



TEACHING NOTES



Crossed Spaces

Edited by Lynne Stringer and R.A. Stephens

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Reading Level: 13+ years

A handsome clockmaker fixes a broken time machine to help a cursed lady. A young scientist betrays his people to protect an alien species. A girl bonds with her new technological helper and sees in him a personality and a soul. A boy finds his whole life changing when his best friend writes in a mysterious notebook. A crew aboard a settlement spaceship discover that sleeping passengers have gone missing.

Come on a journey of exploration with aliens, spacecrafts, bewildering technology and even ghosts. In these seventeen stories humanity is pushed to its limit and forced to question what is most important in life.

Themes

- Friendship • Family relationships • Romance
- Identity and perception • Humanity • Truth seeking • Good vs Evil

Discussion Questions & Classroom Activities:

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. a) Who are the most developed characters in the collection? Do we understand what these characters want, and how the story's conflict stands in their way?
b) Can you tell if the characters in the collection are round or flat characters? Why? The following can be reviewed for information about round and flat characters: [Britannica](#) [Youtube](#)
 - Ask students to complete the following table after choosing a story from the collection to review:

Character	Round	Flat	Justification

2. Choose a story from the collection. What are key elements and signifiers that help to convey the main message or theme of your chosen story?
3. Did you relate to any specific short story in this collection?
4. How do you think editors would have planned this collection and the order, can you see any relation between the stories?
5. How might point of view affect a story? For example Light Club is told in first person, by Linton. How might the story change if its point of view was third person? How could it differ if told by another character, for example one of the Three, or Bassa, or Bly?
6. Do any of these stories make you think about the current anxiety of the situations in the world? Do you relate to any? If you were challenged to write a story with the theme of "Crossed Spaces" what would it make you write? Try writing this.
7. How do the different landscapes of the various stories demonstrate about the theme of said story?

Story	Key features of this setting	What this represents about the theme

THEMES

Friendship (Designer Ghost)

1. What constitutes a friend? Do friends have to be human or can you bond with something originally artificial?
2. 'If it is capable of learning and feeling does it have a soul?' was a question asked by the author Emily Larkin. Respond to this statement and how it might affect the relationship you have.

3. What have the friendships between Nikki and Caitlyn, Nikki and her brother and Nikki and the possum ghost got in common and what are the differences between them?

Family Relationships (*Faulty Connections, Romano’s, The Seeking of Javan*)

1. What do you think the implications of the main theme of Faulty Connections has on the way the virtual world has developed?
2. Have you ever been in a position where you have realised that you spend more time online than in person with others? Do you think this has increased during the pandemic? How do you feel about it?
3. Do you think that virtual contact can make up for a lack of physical contact? Why/Why not?
4. What do you think makes a healthy family relationship?
5. In Romano’s, Emily develops a stronger relationship with Benny than she has with her own mother, why do you think this is? What do you think is important to have in a parent-child relationship?
6. What do you think makes a family? How do you connect to your loved ones? Individually, is there anything different about how to see family?

Romance (*The Clockmaker and the Time Machine, The True Written Life of Ed Specolta*)

1. What do you think is most important in a romantic relationship?
2. Have you ever been, or know someone who has, in a position where it was healthier to part ways or one partner has tried to reshape the other? What do you think about the two relationships in these short stories?

Identity and Perception (*The True Life of Ed Specolta, Over and Out, The Seeking of Javan*)

1. Do you think that you have people close to you that perceive you differently than you perceive yourself?
2. There are a few characters that are perceived a certain way by the main character, but are later identified as to being different from that impression. Why do you think this is? What do you think shapes our perception of others?
3. How do you identify yourself? What aspects of your identity do you think people notice?
4. Do you have aspects of your identity that you are unfamiliar with, or anxious to approach?
5. Choose a story and complete the following table to explore how the characters’ view themselves, and how this differs from how others’ see them. Which version is more accurate?

