



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Mid to upper secondary and beyond: Year 9+; age 14+

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social capabilities, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding.

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Language and literacy
- Creative and critical thinking
- Intercultural understanding
- The special deluxe hardback 30th anniversary edition contains an exclusive preface by the author, photographs, letters, reviews, articles and mementoes from the time of its first publication and reception, extracts from the original edited MS and Melina Marchetta's correspondence with her editor and publisher.
- An iconic and multi-award-winning Australian classic, made into a multi-award-winning film.

THEMES

- Belonging
- Friendship
- Identity
- Coming of age
- Death
- Family, community and culture
- Diversity

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Hardback ISBN 9781761047206

Paperback ISBN 9780140360462

Ebook ISBN 9781742284163

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Looking for Alibrandi

Melina Marchetta

PLOT SUMMARY

Multi-award-winning, a bestseller and made into an award-winning feature film, *Looking for Alibrandi* is a much-loved modern classic.

Josephine Alibrandi is seventeen and in her final year at a wealthy girls' school. This is the year she meets her father, the year she falls in love, the year she finds the real truth about her family – and the identity she has been searching for. The year she sets herself free.

A bestselling modern classic beloved by so many, *Looking for Alibrandi* will stay with you always.

I'll run one day. Run for my life. To be free and think for myself. Not as an Australian and not as an Italian and not as an in-between. I'll run to be emancipated.

'A novel to rejoice in. A story from the heart.' *Australian Bookseller and Publisher*

'An extraordinarily intelligent and passionate novel, written with remarkable self-assurance.' *The Age*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Melina Marchetta is an internationally bestselling and award-winning author in more than twenty countries and eighteen languages. Her eighteen books range from beloved young adult fiction and fantasy through to contemporary and crime fiction, and works for younger readers.

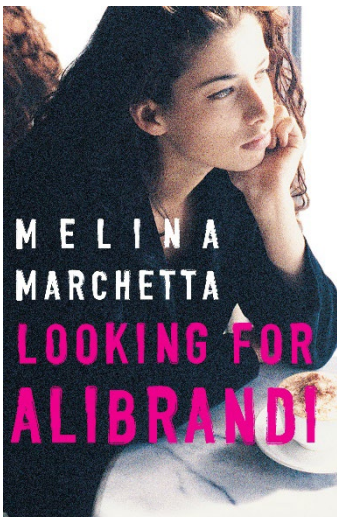
Her much-loved Australian classic *Looking for Alibrandi* swept the pool of literary awards when it was published, and was also released as an iconic Australian film, adapted by Marchetta, winning an AFI Award and an Independent Film Award for best screenplay, as well as the New South Wales Premier's Literary Award and the Film Critics Circle of Australia Award.

In 2009 Marchetta won the prestigious Michael L. Printz Award from the American Library Association.

Her most recent novel is *The Place on Dalhousie*. She lives in Sydney.



Q & A ON *LOOKING FOR ALIBRANDI* WITH MELINA MARCHETTA



It's been 30 years since LFA, how does that feel? I never imagined it would have this longevity. Best of all, I can enjoy it now in a way that's different to how it was when the success intimidated me back in 1992. I'm loving the stories that friends tell me about the first time they read the novel, whether I've known them forever or in the past five years.

It still holds such a special place in so many hearts – why do you think the story still resonates today?

I'd say it's because Josie is so relatable. She's the underdog, she's trying to work out who she is, she's the person who wants to buck the very system that she's desperate to become part of. And she's 17. So I'd say it's something that many of us have gone through at one time in our life.

Did you ever think it'd achieve the success it has?

Not at all. I calculated back then that I knew two hundred people in the world and I felt it would relate to that amount of people. I do remember being very proud of it and knowing it would touch a nerve, but its success has certainly gone beyond expectations.

The book would have no doubt opened many doors for you – what are some of your fondest 'pinch me' moments from your career?

