



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Secondary
(ages 13+)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

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

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Analysing how language and writing evoke mood, tone, and character
- To discuss what makes a story extraordinary
- Encouraging creative and imaginative writing
- To discuss resilience and mental health

THEMES

- Family
- The Gothic in literature
- Nature
- Thrillers

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

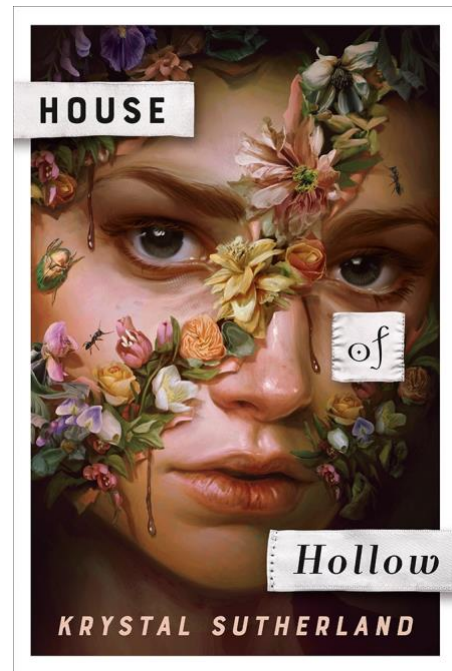
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House of Hollow Krystal Sutherland

PLOT SUMMARY

Iris Hollow and her two older sisters are unquestionably strange. Ever since they disappeared on a suburban street in Scotland as children only to return a month a later with no memory of what happened to them, odd, eerie occurrences seem to follow in their wake. And they're changing. First, their dark hair turned white. Then, their blue eyes slowly turned black. People find them disturbingly intoxicating, unbearably beautiful and inexplicably dangerous.

Now, ten years later, seventeen-year-old Iris Hollow is doing all she can to fit in and graduate high school – something her two famously glamorous globe-trotting older sisters, Grey and Vivi, never managed to do. But when Grey goes missing, leaving behind only bizarre clues, Iris and Vivi are left to trace her last few days. They aren't the only ones looking for her. As they brush against the supernatural, they realise that the story they've been told about their past is unravelling and the world that returned them seemingly unharmed ten years ago, might just be calling them home.

'This dark, deliciously twisted novel has everything you could hope for as a reader – a brilliant concept, glamorous characters with secrets to hide, immersive world-building, and some of the finest writing I've seen in YA fiction. I'll put it like this – I am obsessed with *House of Hollow*.' Louise O'Neill, author of Printz Honor Book, *Asking For It*

FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear readers,

It's rare to remember the moment an idea for a new book took root in the imagination. Stories ferment slowly, like sourdough starter (please forgive the very 2020 analogy). They gather over time, coming together sinew by sinew, and take so long from inception to completion that I usually can no longer place where the initial spark came from.

That is not the case for *House of Hollow*. I know exactly where I was when it first began whispering to me: in front of a ruined doorway in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. I was there with my partner and his grandmother, partly so she could show us her homeland and partly so she could check that our horoscopes were suitably aligned for marriage (they were, thankfully).

Inspiration doesn't happen in a vacuum: I had just watched *Annihilation* and just finished reading Melissa Albert's *The Hazel Wood*, both of which I found deeply affecting. As we drove from Colombo to Anuradhapura, the dawn was sticky hot and hazy with smoke, and I had these elements swirling around in my head: folklore, thresholds, liminal spaces, transformation, flowers, forests, sisters.

I listened to the eerie *Annihilation* soundtrack as I watched the sun rise and the sky turn pink. These songs would end up being my most played throughout 2018 and 2019 – I'm sure Spotify is still worried about me.

Then, in the overgrown ruins surrounding the Abhayagiri Vihāra monastery, I came across a doorway and several others like it, where the rest of the structure had crumbled away and left only the frame of a door behind. I found these overgrown ghost doors quite unsettling. They felt inviting and magical and somehow dangerous at once, kind of like fairy rings. What would happen, I wondered, if I walked through one – and ended up somewhere else? I started taking notes on my phone as soon as we got back to the car and slowly, hour by hour, day by day, week by week, the seed that had been planted began to grow into *House of Hollow*.

What a joy it was to write something at once so dark and so sumptuous, the pages filled with beauty crashing headlong into horror: pale flowers growing out of wounds, a supermodel with black eyes and a twisted past, three sisters whose intense love for each other led them to do unspeakable things.

