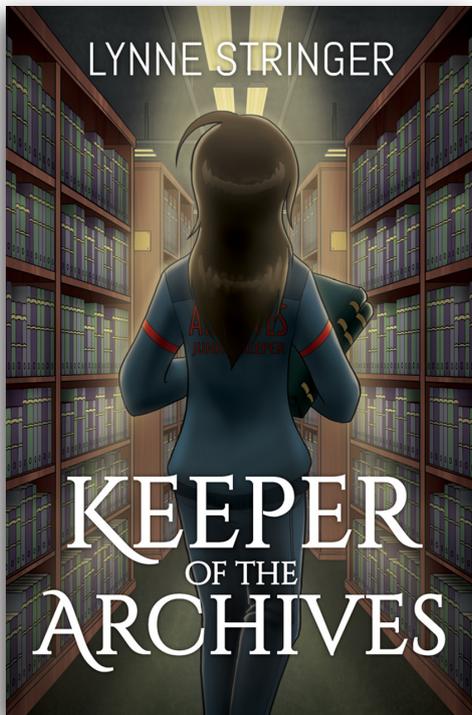

Teachers' Notes



KEEPER OF THE ARCHIVES

Lynne Stringer

ISBN: 9781761111563

Reading level: 14+ years

BOOK SUMMARY

After their home in Sendirian City burns to cinders, Eden Fittell gets a job working in the government's Archives to try and support her family and keep her alcoholic father away.

But the city is being stalked by crime boss Kore Luddan, who is using a freak known only as Izrod to kidnap people off the street. And he usually snatches government employees.

Is Eden safe?

What is Kore planning?

Will it mean the end of Sendirian City?

THEMES

- Masking ▪ Family Dysfunction ▪ Alcoholism ▪ Domestic Abuse ▪ Poverty ▪ Socioeconomic status ▪

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Rhiza Edge, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413 admin@wombathriza.com.au



**Lynne Stringer is available for author talks and workshops.
Contact Rhiza Edge for more information.**

Keeper of the Archives Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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*, a new adult contemporary drama. Lynne also wrote *The Verindon Alliance*, a prequel to her trilogy, in 2020. *The Verindon Conspiracy*, released in 2022, is a sequel to her trilogy. *Keeper of the Archives* will be her seventh novel.

AUTHOR NOTES

Keeper of the Archives draws on a lot of serious issues, many of which I needed to consider carefully before including them.

Alcoholism and domestic abuse

My great-grandfather was an abusive alcoholic, but he died long before I was born, so I had no direct information to draw on about this issue. So when I was putting the novel together, I asked around amongst friends and fellow authors because I wanted to hear from people who had lived through these situations, rather than write scenes based on research from a website.

It only took one quick post on Facebook. No more than ten minutes later, I had two friends ready to provide advice and read the rough scenes I had already written up. They gave me their take on what I'd done and provided some extra detail, which proved incredibly useful.

The hardest thing about this for me was how easy it was to find people with direct experience in this area. I had a feeling, when I first asked, that it wouldn't take long to find someone but I didn't expect it to be that quick. It brought home to me just how significant a problem this still is in our society. I'm not sure there are any easy answers for this and did my best not to present the idea that this kind of issue could be neatly tied up by the end of a novel. My greatest hope is that people in this situation will seek appropriate help.

Environmental disaster

I found out about the possibility of a worldwide water shortage when reviewing a non-fiction book. Although it's only a background piece to my novel, I am hoping to write another novel that enlarges on what happened to cause the destruction of the original Sendirian City. It happened as the result of a worldwide water crisis, where climate change and other environmental issues meant that water became as precious a commodity as toilet paper was during the COVID pandemic.

Could this happen? It depends who you talk to. I believe it can. Climate change is a serious issue that it needs urgent attention. We need to take steps to avoid possible calamities. I don't want any cities in the world to be razed to the ground in a fight over water or anything else.