Character	How they see themselves	How others see them

Humanity (*Traitor, Endymion, The Seeking of Javan, Eboneezer's Cafe, Light Club*)

1. Humanity is defined as being human and likened to being benevolent. Are the actions of Callan Sorenson and Leah more or less humane than each other? And are the circumstances they are put in humane themselves?
2. Is the humanity of individuals questioned when they are protecting something that isn't "human"?
3. What do you think humanity is?
4. In *The Seeking of Javan*, humanity is seen as preserved, although, do you think the Inside or the Outside show a truer version of humanity?
5. Science Fiction has often been called 'the literature of ideas'. This speculative fiction genre invites an author to explore different worlds speculating on futuristic concepts, scientific and technological advancements, and the impact they may have on society. In the short story, *Traitor*, written by Geraldine Borella the author brings us to a new world, an exoplanet called POLI1. Compare and contrast the new world to the human world we live in now. What are the scientific concepts explored? What are the differences in societal norms for the inhabitants of POLI1 compared to the human world?
6. Is the continuing of the human race important? Why/why not? If people no longer existed, how would that change the world for living things left behind? Looking at *Eboneezer's Cafe* what would you prioritise if you'd been in Gina's position - finding somewhere for everyone to live, or having children to grow up there if/when they find it?
7. If we want to avoid a future like Eboneezer's what could we do? Is climate change an important topic, why/why not? Discuss what the Goldilocks Zone is, and the complexities involved in having to find an alternate planet for humans to live on (should we ever be faced with that).
8. Linton longs to belong but is rejected and ostracised by the plains club and by Bassa when he doesn't conform to their behaviour. What gives him strength? Does he feel any sense of compassion?
9. Contrast the two Light Clubs: the group playing games on the plain and the group wandering the dark, offering light. What demands do they make on their members? What do they offer? Which would you choose, and why?
10. The setting of Light Club is never explained, only described from Linton's point of view with his limited knowledge. What can you guess about the past from hints in the story?
11. Linton is a mechanical person. What are his limitations? How is he like a human?

Truth Seeking (*Traitor, Endymion, Arrogance is Death, The True Written Life of Ed Specolta, Over and Out, The Seeking of Javan, Light Club*)

1. Many of the short stories deal with a shift in perception or truths. Sometimes, these truths are covered up, and sometimes they are sought out. Do you think any of the characters would have been better off if they had told the truth or decided to not seek it?
2. Do you think there are truths that are better untold?
3. In *Traitor* the scientist on board Peregrine IR, Callan Sorensen, appears to believe that the inhabitants of POLI1 are more advanced than humans. How does he come to this conclusion? Do you agree or disagree with him?
4. The captain on board Peregrine IR clashes with the civilian scientist, mocking him and refusing to provide him with resources to enable him to explore the planet. While the scientist appears open-

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minded, a seeker of knowledge, the captain comes across as narrow-minded and dismissive. The captain displays a type of scientific anti-intellectualism, a mistrust of scientific intellect. Can you think of examples in our society today where scientific anti-intellectualism is displayed? Why do you think this is occurring? What can we do to combat it?

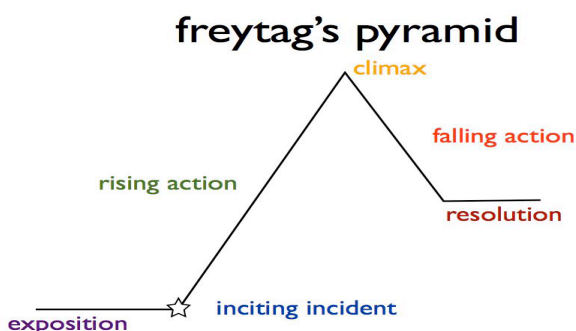
5. History shows there are many traitors who betrayed their nations/people. Some examples include: Judas Iscariot, Benedict Arnold, Tokyo Rose, Oskar Schindler. The scientist in this story betrays his people out of moralistic intention. Can you think of other historical figures or contemporary figures who might be considered as traitors? What act of betrayal did they commit? What were their motivations? Do you agree with what they did? Or disagree? Why?
6. In *Light Club* Ages is only a voice in the darkness, and Linton never sees him. This suggests that Ages might only exist in Linton's mind. What else in the story supports this idea?