They are actually the small and profound ones, but sitting through the first screening of the film with my mum and dad was wonderful. My dad has passed away, but I'll always remember how proud he was of its success, and its cultural impact.

Who's been the biggest, or most surprising, fan to reach out to you to tell you they loved the book?

Someone behind the gates of Villawood Detention Centre. She was a refugee seeking asylum and wrote to tell me that after reading *Alibrandi*, she was able to imagine a Sydney without the barbed wire. It was very profound and I think often of where she may be today.

What does your daughter think of the book?

I have an almost 11-year-old and she's not allowed to read it yet, however I took her to see the Belvoir production and she made the rudest sound during the kissing scene. She tried to borrow the novel from the school library and was rightfully told that she's not old enough. She was outraged, despite the fact that we have many copies at home.

Describe your life back then while you were writing.

I was living at home with my parents, working as a typist in the legal department of a bank and then in a travel company and then in my second year of uni. That's how long it took to write and get rejected and get accepted and edited and then released. If I look back at a list of those at my book launch, I could say that 90 percent of them are still in my life.

You also wrote the screenplay for the amazing film, what was your fondest memory from making that film?

I have many! My nonna's house was used for Josie's grandmother's house and I remember watching them film Tomato Day with members of my family. My grandmother died years ago, but we all have that house in the film to remember her by.

Would you change anything about the story today?

Today, I'd say that gender identity and a different sort of cultural identity would be explored.

I know you're asked this a lot, but what would we have to do to get a sequel out of you? The answer to that question may break some hearts.

What are your favourite books of all time?

L M Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*.

Megan Whalen Turner's *The Queen of Attolia*.

Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*.

To mark the 30th anniversary and coinciding with the release of the special hardback edition and a new play of *Looking for Alibrandi*, Melina Marchetta has also written, as well as been interviewed for, some articles about her beloved and iconic novel:

<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/books/thirty-years-on-i-m-still-grappling-with-what-looking-for-alibrandi-means-to-me-20220919-p5bj6o.html>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-10-09/looking-for-alibrandi-play-belvoir-melina-marchetta-book/101509354>

Introductory Activities

- Among with many other themes, this novel deals with the concepts of family, identity and belonging. Find as many definitions as you can for these and try to write comprehensive definitions for yourself for these ideas and what they mean to you personally.
- Think about things you have discovered or are in the process of discovering about yourself and/or your family, community and background in recent times and note them down.
- As a group, discuss the notions of identity and belonging in Australia and how that has changed over time. What were they like at various times in history, including in the 1990s when this novel was written? What kinds of personal identities do we discuss today? I.e. gender as well as cultural. What makes us feel like we belong or don't belong? What does it feel like to be forming one's own identity at this particular point in history? Is it easier or harder? What is important to you as you make these discoveries about yourself and others?
- Discuss how identities change over time and focus on similarities and differences within Australia and how they contribute they contribute to the complexity and richness of our modern society.
- Write reflectively on an occasion when you learned something about yourself or someone close to you that informed your sense of your own or their

belonging and identity, who you or they are or what you think your identity or their identity is.

- Do we make certain discoveries about ourselves and others at particular stages of our lives? Why is being Josie Alibrandi's age (or thereabouts) such a critical and important time for us? What is it about the values and ideas about ourselves and others that are shaped at this time that are so important to our sense of self?
- Play the song 'Seventeen' by Janis Ian and discuss these ideas in the context of the song lyrics.
- Think of some contemporary songs that explore similar ideas and discuss and compare and contrast.

The Novel

As you read *Looking for Alibrandi* make notes on the following characters and themes.

- **Characters:** Josephine Alibrandi, Christina Alibrandi, Michael Andretti, Katia Alibrandi, Francesco Alibrandi, Marcus Sandford, Sister Louise, John Barton, Jacob Coote, Sera, Anna, Lee, Ivy, Carly.
- **Themes:** Cultural and social identity, personal identity, social classes/barriers, relationships, freedom, fulfilment, self-identity, family, friendship, diversity, death, coming of age.