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Government corruption

So many authors feature government abuses and corruption in their writing and I'm no different. It's a fertile field because it's common both in lower and upper levels of government. There are always people who want to gain power at the expense of everything and everyone else, and it's been proven that power can corrupt even the best of us.

What can we do about this? I believe that continuing to write stories that highlights these issues helps keep the problem in the public eye. This kind of exposure is our best assistance in both identifying and controlling this problem. I would like to believe that we could eradicate this completely but I've been around long enough to see how often it keeps rearing its ugly head. It seems we humans have extremely short memories and are quick to repeat the mistakes and bad choices of previous generations. Only vigilance will ensure that our societies remain as fair and equitable as we can make them.

Masking

As someone whose face reveals everything she thinks, Eden's ability to hide her true self from others does have an appeal to me, which is why I think it's such a prominent theme in the story. However, as I continued to write, it was clear that there were negative elements related to this ability, such as her withdrawal from others, her reluctance to develop close relationships and the stress it placed on her.

Her sudden ability to see behind everyone's mask was a fascinating thing to explore, as we all wear masks to some extent, if only to make ourselves more cohesive in social situations.

Some masking goes way beyond that. I found it intriguing to delve into characters who were hiding their true selves for different reasons, some for simple ones, others for far more sinister purposes. One of the best things about writing fiction is the ability to explore things of this nature and see where they lead and I enjoyed seeing what happened when everyone's masks were stripped away.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

MASKING

1. Because of her family life, Eden has learnt to hide her true self behind a mask of emptiness. What negative effects does it have on her life and relationships?
2. As a result of undergoing Kore's (Hensen's) treatment, Eden is able to see who everyone really is. What difficulties does this create for her? What benefits does she experience?
3. How common do you think masking is in society today? Is there anyone in your life who you know engages in it? What effect does it have on your life and their life?
4. Would you prefer to have the ability to mask your true self or would you prefer the ability to see behind everyone's masks? Explain your answer.

FAMILY DYSFUNCTION

1. Both Eden and Leon come from dysfunctional families. Eden's is her biological family, Leon's is the one he became part of when Kore took him in. What are the differences between the two family groups? What are the similarities?
2. While Kore's 'family' is considered a gang by the Sendirian City locals, he doesn't see it that way. He indeed believes he has created a family. What elements do you think lead Kore to consider them a family?
3. Both Eden and Leon start to find an alternative family at the Underground. Do you think this is a healthier environment for them? In what ways is it an improvement on both Eden and Leon's previous family groups? In what ways is it the same?

ALCOHOLISM

1. James Fittell, Eden's father, blames his alcoholism on what Dale Hensen did in ruining his career. Do you think this did contribute in some way or do you think that there were other contributing factors? If so, what were they?
2. Do you think that Eden's behaviour towards her father was appropriate at the different stages in the novel? Do you think she could have improved or altered the situation by doing things differently? If so, what should she have changed?
3. At the end of the novel, Elena Gregor has extended a job offer to James Fittell if he agrees to stay in a sobriety program. Eden is convinced that it will fail. Do you think she's correct? Do you think her attitude towards her father should be different at this point?
4. Eden wonders if she still loves her father and if she can love him more than she hates him. Explain what you think she means by this.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

1. Eden is angry at her mother because she doesn't protect Eden and her siblings from their drunken father. Do you believe she is justified in this? Do you believe her mother could have taken additional steps to protect the children from their father? If so, what are they?
2. Sendirian City has little support in place for poor families and no services to help with situations like alcoholism and domestic abuse. In our society, there are often services of this kind available but there are still families who don't seek help. Why do you think that is? What can be done to help families who may be reluctant to reach out?
3. The abuse she has suffered caused Eden to retreat into herself and show no emotion. How do you think her new relationship with Leon might help overcome this? Or do you believe it's simply part of her character? Is it something that she should try and change? Why or why not?
4. Leon's huge and frightening presence eventually makes James Fittell stay away. Do you think it would have been better for Eden to learn to stand up to her father directly? Why or why not?

