



# TEACHERS' NOTES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary  
(Ages 9+, years 4 to 8)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and creative thinking, Ethical understanding, Personal and social capability

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Great mystery story told from three different points of view – good example of multiple points of view text.
- An example of an author/illustrator using both text and illustration to create a particular atmosphere within a novel.
- Has themes about friendship, kindness, responsibility . . . and it's funny.

## THEMES

- School activities and mysteries
- Friendship and kindness
- Responsibility and power

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

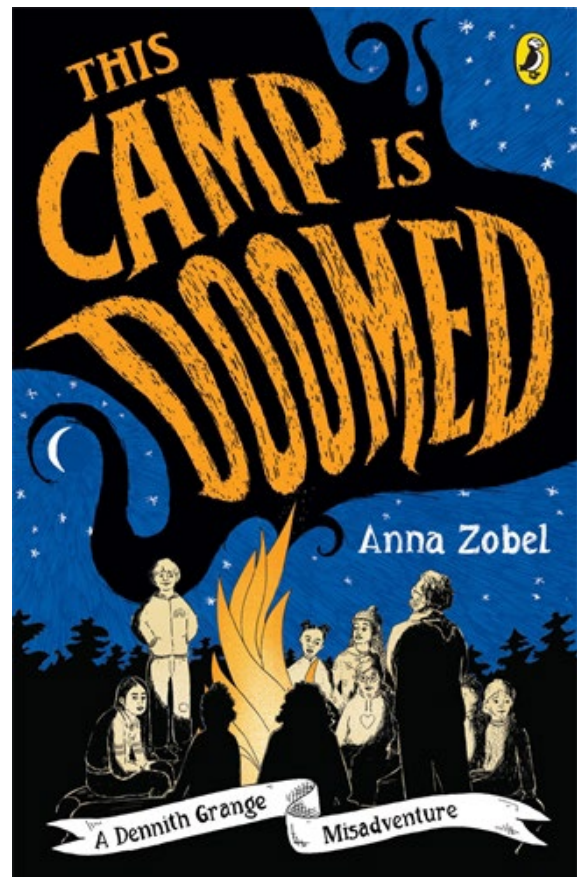
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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## This Camp is Doomed: A Dennith Grange Misadventure Anna Zobel

## PLOT SUMMARY

A run-down camp in the woods.

No phone reception.

Ten students with untested powers

Céline is seeing conspiracies everywhere. Fionn has a bad premonition about the colour blue. Mr Berg is horrified at the camp's questionable safety standards. Something is definitely not right at Camp Buttress.

This hilarious and quirky new novel by Anna Zobel will keep you guessing as the students and their teachers try to solve the mystery – and survive.

## PRAISE FOR *THIS CAMP IS DOOMED*

- 'With a cast of extraordinary kids with fantastical powers, *This Camp is Doomed* is a deliciously spooky mystery, filled with magic, mischief and mayhem that will have readers giggling one minute and gasping with shock the next. Loved it.'  
– SUE WHITING, author of the Pearly and Pig series
- 'A funny, clever mystery about a school camp that starts out as a nightmare – and gets worse!'  
– A.L. TAIT, author of *The Fire Star*
- 'A cosy blend of whimsy, friendship and super powers, this mystery will keep you guessing until the very end!' – ALISON EVANS, author of *Euphoria Kids*
- 'An intriguing mystery starring an equally intriguing cast.' – TIM HARRIS, author of *Mr Bambuckle's Remarkables*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Zobel is an author and illustrator from Melbourne. Her middle-grade novel *Little Gem* was a CBCA Notable in 2022, and was also shortlisted for the Readings Prize. She is the illustrator of several books including *Who's Your Real Mum?*, which was listed for the CBCA and the White Raven Award. Anna is a gallery teacher with a primary background, and she is inspired by all the children she has encountered through her work.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Anna says:

*This Camp is Doomed* started as a kind of challenge. It was January 2021 and I'd just left my classroom teaching role. In Melbourne we were in a weird period – not of lockdown, exactly, but lots of restrictions, so I had time on my hands. My friend Lucy and I decided to challenge ourselves to write something new. We were writing buddies, basically. Lucy was working on a screenplay, and I set myself the task of developing an adventure story with a cast of both children and adults. That was the initial idea. I was inspired by some of my favourite narratives that have characters of all ages: *School of Rock*, in particular. I love that movie. I'm a teacher, and I was a relief teacher for two years, just like Ned Schneebly. So I thought – well, what's a setting that would take a group of kids away from adequate adult supervision? I considered a hotel, or a hiking trip, but settled pretty quickly on a school camp. I was inspired by all the camps I went on as a kid, especially the bad ones. I was inspired by other peoples' camp stories, too. Like my father-in-law, for

example – he's a teacher, and once, on a Year Nine camp, he was attacked by a goose in the shower block and had to run out into the yard in his towel. Maybe I've embellished that, actually. That story was in the book for a bit but I ended up cutting it out.