Questions on the Chapters

Chapter One

1. What information is given about Josie's background? Refer to her family, education and class.
2. What evidence is there that she is caught between two cultures and two social classes?

Chapter Two

1. At school, Josie believes that she doesn't fit. Why does she feel this way?
2. What are the consequences of this feeling? Consider her friends.
3. **Have a Say Day.** This iconic scene where Josie Alibrandi makes a speech and meets Jacob Coote for the first time has been recreated by Alibrandi fans on several occasions. Jacob Coote says:

'We can scream and shout and protest and even burn our flag if we want to. Because we're free to do whatever we want to do and if we break the law we get a fair trial.

'But in some countries, people can't do that. They can't go out into places like Martin Place and protest. In some countries people our age



can't concentrate on their schoolwork or their lives because of the sound of gunfire.'

Josie can't help but be a little impressed by Jacob Coote's speech at Have a Say Day. What do he and Josie have in common?

As a class, consider recreating Have a Say Day. Watch the scene from the film for further inspiration:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loE-BkwgvJ4>

Chapter Three

1. What does Josie feel about the rituals which are associated with her Italian background?
2. **'I'll run one day. Run for my life. To be free and think for myself. Not as an Australian and not as an Italian and not as an in-between. I'll run to be emancipated. If my society will let me.'**

Josie expresses her wish to be free 'if society will let (her)'. What does she mean? What does she mean by emancipated?

3. What discoveries does Josie make about her father in this chapter?

Chapter Four

1. How does Josie learn about the differences that exist between her world and that of John Barton in this chapter?
2. What insights do we gain of the life of John Barton? Is it free from stress?

Chapter Five

1. What are Josie's impressions of Jacob Coote and John Barton?
2. Is Jacob Coote right in describing Josie as a snob?

Chapter Six

1. Josie has her second encounter with Michael Andretti in this chapter. How does he react to her?
2. How does Christina react to Michael's statement, 'It's too late. Seventeen-year-olds don't need a father'?

Chapter Seven

1. What does Josie discover about her grandmother's past?
2. Some of the differences between Italian-Australian and Anglo-Australian cultures are highlighted here. Provide an example of one.

There are also suggestions that Nonna and Josie have qualities in common. Can you identify any?

Chapter Eight

1. How does Carly upset Josie?
2. How does the father-daughter relationship develop in this chapter?

Chapter Nine

1. This chapter highlights some of the generational differences between Christina and Nonna.
2. How does the argument between Christina and her mother highlight these differences?
3. How does Josie react to Christina's date?

Chapter Ten

1. Explain Josie's mixed feelings towards Jacob?
2. How are the cultural differences between Josie and Jacob highlighted here?

Chapter Eleven

1. 'I'm changing, Mama. I'm growing up. I'm finally seeing the light.' What prompted this statement? Is it genuine?
2. '...the age of innocence is gone...' Is Josie trying to frighten her mother or is she serious?

Chapter Twelve

1. Josie shows more interest in Nonna's past. What does she learn of Nonna's early life in Australia?
2. What hints are given that Marcus Sandford was special to Nonna?

Chapter Thirteen

1. Why was Josie furious with Jacob Coote?
2. How does this chapter mark a change in the relationship between Josie and her father?

Chapter Fourteen

1. Josie's attitude to John Barton is changing? How? To what do you attribute this change?
2. How is John reacting to the pressures he feels?

Chapter Fifteen

1. How accurate are Lee's comments on social class? Are her views confirmed by the novel as a whole?

Chapter Sixteen

1. Describe Josie's feelings as she spends the day with Jacob.
2. What discovery does she make about life and love in this chapter?
3. How are cultural differences depicted in this chapter?



Chapter Seventeen

1. What discoveries does Josie make about Michael during their holiday in Adelaide?
2. How have Christina's impressions of Jacob changed?