Good vs Evil

1. In many of the short stories, there seem to be “wrongs and rights”, do you think these are obvious, and why? Do you think they are clear? For example, are there instances where characters are doing something that could be both right and wrong? Why?
2. Do you think you have internal biases as to what is wrong and right?
3. Jennie Del Mastro wrote the following about *Light Club*: ‘Fear of danger makes Linton careful in the darkness; fear of evil sends him running from Ages’ aggression and destructiveness. But fear of pain stops him from opening his chest to have his candle lit. Fear keeps him safe but also hinders him from accepting what will truly help him.’ Discuss this, was it truly fear? What can we do when fear holds us back?

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND PLOT

1. Choose a story. Why do you think the author chose to narrate this story through different perspectives?
2. Find an alternative viewpoint or ‘gap’ in the story and write 500-1000 words. Consider the narrator’s motivations and backstory. How will these things influence their voice?
3. Identify different plot points in the narrative, using the following diagram and descriptions. Discuss differences of opinion in the class.



[Diagram Source.](#)

Exposition: Introductory information to establish the setting and provide background information about the characters.

Inciting incident: A moment or event that acts as the catalyst for the rising action in the story and causes a significant change in the protagonist's life.

Rising action: Events and choices that drive the action towards the climax. The rising action often involves making allies, friends and enemies; encountering setbacks; and finding solutions or partial-solutions to problems.

Climax: The moment of greatest tension in the story, where the protagonist is tested and the deeper truth of their identity is revealed.

Falling action: Events that follow the climax and portray its aftermath to lessen the narrative tension.

Resolution: The ending of the story, which often establishes a 'new normal' for one or more characters. Resolutions may involve various degrees of happiness or sorrow; involve a plot twist; or feature a level of ambiguity. However, resolutions usually stay true to the overall tone of the narrative and suggest how the protagonist has changed, even if they do not neatly tie up all the loose ends.

CREATING THE ANTHOLOGIES

As mentioned in the foreword *Crossed Spaces* was put together as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Crossed Spaces* was a way to escape confinement and build worlds that were unusual or completely foreign. They were chosen from many submissions and put together for their unique world building.

1. What was your favourite story from the collection and which one did you most connect with?
2. Would you have guessed that this collection was born out of the COVID-19 pandemic? Why or why not?

CREATIVE WRITING EXERCISES

Write your own short story set in the science fiction/dystopian genre. Use some of these tips from editor Lynne Stringer.

A lot of people think writing a 50,000-word novel is a monumental task, but believe it or not, it can be a lot harder to write a short story than a long one. It requires an idea that you can hold in your hand.

A short story is a story from 1000–7500 words. Finding a story idea that can fit into that word count can be tricky because, in a short story, you have to do the same thing you have to do in a full-length novel. You need to have an introduction, complication and resolution, and the story should feel complete or the reader will leave it feeling dissatisfied.

Here are a few tips that might help you as you experiment with writing a short story.

1. Try and find a simple idea

This can be trickier than it sounds, but a simple idea will take fewer words to tell, thereby reducing the word count. This comes back to what I said in the first paragraph about an idea you can hold in your hand. The more compact your story is, the shorter it can be, but it can still be intimate, entertaining and engrossing. A simple idea doesn't mean boring.

2. Only do what you must to set the scene

There's always a temptation when writing any story to include loads of backstory and description to set the scene. Even in a full-length novel, too much of this can be a problem, but certainly in a short story, if you include a lot of that, you won't fit in your plot. Try to be as lean as possible without resorting to telling the story instead of showing it.

3. Cut down the number of characters

The more characters you have, the longer your story will be as you introduce them all and establish their place in the story. Try and limit the number of characters as much as possible. It will leave more space for the plot.

