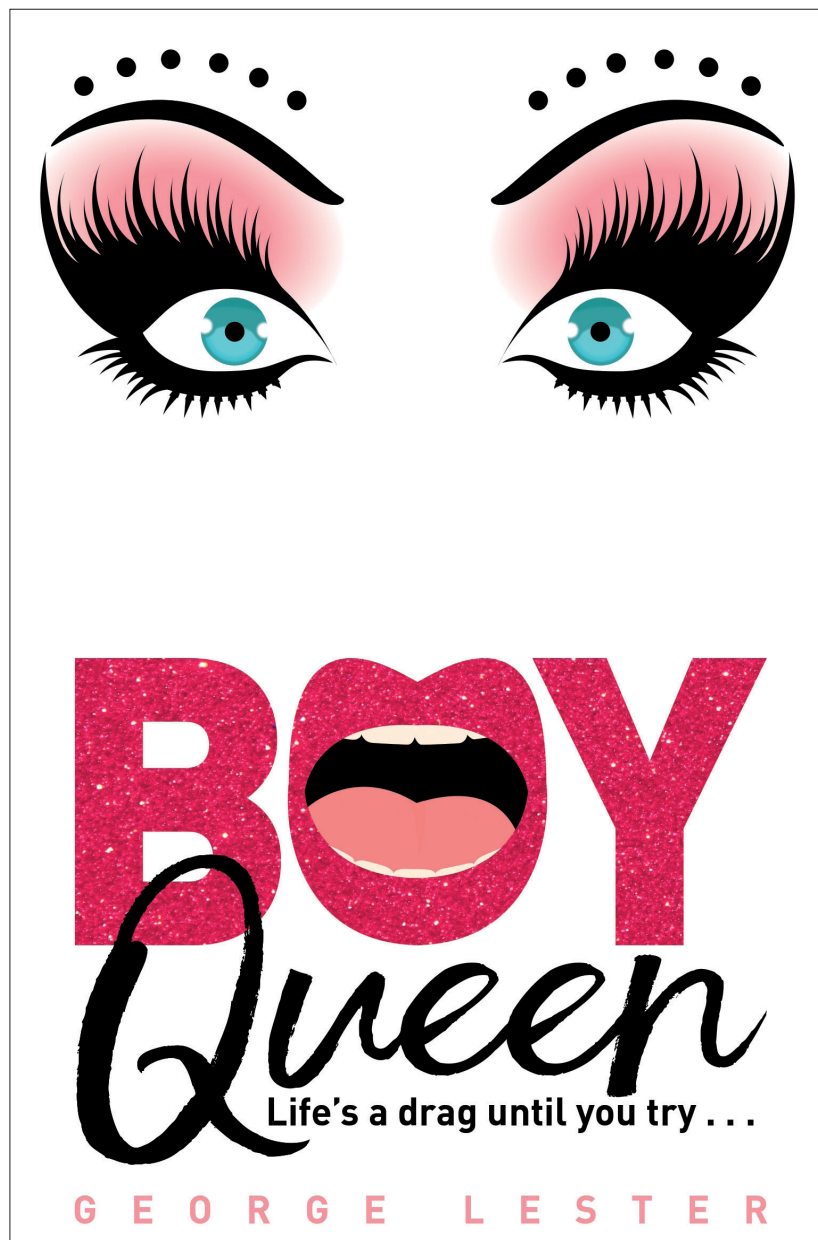
[@mkhanauthor](https://twitter.com/mkhanauthor)

Discussion Notes



1. **This isn't a mandem. It's a slavedom.** Have you ever felt trapped in a friendship group? How do you know when a friendship is worth it?
2. **'Superman ain't no brown boy.'** Do you think there has been an improvement in BAME representation in films, books and TV shows? What would you like to see change in the media?
3. Discuss the way that female characters are talked about and treated in this novel. What was acceptable or unacceptable to you, and why? Do you feel like you could stand up to someone if you overheard them speaking about women in an unacceptable way?
4. **For me, drawing is sacred. Go hard or go home.** Why is it important to have a hobby or a passion? Do you have something that you love in the way Ilyas loves drawing?
5. **Drawing is my superpower.** If you could be a super hero, what powers and personality traits would you have?
6. **I'll be lucky if my dad even lets me go uni[. . .] He thinks it's my duty to continue the family business.** Discuss the expectations Ilyas' parents have of him and how this affects the choices Ilyas makes about his own future. Why do you think Ilyas' father feels the way he does? Do you feel a pressure to live up to your family's expectations?
7. **Mrs M thinks I'm a parasite out to drain Kelly of all her talent.** Kelly's mum tries to separate Kelly and Ilyas. What were her motivations? How do you think you would handle things if your parents acted in this way?
8. **'Your gang is about being manly,' she explains, drawing her hair back. 'Mine's about being the "right kind of girl".'** Discuss the pressures put on teenage boys and girls. Do you think Ilyas and Kelly have more to handle than typical teens? Why/why not?
9. **A bunch of privileged kids go to a developing country to gawp at how primitive brown people can be.** Discuss the impact of race and religion on friendship in the novel.