After the setting was decided, I began to develop the characters. I worked on the teachers first. The anxious parts of Michael Berg are based on myself. When I was a classroom teacher the idea of taking a school camp filled me with absolute dread. The best parts of him are based on my partner, Sean, a VCE Literature teacher. And Maggie – she's all Lucy. That opening scene where Maggie arrives to catch the bus was based on the time I offered to drive Lucy to the airport. When I arrived, she was wearing a tie-dye t-shirt and a bucket hat and tiny sunglasses, and she'd packed three grocery bags and two very small backpacks – and, somehow, she hadn't packed her toothbrush or her phone. The drawings of Maggie are all drawn from photos of Lucy. It's fair to say I was very inspired by her, and encouraged by her, too. She was the one who pushed me to leave classroom teaching, and I'm so glad she did.

As for the student characters – well, I was inspired by my students. I've met so many amazing kids in my teaching career. In 2020 I had a Grade Four class, the last class I ever had, and they wrote the most delightfully outlandish stories. '*The boy turned around,*' began one narrative; '*he was in another dimension. He said, 'HELLO ANYBODY HERE?' The devil said 'I'M HERE'.*' Brilliant stuff. I wanted the students in my book to be twelve years old because it's quite a difficult age, I think, and a funny age, too. The other day I was working with some twelve-year-olds, actually, and they were all so weird. One of them insisted I smell a dirty soccer bib 'for the memories'. I don't know. It's just an age where you have totally disparate interests, and you're all wildly different heights, and you're cripplingly self-conscious but also totally unaware. I was a weirdo, too, when I was twelve. I collected rocks. My pockets were full of weird talismans – tiny cushions I'd sewn out of velvet, gumnuts, biscuits. I'd tell my classmates I wasn't going to high school because I was going to Middle Earth, to be an elf. I was tall and had huge, crooked teeth. It's a painful age, but a nice one, too.

I decided to include powers because I thought it was a good analogy of puberty. It's also a really lazy way of solving problems in the plot. Once I had the characters sorted, and had decided on their individual powers, I just basically packed the whole cast off to camp and went from there. I definitely could have planned it better, but it was so much fun to write – I'd encounter a problem in the plot and then think, 'Wait, Halima could solve this with her power!' It was thrilling.



### Questions

1. Anna says that she was inspired by one of her favourite movies, *School of Rock*. If you were going to be inspired to write a story based on a movie or TV show you love, which would it be? Which elements of that movie or show make it stand out to you?
2. Anna used to be a full-time classroom teacher. How do you think this has helped her write *This Camp is Doomed*? How would the story be different if she had never been a teacher?
3. Do you think authors always use their own experiences in their stories? What effect will this have on their stories? Do you ever use ideas and past events from your own life in your writing?
4. What ingredient turns your own memory of something into a piece of creative fiction?
5. The author mentions that there was a scene based on her father-in-law in the book, but she ended up cutting it out. Why do you think it didn't stay in the story? Why do authors decide to cut things like this – and sometimes even whole characters – out of the narrative?

### PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover of the book. What do you think the book will be about?
2. How has the designer created a sense of mystery and wonder?
3. Do you think there will be mystery elements in the story? What makes you think this?
4. How has the choice of fonts helped create the right tone for the cover?
5. Analyse elements of the book cover design by Kristy Lund-White and comment on what makes them effective. Consider colours, fonts and images in your discussion. Why were these elements chosen?
6. What would you have done differently if you were designing this book cover?
7. The author – Anna Zobel – has also created all the illustrations for the cover. What are the advantages in being both the author and the illustrator for the same story? Can you think of any disadvantages?

### WRITING/ILLUSTRATING STYLE

#### Questions

1. How many character points of view tell the story in *This Camp is Doomed*?
2. Why do you think the author has included an adult voice (Mr Berg) in the points of view? How does this make the book stand out from others you have read? Did you like hearing from Mr Berg during the story? Why or why not?



3. How has the author ensured that the reader knows whose point of view they are in during each section of the story? How does the design of the book help with this?
4. Anna has not only written the story but has illustrated it as well. Do you think she has a distinctive illustration style? What are some specific elements that create her style?