4. Make sure there's a reason for every sentence

Everything you include in your story must have a valid reason for being there. Don't be afraid to be brutal or to experiment with removing something to see if the story works without it. Often you'll be surprised how well your story stands without that part you thought was indispensable. The good thing about this is it will teach you to be lean and clean with all your writing, which will make the pace faster and more engaging.

5. Start strong, end strong

Make sure your opening sentence and paragraph hook the reader, preferably by making them aware of the stakes immediately. Also, make sure you end strongly with an entertaining climax that's fast-paced. A lot can be forgiven in a story that ends well, so work on making that ending as good as it can be.

All these tips will serve you well no matter what kind of writing you do, but they're all good starting points if you're interested in short story writing. And remember, the more you write, the more skill you'll develop, and you'll become a better writer as a result.

For more inspiration you can read these blog posts by the authors of *Crossed Spaces*:

[Penny Jaye](#), [Jennifer Horn](#), [Rosanne Hawke](#), [Jo Hart](#), [Adele Jones](#), [Janeen Samuel](#), [Lynne Stringer](#), [Geraldine Borella](#), and [Jennie Del Mastro](#).

FURTHER NOTES

Our new collection - [Dust Makers](#) - comes out later this year.

Dust Makers is a collection about our impact on the world around us. With a focus on simple sustainability, care for the environment and for each other, these stories consider the impact we have on the spaces we live in and the legacy we leave for the future. We want it to be about our consideration of what is around us and what we leave for the future. We want the stories to be contemporary, historical or futuristic with consideration of the impact we make on our environment and on one another.

Edited by Penny Jaye and RA Stephens

We have a [new submissions open](#) if you'd like to submit something for consideration.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

ACEEN004	ACEEN005	ACEEN007	ACEEN009
ACEEN011	ACEEN018	ACEEN020	ACEEN021
ACEEN022	ACEEN024	ACEEN025	ACEEN027
ACEEN028	ACEEN034	ACEEN035	ACEEN038
ACEEN039	ACEEN040	ACEEN041	ACEEN042

ACEEN043	ACEEN044	ACEEN059	ACELA1550
ACELA1551	ACELA1552	ACELA1553	ACELA1556
ACELA1557	ACELA1560	ACELA1561	ACELA1562
ACELA1566	ACELA1564	ACELA1569	ACELT1633
ACELT1635	ACELT1636	ACELT1637	ACELT1640
ACELT1641	ACELT1643	ACELT1644	ACELT1771
ACELT1772	ACELT1773	ACELY1742	ACELY1743
ACELY1744	ACELY1745	ACELT1774	ACELT1814

About the Authors and Editors

Geraldine Borella

Geraldine Borella writes fiction for children, young adults and adults.

Her stories feature in young adult anthologies, *Crossed Spaces—Short Stories in Other Worlds*, 2021, Rhiza Edge (Traitor) and *The Opposite of Disappearing—Short Stories in Uncertain Times*, 2021, Rhiza Edge (Silencing the Storm) and on Antipodean SF's website and podcast. She is also published in middle grade and adult anthologies, and in magazines. When she was a young adult, she almost burned down her house, completely immersed in a book! She's currently writing a climate fiction young adult novel and lives on the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland.



Jonathan E. Furneaux

Bio here.



Lynne Stringer

Lynne Stringer has been passionate about writing all her life, beginning with short stories in her primary school days. She began writing professionally as a journalist and was the editor of a small newspaper (later magazine) for seven years, before turning her hand to screenplay writing and novels.

Lynne is the author of the Verindon trilogy, a young adult science fiction romance series released through Wombat Books and Once Confronted. Lynne's new release *The Verindon Alliance* is a new stand alone in the Verindon world.

Lynne also edited *Crossed Spaces*.



Catriona McKeown



Catriona spends her days hanging out with teenagers in a middle school in Southern Queensland, where she works to support and advocate for young people with special needs.

Her love of writing character-driven stories reflects her passion to see all young people reach their full God-given potential, and to see the world they live in become a better place.

Catriona has published online a number of short stories, and her first YA novel, *The Boy in the Hoodie*, won the CALEB award for unpublished fiction in 2016. Her second young adult novel, *Memphis Grace*, was published in 2019.

