



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper secondary
(ages 14+)

CONTENTS

Plot summary	1
About the author	2
Author's inspiration	3
Key study topics	3
Further reading	5

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

Learning areas: English

General capabilities: Language, Literature,
Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking,
Personal and Social Capability

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

Discussions around grief, loss, relationships, family and love

Discussions around personal ethics, justice systems, punishment, mercy and the death penalty

Analysing how language and writing evoke mood, tone, tension and characterisation

Encouraging creative and imaginative writing

THEMES

Relationships

Friendships

Family

Grief, loss and survival

Punishment and the death penalty

Coming of age themes

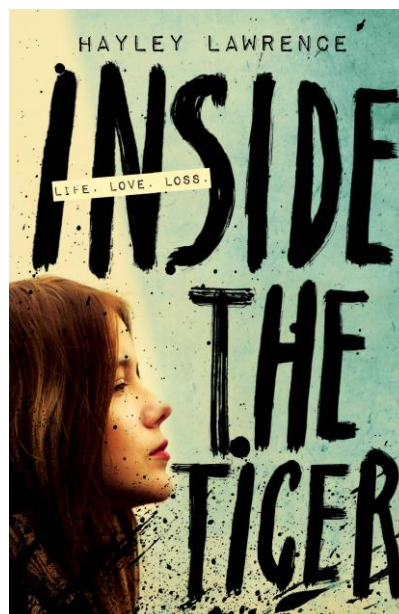
PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9780143788959 (paperback);
9781760146849 (ebook)

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Inside the Tiger Hayley Lawrence

PLOT SUMMARY

It's not because Bel's mother was murdered.
It's not because her father is a politician.

Bel writes to a Death Row prisoner as an easy way out of an assignment.

But now he's written back.

Drawn to Micah's world inside a Thai prison, Bel finds herself falling for the boy with ragged hair, shackles and a terrible past. But is she setting herself up for more loss? And will loving him mean losing the people who mean the most to her at home?

Whatever happens, none of them will ever be the same . . .

SYNOPSIS

A finalist for the Vogel's Literary Prize in 2017, *Inside the Tiger* is a gritty romance that explores love, grief, justice and idealism.

Bel was only a few days old when her mother was killed by a drug addict on a high. She was shipped off to a Sydney boarding school from the age of ten so that her father, now the Justice Minister, could dedicate himself to the cause of victim's rights. Now seventeen years on, Bel is tired of her dad's rallies, and has sworn off politics. So when she's forced to align herself with a

cause for a school assignment, Bel opts for an easy way out. She writes to a Death Row prisoner who she thinks will never write back. But when nineteen-year-old drug smuggler Micah responds, Bel finds herself drawn into the horror of his daily life. And as the letters continue, she begins to develop feelings for him.

During term break, Bel discovers that her friend Eli, who lives next door to her dad, has been on exchange to Thailand and plans to return. When he suggests going together, she decides it's the perfect opportunity to meet Micah, only she doesn't tell Eli about her plan to visit the prison.

After a miserable Christmas with her father, Bel talks him into letting her go to Thailand. On arrival, she breaks the news to Eli that she wants to visit Micah. Eli feels used, but agrees to support her and they visit the prison together. When Bel turns up with Eli, Micah is jealous and Bel's romantic notions about Micah are rocked.

As Bel and Eli leave Bangkok to travel north, Bel is confused about the two different versions of Micah. Then one night at a full moon festival, Eli confesses his love for her and they share a kiss, along with a bed, until Bel tells him she doesn't want to ruin their friendship. Eli says when the time is right, he wants them to be each other's first sexual experience.

Bel decides to give Micah one last chance to prove who he really is, so she tells Eli she wants to visit him again. Eli is hurt, but hopes it will be the last time. When Bel visits Micah the second time, he apologises for his behaviour, and says Bel means the world to him. Bel tells Eli she's giving Micah another chance, and Eli says she needs to choose between them, but it's a choice Bel can't make. Eli refuses to talk to her and they travel back to Sydney in silence.