Look at the Prologue (p.1) and Epilogue (p.303). Why do you think the author included these as a part of the story? How would the novel be (or feel) different if there were no Prologue or Epilogue? Do you think they add extra information to the story? Can you think of other stories that use this literary device at the start and end of the narrative?

6. What mystery story elements can you find in the narrative? Are there plot elements that are in all mystery stories?

### Activities

- Read a section of the story from each of the point of view characters. What makes their voices different from one another? How has the author made sure that they all sound like individual separate characters?
- Anna has used a lot of symbolic images as a part of the chapter openers. Why do you think she's chosen these images? Choose three chapters throughout the story. How are they reflective of the text in that chapter to follow?
- Choose a character other than Mr Berg, Céline or Fionn. Next, choose a scene you really enjoyed from the story. Write this scene from your chosen character's point of view. (You might have to make sure they are a character that appears in that scene.)

## KEY STUDY TOPICS

### Friendship

#### Questions

1. If you could become friends with one of the characters from the story who would it be? Why did you choose that character?
2. Fionn and Luca are best friends. What make their friendship so strong?
3. Céline worries about having trouble making friends. Have you ever found it hard to approach new people or to chat with classmates you don't know so well? What tips would you give to people about making friends?
4. Why do you think it take a while for Céline and Yvette to become friends? Do you think they will stay friends after the camp?
5. Do you think that the kids at Camp Buttress will stay friends after their adventure? Why or why not?

6. Do you think Mr Berg and Ms Malatesta will remain friends?
7. Céline and Teddy used to be best friends, but now they're not. Why do you think some friendships don't last forever? Do you think Teddy and Céline will be friends again after the camp? Do you think perhaps it will be a different type of friendship?



### Powers

#### Questions

1. If you had a 'power' what would it be?
2. Once you've chosen your power, think about whether you'd choose a job where you could use your power, or if you'd work somewhere not related to what you can do with your gift. Why have you made this decision?
3. Do you think the fact that people in this world have powers is a main part of the story? Would the narrative be just as effective if the kids didn't have powers? Why or why not?
4. Being a 'paired powers' in this world is a serious thing. Do you think there could be instances when being a paired power would be positive? What types of job could benefit from a person with two powers?
5. The kids have to attend Me and My Power classes when they are at high school. Do you think this is a good idea?



### Activities

- After choosing your power, create/draw a registration card for yourself.
- List all the different powers mentioned in the book, putting them into the categories mentioned in the story. (Enhanced Mental Skill, Reality Manipulation, Extra Sensory Perception etc] Are there any powers you can think of that aren't in the book?
- Anna in her Author Inspiration note, mentioned that giving the characters powers was a good way to help get around some plot problems. Find two instances in the book (apart from the climax) where this is evident.
- Can you find examples in the story of people abusing their powers?
- Pretend you work for the Department of Power Abuse. Create a list or a document outlining rules for living your everyday life with a power.

### KEY QUOTES

1. *'It was fine when other kids asked for what they needed, like the bathroom or a snack or some water – it just wasn't fine for him, somehow. It was embarrassing. Worse than embarrassing; it was mortifying.'* (p. 11-12) Fionn and Céline are both worried during the story about some things being embarrassing. Do you think they have good reason for this? Have you had moments when you felt embarrassed about something? How did you get through these times? What advice would you give Céline and Fionn to help them?
2. *'His favourite ceremony of all was Year Seven Camp Week, which marked the tumultuous year in which students began to develop their powers. The seventh-graders of Dennith Grange had the special privilege of choosing between nine different camps, which provided them, according to the school website, with a 'unique self-directed education adventure' and a 'transition to maturity and independence'* (p. 31) Have you been on a school camp? What do you think the aim of the camp was? What did you learn on camp? Do you think the aim was similar to Principal Wallace's camp goals?
3. *'Let's tell ghost stories.'* (p. 88) It's a time-honoured tradition to tell ghost stories at camp. Why do you think this is the case? Why do people enjoy being scared?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

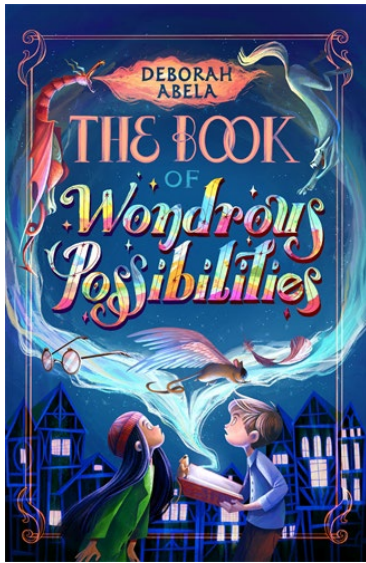
- Why do you think this story is called a 'misadventure' and not an 'adventure'?
- What is a premonition? Have you ever had a premonition about something? How does the idea of a premonition help to create tension in a mystery novel?