I see *House of Hollow* as a natural progression from *A Semi-Definitive List of Worst Nightmares*, which skirted the fantastical but never really dove into it head on. I grew up reading fantasy and my favourite stories were always those that took place in our own world but that

incorporated elements of horror or magic or folklore. That's what I tried to capture with *House of Hollow*, the sense that something strange exists just beyond our perception.

Our main character, Iris, is the youngest sister of Grey Hollow, a fabulously wealthy and famous supermodel who goes missing under suspicious circumstances. Writing about the mystery surrounding Grey was a definite highlight. It was a chance to explore luxurious fabrics and clandestine celebrity parties and haute couture fashion shows and secret bolthole apartments bedecked in brass and wood and wax.

At its heart though (and despite its fairytale grimness), I hope that the book captures something of the deep bond between sisters. I am the eldest of three girls and many of the sweeter moments (and some of the more sinister ones, too) between Iris and her sisters were inspired by growing up alongside two brilliant, frustrating women.

As you open *House of Hollow's* pages, expect to find a modern gothic horror about girlhood and sisterhood – with a very sinister folklore twist.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Krystal Sutherland grew up in Australia, directly across the road from the local public library, where she spent almost every day after school having adventures between the pages of books. Now her own novels for young adults have been published in more than twenty countries.

She served as an executive producer on *Chemical Hearts*, the Amazon Studios film adaptation of her first book, which stars Lili Reinhart and Austin Abrams. The TV rights to her second novel, *A Semi-Definitive List of Worst Nightmares*, were optioned by Yellow Bird US. Her third book, *House of Hollow*, is set for publication in 2021.

She has lived in Sydney, San Francisco, Amsterdam and Hong Kong, but she currently calls London home.

You can find her on Instagram at @km_sutherland or online at krystalsutherland.com



WRITING STYLE

- What is the novel's writing style? What narrative perspective is used: first person or third person? How effective is this? How is the novel structured? Consider how and when information is revealed, and the use of different modes of communication. How effectively does this contribute to the novel's storytelling? Consider the author's blend of supernatural elements with a contemporary setting. How effective is this?
- How might the story be different if it had been written from another character's point-of-view? Choose an incident in the story and write it from a different characters' perspective, e.g. Grey, Vivi.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover design – what do you think the front cover might reveal about this novel?
2. Examine the importance of the back cover blurb in captivating the reader. Do you feel it has been successful? Why? Why not?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Setting

Questions

- How did the author use the setting to evoke atmosphere?
- How does the setting of this story affect the characters and the events that take place?
- How does the author use the setting to create tension and drive the narrative forward?

Activities

- Write a scene using setting to create an atmosphere for the story.
- Write a scene showing a certain place in the world without actually saying where it is.

Characterisation

Questions

- How is Iris different from her sisters? What is Iris's character arc in the novel?
- How is Grey different? What is her character arc?
- How does the author create tension in the novel? How does she ensure the momentum propels us forward, making us want to read more. Research elements that all good thrillers contain in their storytelling to ensure we keep reading.

Activities

- Write a short story or novella about your own family and evoke each character within it in a distinctive way in the style of this novel.
- Write a thriller short story or novella. Ensure that it has forward narrative momentum by ending each chapter with a cliffhanger or something we didn't know about the plot or characters.
- Read about the Gothic tradition in literature under THEMES. Write a Gothic short story or novella.

THEMES

Family

Discussion

- What is the overall impression that this book gives about families, and in particular sisters? Give some examples of why you think that.
- What are the important things that define family in this novel?
- What do you see as the most important characteristics of family in this novel?

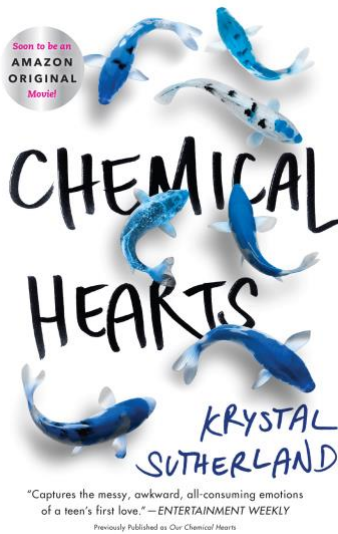
The Gothic tradition

Discussion

- Research the Gothic tradition in literature. The following articles from the British Library are good starting points:
<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/themes/the-gothic>
<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-the-gothic#>
- Read or discuss some of these examples of Gothic literature from the nineteenth century, and write an essay comparing and contrasting to *House of Hollow* to one of them, examining how each work conveys a Gothic aesthetic and is a product of the Gothic tradition in literature.
- What elements are common to all works ascribed a Gothic sensibility? What are the key motifs? Describe the Gothic elements in *House of Hollow*.
<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs>
- Historically, how has Gothic fiction reflected the social and political context in which it was written? To what extent does *House of Hollow* do this? Contrast it to one of the nineteenth century examples examined earlier and discussed by the British Library.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