On her arrival home, Bel is woken from political apathy and decides she needs to do more for Micah. Although her relationship with Eli is strained, he eventually agrees to help her stage a protest against the death penalty. When her protest goes viral however, Bel's dad says she has not only pitted herself against his political ideals, but is disrespecting the memory of her mother by befriendng a drug mule.

Bel goes ahead with the protest regardless. It receives international coverage, and when Micah's mother shows up, Bel realises how distraught his family are, since he's cut them off in an effort to protect them. After the protest, Bel's father helps her clean up. He apologises for being so absent and respects her decision to support prisoners, even though he doesn't agree with it.

The success of Bel's protest soon turns, as the Thai justice system retaliates with executions of foreign prisoners. A distraught Micah writes to Bel to tell her

that his friend has just been executed. He writes that what they have isn't real, it never was, and it has to end. Despite her apologies and letters, months pass with no contact from Micah. Bel has been cut off.

The media are relentless in the wake of the execution and Bel's father is called to front a press conference to defend her. Haunted by her own actions, Bel spends a night on the beach where she finally grieves for the mother she never got to know, and for Micah who she loved. Her dad's house is the only sanctuary she has left. And it now feels more like home. Bel also realises that what Micah needed all along was his own mum. She sends his mother airline tickets so that she can visit Micah, then lets Micah go.

Bel goes to Eli's house to tell him he's more than just the guy who picks up her pieces when things go wrong. They profess their love for each other and sleep together.

Micah finally writes to Bel, thanking her for the visit from his mum. He says the climate in prison has changed after her protest. He's hopeful of getting his sentence reduced to Life and returning to Australia to serve it.

On the day of Bel's final exams however, her father tells her the devastating news that Micah was denied the King's pardon and has been executed overnight. He comforts her through her grief, telling Bel never to stop being an idealist just because she has been burnt. At home, Eli is waiting, and she collapses into his arms.

By the first day of uni, Bel has reconciled the deaths of two people she loved on opposite sides of the law. She has also decided to study politics. Life is a gift, and while ever it belongs to her, she's determined to make beautiful things with it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hayley Lawrence worked as a lawyer in Sydney before trading city life for the coast when she married a pilot. Hayley now lives on the Mid-North Coast of NSW with her husband and five vivacious daughters who continue to bring joy and utter mayhem to her life. Despite leaving legal work, Hayley could not leave behind the stories of the people she encountered as a lawyer. They are stories that raise questions about the nature of humanity, and it's these questions that haunt her novels.

Hayley's debut novel, *Inside the Tiger*, was a finalist for the Australian's Vogel Literary Prize and won two fellowships at Varuna, the Writers' House.



AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

In writing *Inside the Tiger*, I wanted to give readers a sense of what it's like to walk in the shackles of a Death Row prisoner, and in the shoes of the people who love them – each are lonely and fearful places to be.

This story came easily to me because, like Bel, I wrote to a Death Row prisoner. Much of Micah's experience is based on what I learnt from writing for five years to Obi, a young Nigerian man on Death Row in Thailand. Over the years, I sent care packages and news from Australia to Obi – the birth of my first baby, then my second. Obi wrote back, always thankful for the help, happy to hear my news and share his. When our first daughter turned one, he made her a photo frame for her picture.

In 2007, my husband and I went to visit Obi in prison. He said he'd never been visited before, and didn't want to bring shame upon his family by telling his mother where he was. My meeting with Obi was nothing like Bel's meeting with Micah, but it was an unforgettable experience. My husband Chad was with me, and we chatted with Obi when he arrived, sharing the phone between us like Bel and Eli do in the story. Obi told us things he couldn't write in his letters, which were all subject to censorship from the guards. It became apparent to us that he was just a young guy who'd made a very poor choice out of desperation, but he would now pay for that choice with his life or a lifetime of imprisonment.

My experience writing to a person on Death Row gave me a valuable perspective on life, and I never dreamt I would one day write a novel about it. My novel isn't really about Obi, though – Micah is fictional and so is Bel's relationship with him, although some of Bel's concerns were concerns I shared. That's what happens when you get to know a person sentenced to die. However, Obi was one of the lucky ones – he had his sentence commuted to Life Imprisonment and was transferred back home to serve the remainder of his sentence at home. We lost contact then, but one day he may be eligible for parole and it's my hope that he is reunited with his mother and manages to get his life on track.

