



RECOMMENDED FOR

Secondary students (ages 13+; years 8–11)

CONTENTS

1. Plot summary	1
2. About the author	2
3. Author's inspiration	2
4. Writing style	2
5. Discussion questions	3

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Critical and Creative Thinking; Ethical Understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- A tense and unputdownable thriller that will get students talking

THEMES

- Mystery
- Bullying and conflict
- The negative effects of gossip and rumour
- Friendship and romance
- Persecution and justice
- Influence and coercion
- Survival

PREPARED BY

Fleur Ferris and Penguin Random House Australia

PUBLICATION DETAILS

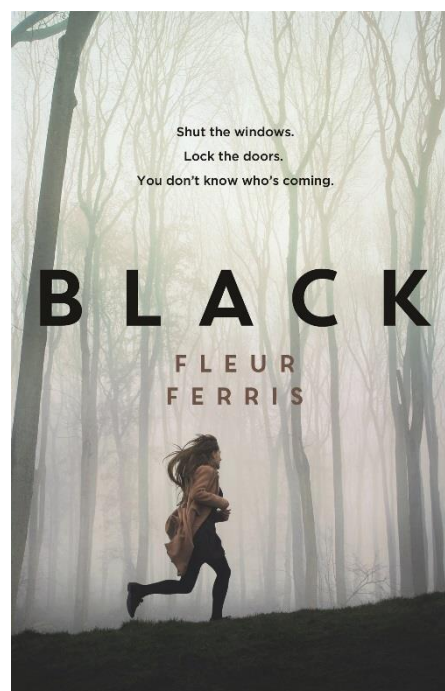
ISBN: 9781925324976 (paperback);

9781925324983 (ebook)

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Black Fleur Ferris

PLOT SUMMARY

Ebony Marshall is in her final year of high school. Five months, two weeks and four days . . . She can't wait to leave the town where she's known only as 'Black'. Because of her name, of course. But for another reason, too.

Everyone says Black Marshall is cursed.

Three of her best friends have died in tragic accidents. After Oscar, the whispers started. Now she's used to being on her own. It's easier that way.

But when her date for the formal ends up in intensive care, something in quiet little Dainsfield starts to stir. Old secrets are revealed and terrifying new dangers emerge.

If only Black could put all the pieces together, she could work out who her real enemies are. Should she run for her life, or stay and fight?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fleur Ferris spent the first seventeen years of her life growing up on a farm in Patchewollock, north-west Victoria. She then moved twenty times in twenty years.

During this time, Fleur sometimes saw the darker side to life while working for a number of years as a police officer and a paramedic.

She now lives a more settled lifestyle on a rice farm in southern New South Wales, with her husband and three young children.

Fleur's colourful and diverse background has given her unique insight into today's society and an endless pool of experiences to draw from. When she isn't weaving this through young adult fiction, reading or spending time with her family, you will find her with friends, talking about art, books and travel.

Risk is Fleur's first novel for young adults, and in 2016 she will publish her second novel, *Black*.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Fleur says:

Working in the police force, many years ago, showed me that there are always reasons driving the actions of others, no matter how crazy or random they may first appear. Acts of crime or violence driven by righteous beliefs regularly feature on the news, and our history shows that it has always been an issue in our society.

Inspiration for *Black* came from many recent and historical events. My research covered superstitions and curses, and went as far back as the witch-hunt days in the 1500s. I also studied current and historical cases of involuntary exorcisms. I didn't have to look far to find cases that resulted in serious injury or death. Like in the witch-hunt days, these acts (exorcisms) were performed with the belief that the person or the wider community were doing the right thing. People acting under the whole-hearted and unshakable belief that what they are doing is right can be extremely dangerous.

It was very important to me that the focus in *Black* was on the results of people's actions, not the reasons behind them. It is not a book to prove or disprove whether curses, witchcraft or demonic

possession exist. Nor is it meant to criticise, disprove or condone religious beliefs of any kind. It is a story that shows how a person can find themselves in a dangerous situation because of the perception of those around them. It shows how events escalate, how our minds can be influenced and how beliefs are formed. It also shows the lengths a person or group will go to to uphold and protect their views when they think righteousness is on their side.