9781529042115 • 06.08.20 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK

Boy Queen by GEORGE LESTER

ABOUT THE BOOK

Robin Cooper's life is falling apart.

While his friends prepare to head off to University, Robin is looking at a pile of rejection letters from drama schools up and down the country, and facing a future without the people he loves the most. Everything seems like it's ending, and Robin is scrabbling to find his feet.

Unsure about what to do next and whether he has the talent to follow his dreams, he and his best friends go and drown their sorrows at a local drag show, where Robin realizes there might be a different, more sequinned path for him . . .

With a mother who won't stop talking, a boyfriend who won't acknowledge him and a best friend who is dying to cover him in glitter make up, there's only one thing for Robin to do: bring it to the runway.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George Lester is a freelance editor, musical theatre lover and drag nerd who lives with his wonderful partner in Twickenham. He semi-regularly posts videos online talking about books and writing mostly. He is also a Drag Queen under the name That Gurrri!

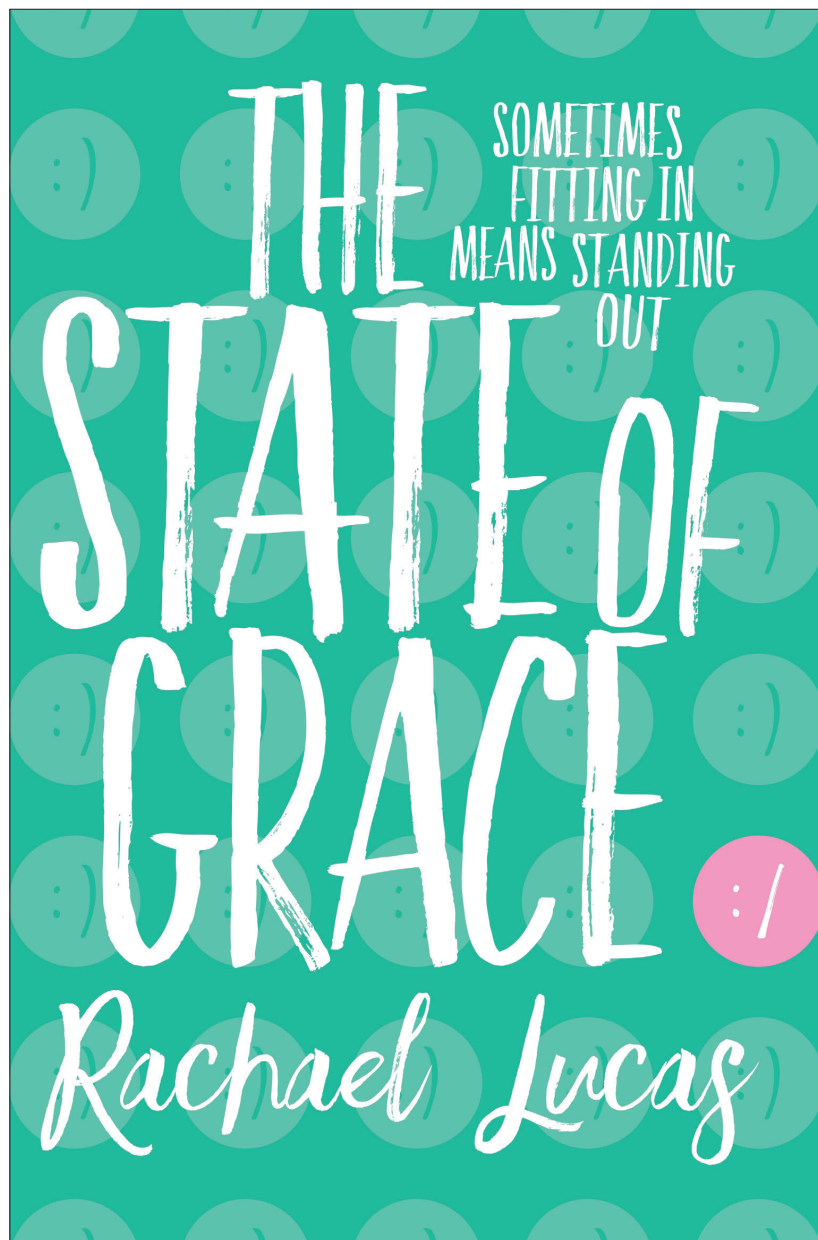
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Discussion Notes



