



RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper secondary
(ages 14+)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Language, Literature, Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Analysing how language and writing create mood, tone, tension and characterisation
- Analysing literary tropes and narratives
- Encouraging creative and imaginative writing

THEMES

- Friendship
- Family
- Love
- Fairytales
- Creativity

PREPARED BY

Jodi McAlister and Penguin Random House
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Valentine

Jodi McAlister

PLOT SUMMARY

Four teenagers – all born on the same Valentine's Day – begin to disappear. As the bodies mount up, Pearl Linford has to work out what in the supernatural hell is going on, before it happens to her.

Finn Blacklin is the boy with whom Pearl shares a birthday, the boy she has known all her life and disliked every second of it, the boy her subconscious has a totally annoying crush on. Finn is also the Valentine: a Seelie fairy changeling swapped for a human boy at birth. The Unseelie have come to kill the Valentine – except they don't know who it is. And now both the Seelie and the Unseelie think Pearl is the Valentine, and if they find out she isn't, she'll disappear too.

Pearl must use all her wits to protect herself. Finn must come to terms with his newfound heritage. And then there's the explosive chemistry between them that neither of them know quite what to do about . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jodi is an author and academic from Kiama, a seaside holiday town on the south coast of New South Wales. She is a literary historian, and her PhD was awarded by Macquarie University in 2015. She is currently a lecturer in English at the University of Tasmania. Her academic work focuses on the history of love, sex, women and girls, popular culture and literatures. It means that reading romance novels and watching *The Bachelor* is technically work for her.

You can find Jodi on Twitter at @JodiMcA, where she tweets regularly about her research, her writing, cool things she finds interesting, her hero worship of Kate Bush, and rainbows outside her office window.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Jodi says:

When I was a teenager, one of the questions that used to keep me up at night was wondering how I would react if something terrible happened.

When I say 'something terrible', I don't mean something that's obviously awful but that's also kind of normal. It was definitely pretty terrible when my beloved grandmother died, but this is an experience that a lot of people have. I wanted to know what I would do if something terrible and extraordinary happened: if aliens suddenly swooped down on my town, or if dragons turned out to be real (and angry), or – as is the case in *Valentine* – some of those fairytales we have whispered to us at night turned out to be real after all.

These are some of my favourite books to read: books where everything is normal, until it's not. And what would I do, I wonder, if my normal world suddenly became terribly not-normal?

This is one of the questions I explore in *Valentine*. Haylesford, where Pearl Linford and Finn Blacklin live, is the most normal of normal towns, until a black horse comes galloping out of the night and everything starts to change. It doesn't happen quickly – at first, it's only little things – but once it gets going and the bodies start piling up, the unreal becomes the new reality for Pearl and Finn pretty damn quickly.

And this is a question they both have to face. When things aren't ordinary any more – when things are extraordinary – what do you do? How do you cope?

One of the most useful rules for writing I've ever heard is that action informs character: that what a character does tells us what kind of person they are. Because of this, this central question – what do you do when something terrible happens? – was incredibly important to me when writing this book. To understand the kind of people Pearl and Finn were, I had to work out how they would react to the intrusion of the terrifying and the fantastical into their everyday world. Would they try to run? Try to hide? Would they freeze? Or would they fight?

I still don't know how I would react if I were in Pearl or Finn's shoes. While both characters, especially Pearl, have elements of me in them, they are not me and this is not my story. (Or is it? Maybe I did have to deal with marauding fairies thinking I was their Chosen One when I was in high school. YOU'LL NEVER KNOW.) But spending time with them and asking myself this same question – how do you react when something terrible happens? – over and over again has helped me realise how I would like to react.

I'd like to be brave. I'd like to be defiant. I'd like to be smart. I'd like to save my family and friends and everyone that I love.

But most of all, I would like to survive. I would like to live.

What about you?

Questions

1. If you were faced with an extraordinary event, how do you think you would react? Write about an imagined scenario and how you think you would behave.
2. Create a character and describe how you think they would respond to a terrible event. What does this tell you about this character?

Activities

3. What constitutes a fairytale? What do you think are the essential components?
4. Write your own fairytale, re-telling a traditional story in the present day.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Research faerie mythology and its history in literature and folklore.
2. Find examples of contemporary re-interpretations of fairytales that up-end our traditional expectations of this genre.

WRITING STYLE

Questions

3. What is the writing style of *Valentine* like?
Consider the story's structure, how and when information is revealed, and the authorial voice. How effectively do these elements contribute to the novel's storytelling?
4. How does the first-person point-of-view affect what is revealed to the reader? What does Pearl know or not know at different points in the story? How might the story have been different if a third-person narration had been used?
5. 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 character's perspective.
6. Sometimes Pearl's narration falls into the category of 'stream of consciousness', where the rules of ordered narration and sometimes even grammar don't apply. What's the effect of this kind of stream of consciousness narration and what does it tell us about Pearl's mental state?
7. How does the book's title relate to its content? What does it refer to?

THEMES

- Friendship
- Family
- Love
- Fairytales
- Creativity

Friendship, Family and Love

Questions

- What are the most important relationships in *Valentine*? What evidence can you find in the text to suggest that these relationships are important to Pearl?

(For instance: Pearl decides not to lie to Shad and Disey, chooses to save Phil, etc.)

Fairytales

Questions

1. What fairytale tropes and/or narratives can you see in *Valentine*? How are these updated or subverted?

(For instance, Pearl's coma and her waking by Finn is a reference to the fairytale *Sleeping Beauty* – although there are obviously considerable differences!)

Creativity

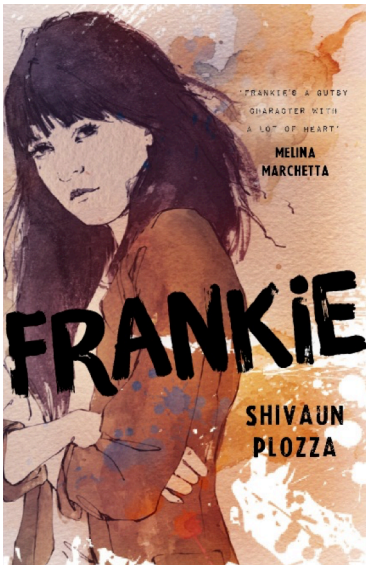
Consider the following in *Valentine*:

- Songwriting
- Social media
- Text messages

Create your own creative work incorporating one or more of the forms noted above, or in a form of your own choosing, to express one of the themes of *Valentine*.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Frankie
by Shivaun Plozza

Frankie Vega is angry. Just ask the guy whose nose she broke. Or the cop investigating the burglary she witnessed, or her cheating ex-boyfriend or her aunt who's tired of giving second chances . . .

When a kid shows up claiming to be Frankie's half brother, it opens the door to a past she doesn't want to remember. And when that kid goes missing, the only person willing to help is a boy with stupidly blue eyes . . . and secrets of his own.

Frankie's search for the truth could change her life, or cost her everything.



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.



Our Chemical Hearts
by Krystal Sutherland

Henry Page has never been in love. 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.

ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Valentine	Jodi McAlister	9780143574163	8 +	\$19.99		
Frankie	Shivaun Plozza	9780143573166	8 +	\$19.99		
Yellow	Megan Jacobson	9780143573333	8 +	\$19.99		
Our Chemical Hearts	Krystal Sutherland	9780143573906	8 +	\$19.99		
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