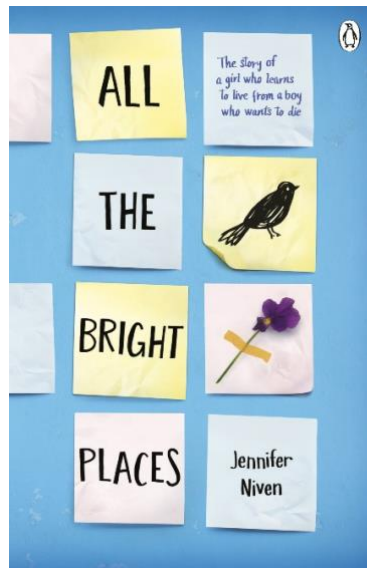
Chemical Hearts by Krystal Sutherland

Henry Page has never been in love. The slo-mo, can't-eat-can't-sleep kind of love he's been hoping for just hasn't been on the cards—he's too busy trying to get into a semi-decent college and become editor of his school newspaper. The rest of his spare time he spends with his best friends, Lola and Murray, playing video games and advising them on their own sordid love lives.

Then he meets Grace Town, the elusive new girl in school, who wears oversized boys' clothing, walks with a cane, rarely seems to shower, and is hiding crushing secrets. She's hardly who Henry expected his dream girl to be, but when the two are chosen to edit the paper together, sparks fly. After all this time, Henry's about to learn firsthand just how disastrous the road to first love can be—and that sometimes it's the detours that end up mattering much more.

A brilliant debut that is equal parts humour and heartbreak, Krystal Sutherland's *Our Chemical Hearts* is a potent reminder of the bittersweet bliss that is first love.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



All the Bright Places by Jennifer Niven

Theodore Finch wants to take his own life. *I'm broken, and no one can fix it.*

Violet Markey is devastated by her sister's death. *In that instant we went plowing through the guardrail, my words died too.*

They meet on the ledge of the school bell tower, and so their story begins.

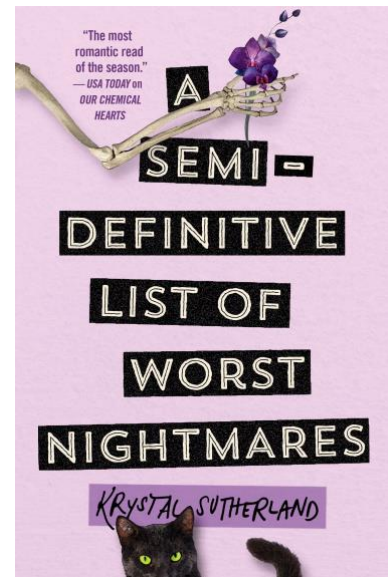
It's only together they can be themselves . . .

I send a message to Violet: 'You are all the colors in one, at full brightness.'

You're so weird, Finch. But that's the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me.

But, as Violet's world grows, Finch's begins to shrink. How far will Violet go to save the boy she has come to love?

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



A Semi-definitive List of Worst Nightmares by Krystal Sutherland

Ever since Esther Solar's grandfather met Death, her entire family has been cursed to suffer one great fear in their lifetime—a fear that will eventually lead each and every one of them to their graves.

Esther's managed to escape the curse . . . so far. She doesn't yet have a great fear because she avoids pretty much everything. Elevators, small spaces, crowds—anything that might trigger a phobia is off-limits and is recorded in her semi-definitive list of worst nightmares.

Esther thinks she has it all figured out, until she's reunited with an old classmate—and first crush—Jonah Smallwood. An unexpected friendship between the two develops and together they face one phobia at a time, only to discover the one fear they hadn't counted on: love.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
A Semi-Definitive List of Worst Nightmares	Krystal Sutherland	9780143573913	8+	\$19.99		
Chemical Hearts (film tie-in edition)	Krystal Sutherland	9781760895402	8+	\$19.99		
House of Hollow	Krystal Sutherland	9780143796992	8+	\$19.99		
				TOTAL		

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