Chapter Eighteen

1. How does this chapter reveal Josie's continuing sensitivity to racist taunts?
2. 'I pictured myself with Jacob Coote for the rest of my life.' What developments have occurred in her relationship with Jacob?

Chapter Nineteen

1. **Tomato Day - an Italian tradition and another utterly iconic Alibrandi scene also celebrated in the film.**

What is Josie's attitude to Tomato Day in this chapter? Contrast with her attitude at the end of the novel.

2. Research how Tomato Day is a much-loved tradition in Australia and how *Looking for Alibrandi* has contributed to its awareness and ultimately to its celebration.
3. Watch the opening scene of the *Looking for Alibrandi* film together. How is it similar to the book? How is it different? How does it illustrate (beautifully!) the themes of the novel?

Chapter Twenty

1. What does Josie learn about responsibility in this chapter?
2. What does she mean by the last sentence, 'I think my emancipation began at that moment.'?

Chapter Twenty-One

1. What does Josie have in common with John Barton? Why does she see *Macbeth* with him? How does this cause tension with Jacob Coote? Why?
2. What lessons are learnt from this incident?

Chapter Twenty-Two

1. What do we and Josie learn about Christina from her conversation on page 197?
2. What does Christina try to teach Josie about love?

Chapter Twenty-Three

1. What evidence is there that Josie is more tolerant of her Nonna? How do you explain this change?
2. Has Josie developed a greater appreciation of cultural heritage, too?

Chapter Twenty-Four

1. How does Josie react to Jacob's advice, 'Break away from those rules, Josie. Make your own.'
2. What similarities does Josie see in Marcus Sandford and Jacob Coote?
3. Why does Josie reject Jacob's approaches?

Chapter Twenty-Five

1. What does Josie discover about Nonna? How does she react? Is her reaction understandable?

Chapter Twenty-Six

1. Josie contemplates further the ramifications of Nonna's affair with Marcus Sandford.
2. How does her opinion of Nonna begin to soften in this chapter?
3. Why does Josie refer to her mother and grandmother as 'two of the strongest women'?
4. 'I was beginning to feel free.' What does Josie mean?

Chapter Twenty-Seven

1. Describe John Barton's mood in this chapter. What clues are there to what is about to happen?

Chapter Twenty-Eight

1. How does Josie feel when she learns of what happened to John?
2. Josie believes John thought he was achieving his own emancipation. From what?

Chapter Twenty-Nine

1. Josie makes several discoveries in this chapter. What are they?
2. How does her relationship with her father develop further here?

Chapter Thirty

1. How has Jacob been changed from his relationship with Josie?
2. Why did Jacob end the relationship with Josie?
3. How did Josie react? 'I will never fall in love again...'

Chapter Thirty-One

1. Lee recounts her first sexual encounter. What is Josie's attitude to sex at this stage?

Chapter Thirty-Two

1. In this chapter Josie feels she has achieved her emancipation. How would you define 'emancipation' now? What does it mean in terms



of her relationship with her father, her mother, her grandmother, her culture and her understanding of herself?

2. The novel ends with the line: 'Because finally I understood.' What did Josephine come to understand?

Essay Questions

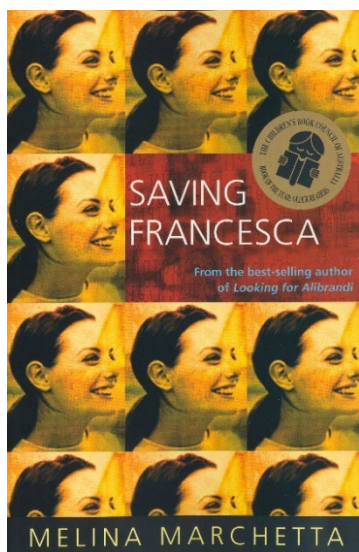
1. **'I'm beginning to realise that things don't turn out the way you want them to. And sometimes, when they don't, they can turn out just a little bit better.'**

Discuss the ways in which Josie's identity and idea of herself and her family and friends changes and evolves over the course of the novel. Relate these to modern explorations of changing identity. Do you think Josie would experience the same struggles today?