In writing this story, I also wanted to explore polar opposite worlds: the world of privilege and the world of disadvantage. This novel explores how we can be united across the divide of class through shared human experiences like grief, loss and love. It also explores the idea of responsibility being knitted into privilege.

I hope this story inspires readers to work towards changing the world in whatever ways they can. To stand up for what they believe is right. We all have gifts, and through our small actions, we can create big ripple effects. Finally, I hope all my readers find an Eli

on their travels, a noble person to stand beside them through hardships.

The death penalty is a hot and divisive issue, but *Inside the Tiger* is primarily the story of a girl finding her feet in a world that's familiar to most of us – with family dramas and heartache, friendships and unexpected romances. This isn't really a political story or a debate about ethics. First and foremost it's a story of love and hope. A story about imperfect people in imperfect places. Few of us have to face what Micah and Bel face in this novel. But at some point, we all have to deal with the question of what we believe is right, and the lengths we're prepared to go to in standing up for those beliefs.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

- One of the major themes of the novel is surviving and moving on from loss – death, relationship breakdown, survivor guilt and the death penalty are all touched on. Write a piece from one of the character's perspectives detailing their experience and coping strategies and how it affected their personality and relationships.
- Another major theme is idealism and advocating for change. Write a piece from one of the character's perspectives detailing one thing they are passionate about and how they would go about making a difference.
- Bel researches the different justice models in her exploration of the death penalty. What are your beliefs about rehabilitative versus retributive justice? Use examples from your experience – either big issues from the news or smaller scale from school or home.
- What is the novel's writing style? How effectively does this contribute to the novel's storytelling?
- How does the first-person point-of-view affect what is revealed to the reader and our feelings about the narrator? How might the story have been different if a third-person narration had been used?
- 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.
- How does the use of humour contribute to the storytelling?
- How does the author use letters, text messages, instant message and recorded video to move the story forward? What impact does this have on how we experience the characters in the novel and how we feel about them?
- What are some other ways this novel could have ended and how would that have affected your

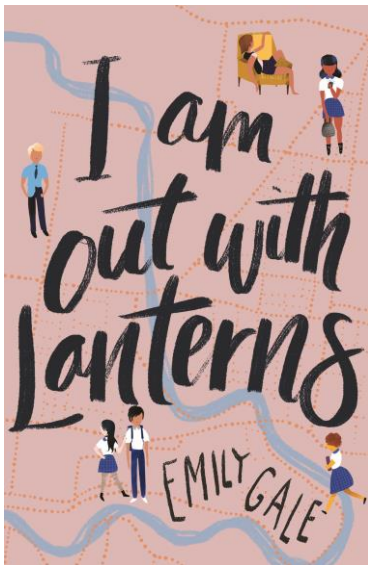


experience of the story and feelings about the characters?

- How does the book's title relate to its content? What does it refer to?
- Bel is against the death penalty, but many people aren't. Write a list of pros and cons about the death penalty.
- Discuss how the books and plays mentioned within the story are set against or support the major themes.
- Is Bel a purely sympathetic character? Discuss her character arc and development across the novel.
- Is Micah simply a tragic character? Discuss his character arc and development across the novel in light of his situation and the ending of the story.
- Discuss Eli in terms of his role as a secondary character. Where in the novel does he change the course of the story?
- Are there moral dilemmas in the book? Discuss how the various characters dealt with them and the fall out of their decisions.
- With reference to what you've learnt about Micah's life in a Thai prison, pretend you are also a prisoner in Thailand. Write out a diary entry detailing a day in your life, starting from the moment you wake. Include details about meals, sleeping quarters and outdoor activities.
- Drug trafficking features prominently in this novel. Discuss the impact drugs can have in a community. What other problems are fuelled by the drug trade?
- Imagine yourself as a foreign prisoner on death row. Write a letter to your parents or a sibling detailing which offence you were convicted for and professing your guilt or innocence. Include details of the country you were arrested in.
- This novel primarily discusses the death penalty as it related to Thailand, but there are many other countries around the world capital punishment is used as a punishment. Research the US and China to compare how the death penalty differs in each of these countries, according to methodology, media coverage, crimes committed and the numbers of people executed.
- Bel researches different methods used to execute prisoners around the world. Which of these, if any, do you believe is the most humane and why?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