1. **I'm getting excited about classes, about who I'm going to meet, about how I'm going to fit in, about moving to London and living with Natalie next year. Within the space of a few words, that's all been taken away.** Discuss the disappointment Robin feels not getting into the school he wanted. How would you build yourself up from that?
2. Discuss the romances Robin has in the book. How are they different?
3. Compare the different friendships Robin has and why they are all so important to him.
4. **While the words are on the tip of my tongue to tell her exactly what happened with Connor last night, I swallow each and every one of them. They taste like acid on the way down.** Why do you think Robin doesn't confide in his friends about his encounter with Connor outside Entity?
5. **'You know, considering we've known each other for eighteen years, you're doing a terrible job of knowing me.'** Robin's mum says this to him after she sees him perform. Discuss the relationship Robin has with his mother.
6. **'Seeing all of you up there doing your thing brought me back to life, I guess, and it was a kind of performance I hadn't even considered for myself.'** How does drag help Robin find himself throughout the novel? Discuss how Robin's friends and family react to him in drag and how this affects him.
7. *Boy Queen* has a lot of humour throughout, why do you think this is important in the book? Why does Robin use humour?
8. **'I know I'm camp, it happens to be something I like about myself. Sure, if there's a bigot out there looking for a target then there I am, but I can't dim myself, Mum. You taught me better than that. I can't be afraid all the time.'** Discuss how Robin grows over the course of *Boy Queen*.





9781509839551 • 06.04.17 • PAPERBACK • £7.99 • MY+ 5.9

The State of Grace by RACHAEL LUCAS

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sometimes I feel like everyone else was handed a copy of the rules for life and mine got lost.

Grace has Asperger's and her own way of looking at the world. She's got her best friend Anna and a horse who understand her, and that's pretty much all she needs. But when Grace kisses Gabe and things start to go wrong at home, the world doesn't make much sense to her any more. Suddenly everything threatens to fall apart, and it's up to Grace to fix it on her own.

Whip-smart, hilarious and unapologetically honest, *The State of Grace* by Rachael Lucas is a heart-warming story of one girl and her totally normal teenage life.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachael Lucas is an author, coach and freelance writer. Her bestselling debut novel *Sealed with a Kiss* was downloaded over 130,000 times on Kindle. She lives and works in a Victorian house by the seaside in the North-West of England with her partner (also a writer) and their children.

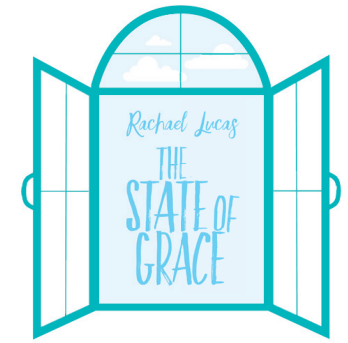
'A witty and engaging read about family, friends and first love.'
Daily Express

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Discussion Notes



1. **Sometimes I feel like everyone else was handed a copy of the rules and mine got lost.** Discuss the characteristics of autism and how they might make typical teenage situations more challenging for someone like Grace.
2. **I've been on a date, nothing disastrous has happened and today I'm winning at being a human.** What represents a good day for Grace versus a bad one?
3. **Anna is one of my safe places. She's one of the things that doesn't move and doesn't change. That's a good thing.** Give a couple of examples of Anna being a good friend to Grace, as somebody who is sensitive to her condition.
4. **I keep veering from one feeling to the next. Maybe this is what dates are like. I don't have anything to compare it with, so I don't know.** Discuss the way Grace and Gabe's relationship develops throughout the book. Do you think dating is harder for Grace than the average teenager, or are her uncertainties relatable?
5. **I wish hard that Dad might hear my thoughts and magic himself from the frozen wilderness to be back here.** How does Dad's absence impact on the family?
6. **I don't speak all afternoon, and nobody notices.** Discuss the events surrounding Leah's alcohol poisoning and their effect on Grace. Do you think she is stronger by the end of this book as a result?
7. **'It's like living with all your senses turned up to full volume all the time,' I say. [. . .] 'And it's like living life in a different language, so you can't ever quite relax because even when you think you're fluent it's still using a different part of your brain so by the end of the day you're exhausted.'** Discuss the role of books in educating readers about specific conditions. Do you feel better equipped to interact with an autistic person in real life as a result of reading this book?
8. The author and her daughter have both received an autism diagnosis. Discuss how first-hand experience can contribute to the authenticity of a story.





9781509870059 • 08.08.19 • £7.99 • PAPERBACK

No Big Deal by BETHANY RUTTER

ABOUT THE BOOK

Emily knows she's smart. Emily knows she's funny. Emily knows she's awesome. Emily knows she's fat.