2. The first-person style of narration makes *Josie Alibrandi* an engaging but unreliable narrator. What does this statement mean? Do you agree? How might the novel have been different if it was told as a third-person omniscient narrative (i.e. not inhabiting Josie's point of view). Discuss different modes of storytelling and the ways in which different narrative perspectives are conveyed.
3. *Looking for Alibrandi* is ultimately about celebrating and accepting one's identity, cultural or otherwise. Discuss.
4. Does Australia deal with cultural difference and diversity any better today? Discuss Australia's treatment of refugees and First Nations peoples, for example. How have things improved? Where is there room still for change? What needs to happen for there to be more change?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Saving Francesca by Melina Marchetta

Why this story? A memorable and much-loved Australian classic from Melina Marchetta told with humour, compassion and joy.

Francesca is at the beginning of her second term in Year Eleven at an all boy's school that has just started accepting girls. She still misses her old friends, and, to make things worse, her mother has had a breakdown and can barely move from her bed.

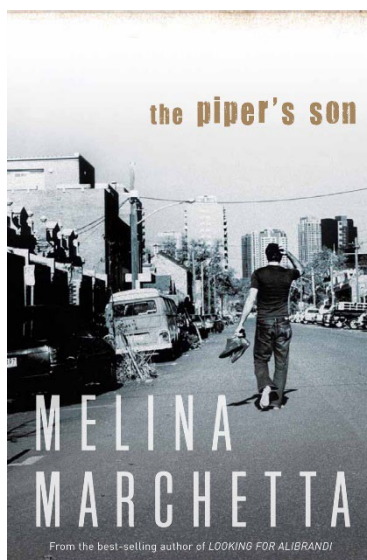
But Francesca had not counted on the fierce loyalty of her new friends, or falling in love, or finding that it's within her power to bring her family back together.

Winner CBCA Book of the Year, Older Readers

Winner, WAYRBA, Children's Choice Awards

Shortlisted, Adelaide Festival Awards

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



The Piper's Son by Melina Marchetta

Why this story? A brilliant, heart-wrenching novel about families, love and forgiveness from the internationally bestselling and multi-award-winning author of *Looking for Alibrandi*.

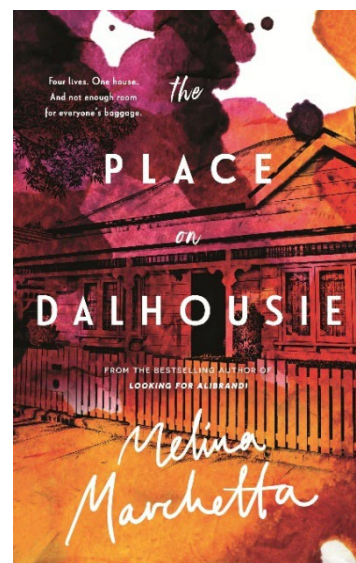
Thomas Mackee wants oblivion. Wants to forget parents who leave and friends he used to care about and a string of one-night stands, and favourite uncles being blown to smithereens on their way to work on the other side of the world. But when his flatmates turn him out of the house, Tom moves in with his single, pregnant aunt, Georgie. And starts working at the Union pub with his former friends. And winds up living with his grieving father again. And remembers how he abandoned Tara Finke two years ago, after his uncle's death.

In a year when everything's broken, Tom realises that his family and friends need him to help put the pieces back together as much as he needs them.