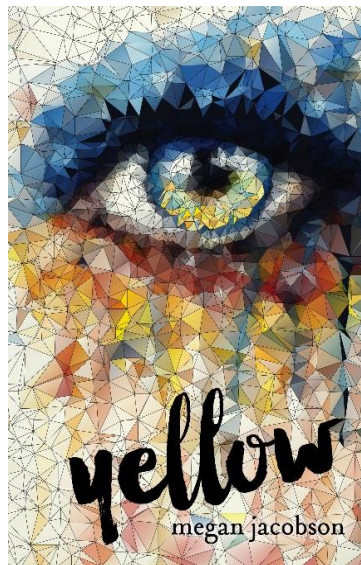


I Am Out With Lanterns
by Emily Gale

One of us is in the dark.
One of us is a bully.
One of us wants to be understood.
One of us loves a girl who loves another.
One of us remembers the past as if it just happened.
One of us believes they've drawn the future.
But we're all on the same map, looking for the same thing.

Year Ten begins with a jolt for best friends and neighbours Wren and Milo. Along with Hari, Juliet, Ben and Adie, they tell a story of friendship, family, wild crushes, bitter feuds, and the power of a portrait.

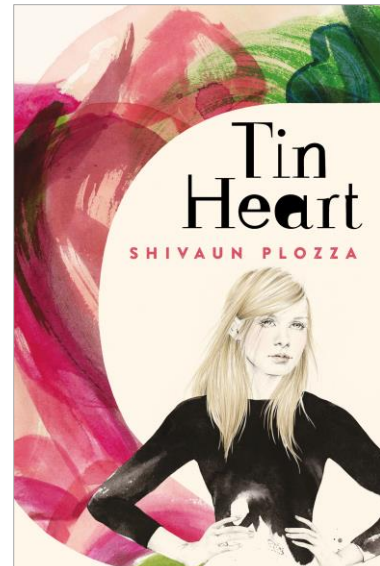
As their lives intertwine, images could bring them together, and tear them apart.



Yellow
by Megan Jacobson

If fourteen-year-old Kirra is having a mid-life crisis now, then it doesn't bode well for her life expectancy. Her so-called friends bully her, whatever semblance of a mother she had has been drowned at the bottom of a gin bottle ever since her dad left them for another woman, and a teenage ghost is speaking to her through a broken phone booth.

Kirra and the ghost make a pact. She'll prove who murdered him almost twenty years ago if he makes her popular, gets her parents back together, and promises not to haunt her. But things aren't so simple, and Kirra realises that people can be haunted in more ways than one.



Tin Heart
by Shivaun Plozza

When Marlowe gets a heart transplant and a second chance at life, all she wants is to thank her donor's family. Maybe then she can move on. Maybe then she'll discover who she is if she's no longer The Dying Girl.

But with a little brother who dresses like every day is Halloween, a vegan warrior for a mother and an all-out war with the hot butcher's apprentice next door, Marlowe's life is already pretty complicated. And her second chance is about to take an unexpected turn . . .



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Inside the Tiger	Hayley Lawrence	9780143788959	14+	\$19.99		
I Am Out With Lanterns	Emily Gale	9780143782766	14+	\$17.99		
Tin Heart	Shivaun Plozza	9780143786276	14+	\$19.99		
Yellow	Megan Jacobson	9780143573333	14+	\$19.99		
The Centre of My Everything	Allayne L. Webster	9780143783336	14+	\$19.99		
All the Bright Places	Jennifer Niven	9780141357034	14+	\$17.99		
Our Chemical Hearts	Krystal Sutherland	9780143573906	14+	\$19.99		
The Piper's Son (YA crossover, 16+)	Melina Marchetta	9780143203421	16+	\$19.99		
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