### ACTIVITIES

- Draw a map of Camp Buttress. Include as many buildings and locations from the story as you can. You could even include the forest and the path to the swing and the Hilltop Treehouse.
- Using the clipboard of the camp students at the start of the book as a guide, draw up a guide to your class and all the students in it.
- Create a letter from the Department of Power Abuse to the Klock family outlining their First Notice of Revocation Refusal. (Use the second letter they received on page 234 as a guide.)
- Céline loves reading *Big City Witch* – a manga series about a detective witch. Create your own idea for a manga series or a graphic novel. Outline who your main character might be and also the basic plot of your story.
- In the story, Céline's point of view is indicated by a book at the start of her section. Mr Berg's is flagged with a pair of glasses and Fionn's by his citrine necklace. Choose three of the other students and create illustrations that could represent their characters and their points of view.
- Looking back through the stories, can you pick up clues as to Grandma Daizie's real identity? What are some things that give her away once you know the truth?

FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*The Book of Wondrous Possibilities*  
by Deborah Abela

Arlo Goodman lives with his Uncle Avery in a run-down flat above their bookshop. He has no friends, except for his pet mouse, Herbert.

But when a girl called Lisette bursts into the shop and begs him to hide her from a murderer, Arlo's life changes forever.

He's swept up into an adventure involving kidnapers, car chases and a story in *The Book of Wondrous Possibilities*, where Arlo and his skymouse battle dragons. But can Arlo find the courage to battle an even greater enemy, who threatens to destroy everything he loves?

*Teachers' notes available.*



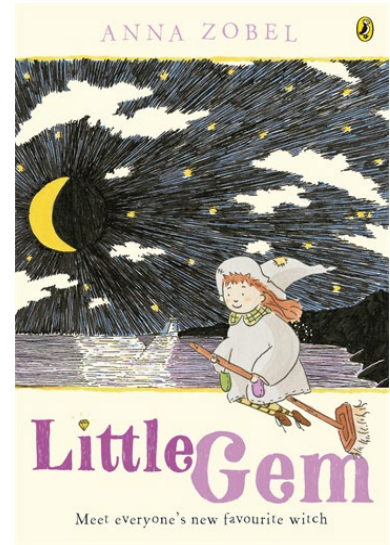
*Monster Island*  
by George Ivanoff

After following his mum to her top-secret new job, Bernie finds himself on a mysterious remote island inside the Bass Strait Triangle. The scientists working there call it Monster Island, and Bernie soon discovers why...

Here, extinct and mythical creatures are alive! But that's not the only mystery. Why are there so many mushrooms? Where have the hostile black drones come from? Who controls them? And why are they spying on the creatures on the island?

Bernie and his new friend Ivy are determined to find out.

*Teachers' notes available.*



*Little Gem*  
by Anna Zobel

Sometimes getting a little lost can help you discover who you really are...

When her spell at Witchcraft School goes wrong, Gem lands in an unfamiliar, empty cottage, outside a strange, colourful town.

Everyone in Ellsworth Pining thinks Gem is their new village witch, even when Gem tries to correct them. And Gem's new friends do need her. The Weather Worker is missing, and there are tales of a terrifying beast in the woods.

Gem might know a spell that could help – if she can get it right.

*Teachers' notes available.*



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
<b>This Camp is Doomed: A Dennith Grange Misadventure</b>	Anna Zobel	9781761047565	4-8	\$16.99		
The Book of Wondrous Possibilities	Deborah Abela	9781761044021	4-6	\$16.99		
Monster Island	George Ivanoff	9781761047244	5-7	\$16.99		
Little Gem	Anna Zobel	9781760896089	3-5	\$14.99		
Little Gem and the Mysterious Letters	Anna Zobel	9781760896096	3-5	\$14.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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<p>NAME: _____</p> <p>SCHOOL: _____</p> <p>ADDRESS: _____</p> <p>STATE: _____</p> <p>POSTCODE: _____</p> <p>TEL: _____</p> <p>EMAIL: _____</p> <p>ACCOUNT NO.: _____</p> <p>PURCHASE ORDER NO.: _____</p>	<p>PLEASE SEND ORDER FORMS TO YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION SUPPLIER.</p>
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