Longlisted, the Miles Franklin Literary Award; Shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Award; Shortlisted, NSW Premier's Literary Award; Shortlisted, Queensland Premier's Literary Award

'The characters are alive and vibrant on every page of this perfectly crafted story about families, relationships, love and forgiveness.' **Good Reading**
'With all the emotion and family dramas we've come to expect from Ms Marchetta, *The Piper's Son* is another one of her sure-to-be-cult novels.' **Dolly**

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



The Place on Dalhousie by Melina Marchetta

Why this story? A perfectly crafted novel about families, relationships and the true nature of belonging featuring the cast of *Saving Francesca* and *The Piper's Son* grown up and in their twenties, alongside a new group of adult characters.

'You look the type to break your father's heart.'
'Yeah, but he broke mine first.'

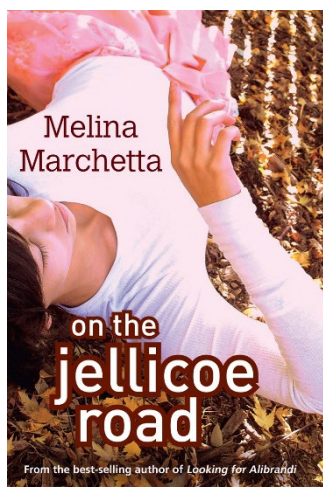
When Rosie Gennaro first meets Jimmy Hailler, she has walked away from life in Sydney, leaving behind the place on Dalhousie that her father, Seb, painstakingly rebuilt for his family but never saw completed. Two years later, Rosie returns to the house and living there is Martha, whom Seb Gennaro married less than a year after the death of Rosie's mother. Martha is struggling to fulfil Seb's dream, while Rosie is coming to terms with new responsibilities. And so begins a stand-off between two women who refuse to move out of the home they both lay claim to.

As the battle lines are drawn, Jimmy Hailler re-enters Rosie's life. Having always watched other families from the perimeters, he's now grappling, heartbreakingly, with forming one of his own . . .

An unforgettable story about losing love and finding love; about the interconnectedness of lives and the true nature of belonging, from one of our most acclaimed writers.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



On the Jellicoe Road by Melina Marchetta

Why this story? A brilliant novel by the best-selling author of *Looking for Alibrandi*. Winner of the American Library Association's Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature and shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards.

Taylor Markham is not a popular choice. She is erratic, has no people skills and never turns up to meetings. Not to mention the incident when she ran off in search of her mother and only got halfway there. But she's lived at Jellicoe School most of her life and as leader of the boarders that's her greatest asset. Especially now the cadets, led by the infamous Jonah Griggs, have arrived. The territory wars between the boarders, townies and cadets are about to recommence.

But Taylor has other things on her mind: a prayer tree, the hermit who whispered in her ear, and a vaguely familiar drawing in the local police station. Taylor wants to understand the mystery of her own past. But Hannah, the woman who found her, has suddenly disappeared, leaving nothing but an unfinished manuscript about five kids whose lives entwined twenty years ago on the Jellicoe Road ...

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Finnikin of the Rock by Melina Marchetta

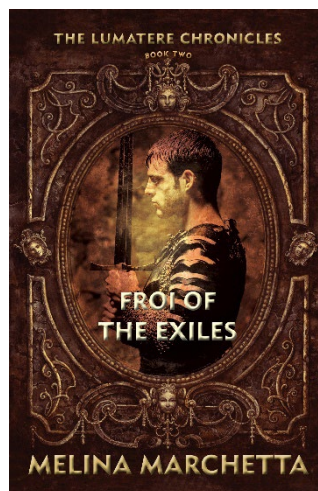
Why this story? 'Filled with questions about the impact of exile and the human need to belong, this standout fantasy quickly reveals that its real magic lies in its accomplished writing.'

Finnikin has not been home to his beloved Lumatere for ten years. Not since the dark days when the royal family was brutally murdered and the kingdom put under a terrible curse. But then he is summoned to meet Evanjalín, an enigmatic young woman who claims the heir to the throne still lives. She is determined to return home and Finnikin is affected by her arrogance . . . and her hope. He begins to believe he will see his childhood friend, Prince Balthazar, again. But the truth will test Finnikin's faith in Evanjalín . . . and in himself.