Black was written primarily for young adults who are on the cusp of deciding future vocations, perhaps moving out of home and away from the constraints of parental or guardian supervision and, of course, being able to vote in political elections. It is important they think about what influences their beliefs, how they can unwittingly (or knowingly) influence others, and to recognize when they are being manipulated, side tracked or dazzled by real-life red herrings.

WRITING STYLE

Fleur says:

This story is written in first-person point of view because I wanted the reader to be limited to the same information as the protagonist – to experience what she was experiencing, to see only what she was seeing and to know only what she was thinking. I hoped the questions formed in Ebony's mind would also form in the reader's mind and I placed as many red herrings and hooks as I could to try and achieve this.

Black is a thriller, so pacing the story and drip feeding enough, but not too much, information to the reader was also important. In the climactic scene, to ramp up the pace and tension I placed a ticking clock on how long one of the characters had to complete his goal of reaching an area of phone service and alerting police. The timing was critical to the outcome for these characters.

The romance of this story was introduced to provide the seeds of change for the protagonist. For Ebony, romance was unexpected and caught her off guard. It forced Ebony to look at her current situation and made her want to change and, hence, was a catalyst for internal growth.

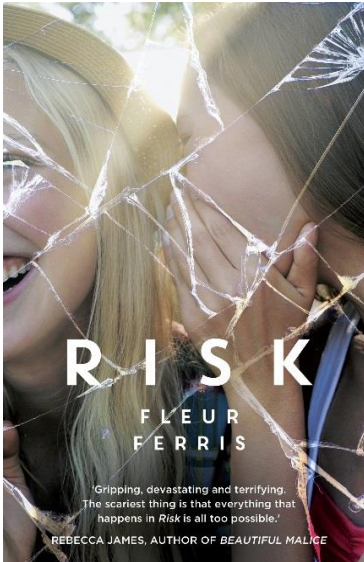
Conflict helps to drive a plot forward and keeps a reader turning the pages. Internal and external conflicts between multiple characters are woven

through this story from the first scene to the last. An example of a more subtle internal conflict is Ebony not wanting to go to the ball but agreeing to because she feels sorry for the new guy and wants to show up the Knuckleheads. An example of an external conflict is the altercation between Ebony and Ged.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In *Black* we see certain characters righteously taking matters into their own hands to do what they see as good for all. Is there ever a time personal and righteous beliefs should be placed above the law? Can you list five examples of when an individual or group have broken the law for righteous reasons? Did any of these acts have a positive outcome?
- *Black* shows how gossip instils fear into others and has an ongoing negative impact on Ebony's life. Is gossip ever harmless? When does gossip turn into a form of bullying?
- When Ebony decides to stand up to Ged, Ged backs down. In this situation did we see the bullied becoming the bully or was Ebony just standing up for herself?
- Eventually Ebony uses Ged's fear against her and pretends to 'curse' her. Did Ebony go too far? How far should we go to stand up for ourselves?
- Is cursing someone who believes in curses a death sentence? Looking back through history, can you list eras where the broader population believed in the power of curses? Do people in today's society believe in curses? Are people superstitious by nature?
- The secret agenda of the Pure Apostles is to hunt down demons. Looking back through history, can you give five examples of fanatical groups? What were their goals? What disbanded them?
- A few of Ebony's friends died in unrelated incidents, which started rumours about her being cursed. As this belief grew in Ged's mind she started linking other deaths to Ebony. Do our beliefs make us perceive certain events in certain ways? Do we look for signs to cement our beliefs and ignore others that oppose them? Is this natural human behaviour? Does it put us at risk of placing false meaning to or misreading innocent or unrelated events?
- Father Ratchet was able to gain people's trust and preach his ideas because of the position he held in the town, which made him an influential and powerful character. What techniques did he use to convince others to share his beliefs? For instance, consider how he provided support to people in times of crisis or need and used these unfortunate times as opportunities to recruit people to his beliefs. What makes people more vulnerable at such times of crisis? Can you name other ways seeds can be planted in our minds or ways in which we are influenced on a daily basis?
- Did Ebony's mother and father do the right thing in staying in Dainsfield? Did they do the right thing in not telling Ebony about the danger she might be in?
- How does the author create tension in the story, leading to the terrifying climax? Which plot points fit the following elements of a successful thriller story?
 - Red herrings that lead the reader or protagonist in a particular direction so they don't see the real danger
 - Points where the character thinks she's safe but is proved wrong
 - Time imperatives or 'ticking clocks'
 - Points where the stakes are raised
 - Inciting incidents
 - Complications
 - Twists
 - A darkest hour when all hope seems lost
- What is Ebony's character arc in the novel? What does she learn about herself and others?

FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Risk
by Fleur Ferris

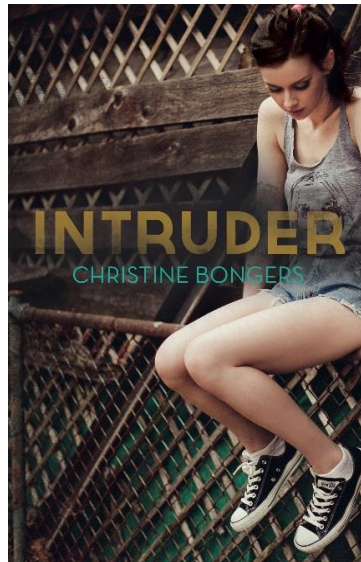
Taylor and Sierra have been best friends for their whole lives. But Sierra doesn't seem to notice when she hurts her friends.

So when Sierra says Jacob Jones is the one and asks her friends to cover for her while she goes to meet him for the first time, Taylor rolls her eyes. But Sierra doesn't come back when she said she would. One day. Two days. Three . . .

What if Taylor's worrying for nothing? What if Sierra's just being Sierra, forgetting about everyone else to spend time with her new guy?

When Taylor finally tells Sierra's mum that her daughter is missing, Taylor and her friends are thrown into a dark world they never even knew existed.

Teachers' resources available.



Intruder
by Christine Bongers

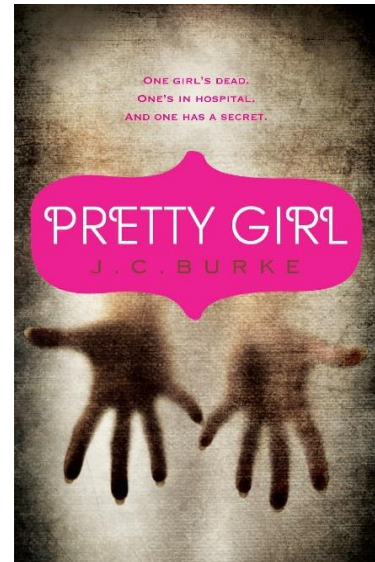
Kat Jones is woken by an Intruder looming over her bed. She's saved by Edwina – the neighbour Kat believes betrayed her dying mother.

Her dad issues an ultimatum. Either spend nights next door, or accept another Intruder in her life – Hercules, the world's ugliest guard dog. It's a no-brainer, even for dog-phobic Kat.

When she meets adorkable Al at the dog park, finally Kat has someone to talk to, someone who cares.

But the prowler isn't finished with Kat. To stop him, she needs Edwina's help . . . and what Kat learns could mend fences – or break her fragile family apart forever.

Teachers' resources available.



Pretty Girl
by J.C. Burke

Paige, Sarah, Jess and Tallulah were best friends. Now they've begun university, but it's not turning out like it's meant to. Tallulah's partying too hard, Jess is being secretive, Paige is embarrassing herself, and Sarah's struggling to keep up with her wealthier friends.

One night, Sarah saves Paige from drowning in the university swimming pool. Paige can't remember why she was there, and Sarah's too afraid to say what she thought she saw. Then Jess's body is found outside the college laundry.

It's not until Sarah meets the charming Jonny that she can tell someone her suspicions. But what really did happen that night at the pool?

Teachers' resources available.

ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Black	Fleur Ferris	9781925324976	8-11	\$19.99		
Risk	Fleur Ferris	9780857986474	8-10	\$19.99		
Intruder	Christine Bongers	9780857983763	6-10	\$19.99		
Pretty Girl	J.C. Burke	9781741663136	10-12	\$19.99		
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