POVERTY

1. While some government officials appeared concerned about the number of fires amongst the units housing the poor, others felt that it wasn't an issue worth focussing on. What steps do you think Sendirian City could put in place to make sure that appropriate housing is available in all sectors?
2. Sasha had a program in place to help the poor and had developed steps to care for those who had been displaced by the fires. When the government sector takes over those plans, she is sceptical. Do you think she should be more optimistic? What do you think she could do to ensure the government sector keeps its promise to do more to help the poor?

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

1. In Sendirian City, there is a clear line drawn between the haves and the have-nots, to such an extent that they live in different sectors. List the most distinct differences between the rich sector, the middle-class sector and the poor sector. Use the map at the front of the novel as a guide.
2. Many of the wealthy in Sendirian City would not believe there is a division between the wealthy and the poor as it's not impossible for people from the poor sector to be employed in other sectors. But even though Eden was employed by government, she was sure it was only because of a number of mitigating circumstances. List them.
3. Do you know of other societies that have significant division between different socioeconomic groups? What do you think causes this kind of division? How do you think it can be overcome? Do you think it should be overcome or do you think it has a place? Why or why not?

GENRE CONSIDERATIONS

Science fiction is often a genre of much discussion. It sits within the umbrella of 'speculative fiction' which includes the fantasy genre. There is a lot to unpack in science fiction, including subgenres and expectations. But for the sake of this activity let's define science fiction with three considerations:

- i. An exploration of identity and change, or of humanity's identity and capacity for change
- ii. A query of how new technologies impact our society, whether that be a positively or negative impact
- iii. A consideration of how our actions in the present may shape life for future generations

Science fiction may include space exploration, aliens, time travel, dystopian societies, worldwide calamities, monsters, clones, multiverses, future technology beyond our comprehension, none or all of the above. However, at its heart the core concept is about exploration of ideas in regards to our humanity and our actions.

With all this in mind let's return to *Keeper of the Archives*.

1. In what way does this novel fit with the three considerations of science fiction?
2. What other elements of the genre does *Keeper of the Archives* use to explore its themes? i.e. a dystopian past or future.
3. How does science function within *Keeper of the Archives*? Is technology and science a key concept or is its use relegated to enabling plot exploration?
4. Mark Juddery says in 'The True Fiction of Sally Marshal' that science fiction is the "...use of a surreal story to make comment upon the real world." Considering the use of the term 'surreal' what about *Keeper of the Archives* functions as surreal and how does it work to help the plot explore its themes?

ACTIVITY

After reviewing how science fiction was integral to the exploration of the themes at the core of *Keeper of the Archives* it's time for you to write a story of your own.

Come up with a few themes that you want to explore within the framework of a science fiction narrative. Then design a story that uses the flexibility science fiction allows to interrogate those themes. If identity and the question of nature versus nurture is on your mind, for example, a story that utilises both cloning technology and impact of generational choices would be something that could assist that exploration.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

CURRICULUM V9

YEAR 9

English

AC9E9LA05	AC9E9LA07	AC9E9LA08	AC9E9LE02
AC9E9LE03	AC9E9LE04	AC9E9LE05	AC9E9LY04
AC9E9LY08			

YEAR 10

English

AC9E10LA03	AC9E10LA04	AC9E10LA06	AC9E10LA09
AC9E10LE02	AC9E10LE03	AC9E10LE04	AC9E10LE05
AC9E10LE07	AC9E10LY04		

CURRICULUM 8.4

SENIOR SECONDARY

English

Keeper of the Archives can be used as a text for Years 11 and 12. It can be used in English, Literature and Essential English. The applications can include the intersection of history, culture and language as well as the genres of science fiction and social sciences. Character arcs and motivations can also be observed.