'A wonderful story full of hauntingly vivid characters and landscapes . . . this is addictive, highly recommended reading.' **Sydney Morning Herald**

'Dark and beautiful and utterly believable.' **Kristin Cashore**

'Magic, romance, intrigue, and adventure all play their parts as this dense, intricate epic unfolds, and flawed, memorable heroes fight for their kingdom's redemption.' **Publishers Weekly (starred review)**



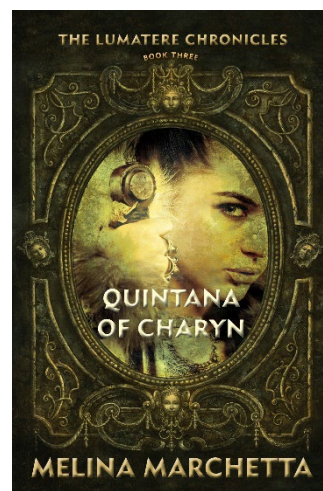
Froi of the Exiles by Melina Marchetta

Why this story? 'Marchetta again demonstrates her fearlessness in exposing humanity at its ugliest, but also at its noblest, as her damaged characters struggle to rebuild their lives. The precipice on which Marchetta leaves readers will have them aching—but also terrified—to discover what comes next.' **Publisher's Weekly (starred review)**

Fiercely loyal to the Queen and Finnikin, Froi has finally found his home in Lumatere . . . or so he believes. But when he is sent on a dark and secretive mission to the rival kingdom of Charyn, nothing could have prepared him for what he finds in its surreal royal court. In this dangerous place he must unravel the mysteries of a half-mad princess . . . and discover the truth before it is too late.

'For fans, this is a must-read; newcomers to Lumatere's story will dive in with enthusiasm. This epic has everything readers can ask for: great characters and a truly spectacular plot filled with romance, suspense, friendship and betrayal.' **Kirkus Review**

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Quintana of Charyn by Melina Marchetta

Why this story? Melina Marchetta weaves an accomplished and breathtaking blend of love, suspense and adventure in this unforgettable final volume in her epic fantasy series, *The Lumatere Chronicles*.

Separated from the girl he loves and has sworn to protect, Froi and his companions travel through Charyn searching for Quintana and building an army that will secure her unborn child's right to rule. While in the valley between two kingdoms, Quintana of Charyn and Isaboe of Lumatere come face-to-face in a showdown that will result in heartbreak for one and power for the other. A dramatic conclusion to Printz Award-winner Melina Marchetta's epic fantasy trilogy.

Praise for *Quintana of Charyn*:

'Marchetta, known for her mastery of character, shows herself here to have conquered the intricacies of plot, worldbuilding and theme. Readers will have a hard time forgetting the complex, deeply human characters that populate this multifaceted narrative.' **Kirkus Reviews (starred review)**

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Looking for Alibrandi: 30 th anniversary hardback edition	Melina Marchetta	9781761047206	14+	\$19.99		
Looking for Alibrandi (paperback edition)	Melina Marchetta	9780140360462	14+	\$19.99		
Saving Francesca	Melina Marchetta	9780143000976	14+	\$19.99		
The Piper's Son	Melina Marchetta	9780143000976	16+	\$19.99		
The Place on Dalhousie	Melina Marchetta	9781760893606	16+	\$22.99		
On the Jellicoe Road	Melina Marchetta	9780143011194	14+	\$19.99		
Finnikin of the Rock	Melina Marchetta	9780143009870	14+	\$19.99		
Froi of the Exiles	Melina Marchetta	9780143567738	14+	\$19.99		
Quintana of Charyn	Melina Marchetta	9780143569244	14+	\$19.99		
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