She doesn't need anyone to tell her any of these things – she likes herself and she likes her body. She just thinks it's time everyone else caught up.

With a newly-slim bestie, a mum knee-deep in fad diets and increasing pressure to change, Emily faces a constant battle to be her true self. But when she meets gorgeous Joe, things start to change. Somehow, she's going to have to convince everyone, including herself, that it's no big deal.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bethany Rutter is a journalist and blogger who writes about fat bodies, plus size fashion and body politics including the benefits and limitations of body positivity. She works in marketing at a plus-size fashion brand and is an occasional DJ. Her writing has appeared in the *Guardian*, *Telegraph Magazine*, *Vogue*, *Dazed*, *RedOnline*, *The Debrief* and others. She co-hosts the podcast *What Page Are You On?* and is the author of *Plus+*, a coffee table book offering style inspiration for everyone.

'No Big Deal is an iconic love song to everyone out there who knows that life isn't one size fits all.' Julie Murphy, bestselling author of *Dumplin'*

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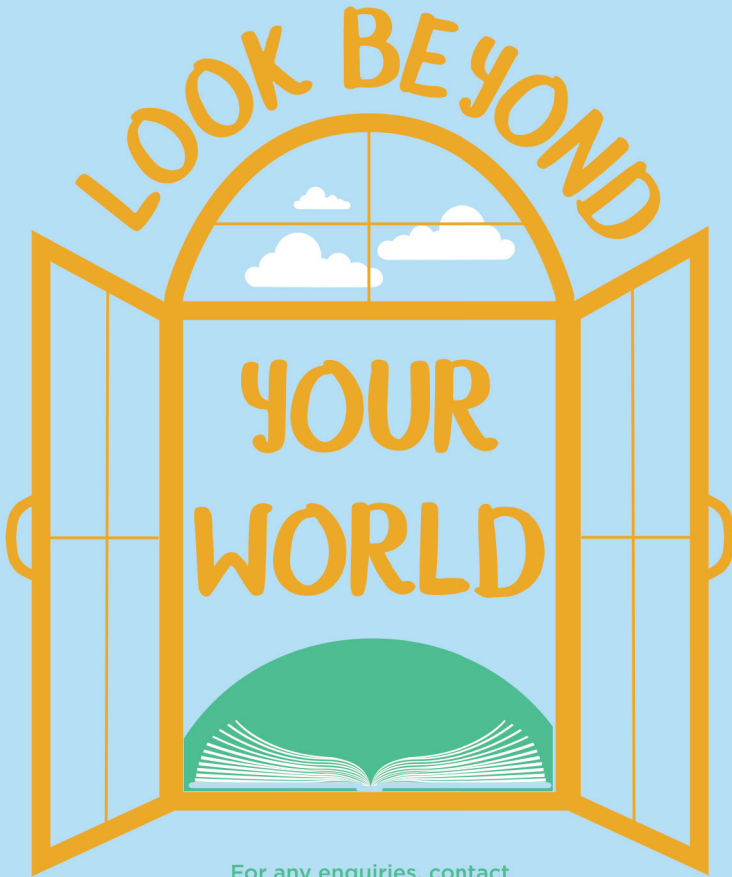
Discussion Notes



- 1. It's not my body that's holding me back. It's more of a problem that people keep telling me it should.** Discuss society's reaction to Emily's body in the book. Do you think Emily's friends and family are body positive?
- 2. 'I just don't want people saying things about you - you know?' 'The only person who ever says anything bad is you!'** Discuss the relationship Emily has with her mother.
- 3. All her diets begin well and end badly.** Emily's mother has tried several fad diets and wants Emily to do them with her. Do you think these kind of diets work? What impact do you think watching her mother go on these diets has on Emily? Do you see a lot of fad diets in society?
- 4. We even have the same smattering of freckles, but our bodies are completely different.** Emily compares herself and her sister Katie. Discuss how people often compare themselves to others. Does social media exacerbate this problem?
- 5. I really do not want to have to make my mind up for definite on this yet, but time is running out.** Emily is unsure what she wants to do next year. Discuss the pressures this can bring. What options are there outside of going to university?
- 6. I've always been the one into clothes and beauty, while Camila stuck to a pretty standard uniform of neutral basics, trying to draw as little attention to herself as possible.** Discuss the different approaches the friends have to clothes in the book. Why do you think Camila's sense of style changes? What can clothes symbolize?
- 7.** Discuss Joe and Emily's relationship and how it develops. What did you think of their relationship?
- 8.** Each chapter title is a song and music features throughout the book. Did you think the songs added to the book? If your life had a soundtrack, which songs would feature and why?



KEY STAGE 3



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