You can follow along on Catriona's writing journey through her [website](#), on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and even on [Pinterest](#).

Janeen Samuel

Bio here.



Jo Hart

Bio here.



Adele Jones

Queensland author Adele Jones writes young adult and historical novels, poems, inspirational non-fiction and short fictional works. Her writing explores issues of social justice, humanity, faith, natural beauty and meaning in life's journey, and her first YA novel *Integrate* (book one of the Blaine Colton Trilogy) was awarded the 2013 CALEB Prize for unpublished manuscript. As a speaker she seeks to present a practical and encouraging message by drawing on themes from her writing. For more visit www.adelejonesauthor.com or contact@adelejonesauthor.com



Rusell Hume

Bio here.



Penny Jaye

From picture books or young adult fiction, Penny Jaye writes to explore themes that matter. Her YA novel, *Out of the Cages* published by Rhiza Press, tackles modern day slavery. *The Other Brother* is a picture book about belonging and the power of compassion. Penny lives in western Sydney with her family and enjoys juggling a busy life with various writing commitments, including author visits. She loves family movie nights, lunch by the river and being tucked up in bed to read a new book! Penny also writes as Penny Reeve and Ella Shine.



Paul Garrety

Bio here.



Rosanne Hawke

Rosanne Hawke is a SA author of 30 books for young people. She has been a teacher, a lecturer in creative writing at Tabor Adelaide, and worked with a mission agency in Pakistan & UAE. Her books explore cultural and social issues, Cornish folklore, history, mystery, family and faith. She often writes of displacement, belonging and reconciliation and tells stories of children unheard. *Taj and the Great Camel Trek* won the Adelaide Festival Award for Children's Literature and was highly commended in the 2012 Prime Minister's Literary Awards. Rosanne is the recipient of the Nance Donkin Award for a woman author who writes for children. She writes in an underground room near Kapunda.



Jennifer Horn

Bio here.



Jennie Del Mastro

Jennie Del Mastro is a writer of speculative fiction who loves following her thoughts to the horizon. She lives and works in Gippsland, Gunai/Kurnai country, where going out in the weather is an adventure. Her work can be seen in an upcoming issue of *Aurealis*, as well as the Big Issue Fiction Edition and several anthologies including *Crossed Spaces*. Find out more at jenniedelmastro.com.



Anne Hamilton

Anne Hamilton, a longtime writer and mathematician, has a number of publications to her name including *Many-Coloured Realm* and *Daystar*, as well as children's books *Nerrilee's World* and *Terry*.

Anne also has a trilogy of short books about how maths integrates with God's great creation called *The Singing Silence*, *The Winging Word* and *The Listening Land*.



Stephanie Martin

Bio here.



Emily Larkin



Emily Larkin is a Queensland author who loves stories, spending time with family and friends, and finding wonder in the everyday. Emily holds a Doctor of Creative Arts (Creative Writing) from the University of the Sunshine Coast. She writes for children, teens, and adults – and has a special interest in mental health, and using speculative fiction to illuminate contemporary issues. Emily is a contributor to the *Crossed Spaces* speculative fiction anthology, and is the author of the picture book *The Whirlpool*, illustrated by Helene Magisson (Wombat Books, 2017). Emily has presented at overseas writing conferences, and published short fiction in Australian and international literary journals and magazines such as *Meniscus*, *Seizure*, *Idiom 23*, *After the Pause*, *Flumes*, *Black Fox Literary Magazine*, *The Zodiac Review*, *Number Eleven Magazine*, *Literary Orphans*, *Sad Girls Club*, and *Streetlight Magazine*. Emily enjoys holding creative workshops, works with the Queensland Writers Centre, and is a sessional tutor at UQ and QUT College. She also loves reading and more reading, playing D&D, and cuddling animals. To follow Emily, visit <https://www.facebook.com/ehlarkinauthor> or <http://www.ehlarkin.com/>.

R.A Stephens

Bio here.

