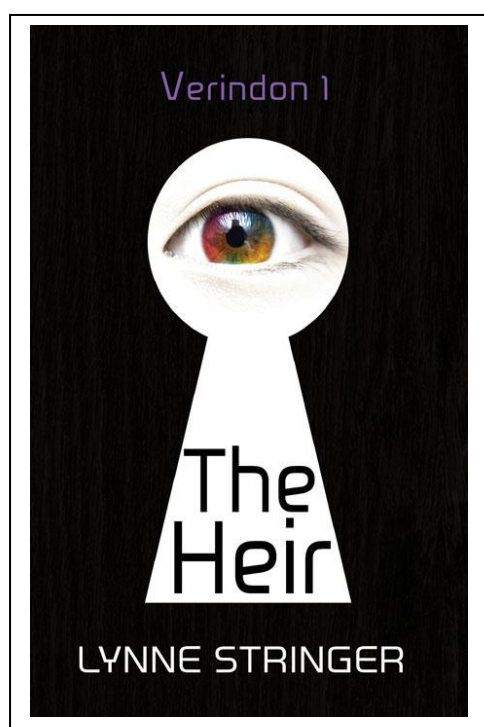


Teacher's Notes and Ideas

Prepared by Wombat Books



The Heir

Lynne Stringer

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Recommended Age: 14 and up

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Introduction

Sarah hates the prestigious high school she attends. Most of the other students ignore her. School is only made tolerable by the presence of Dan Bradfield, the boy she adores. Dan is the heir to his father's multinational computer company, but he is dating Sarah's best friend, Jillian.

When tragedy strikes, Dan is the one who supports Sarah. But she can't shake the feeling there is something strange about him. Is he protecting her from something? Is there something going on that she doesn't know about?

And did she really see a monster in the bushes?

Story Summary

In *The Heir* Sarah Fenhardt begins the story as a girl who is marginalised because of poor social standing and lack of money. She has no love for the things that have caused her to be ostracised, but by the end of the book, she is forced to deal with the false love and adoration that goes with wealth and success.

She also has to accept that she is not to blame for her mother leaving their family years before and deal with the loss of everything she holds dear, rebuilding her life on a new foundation.

Values Addressed/Themes

Materialism

Wealth, fame, success

Sexual harassment

Self esteem

Divorce and rejection

Grief and loss

Change of circumstances

Racism



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 currently works as a professional editor and proofreader. She lives in Brisbane, Australia, with her husband and young son.

Lynne is available to speak at high schools. Please visit the Wombat Books website for more information.

Discussion Questions

Chapter One

1. Why do you think Sarah has told no one about what Frank Howell is doing to her? Why does she feel compelled to keep walking through the middle of the school every day, knowing he will probably be waiting there for her?
2. Why do you think Jillian is so interested in science fiction and argues with her teacher so forcibly about outer space? What do you think motivates her to talk to Sarah about it all the time?
3. Most of the students at Enterprise Academy are only interested in students who are wealthy and prestigious. Do you think this is a good way to determine someone's worth? Have you noticed people in your life who tend to judge people by these standards? Identify more appropriate standards you can use.
4. Do you think it's healthy for Sarah to be drawing pictures of a boy she likes but rarely speaks to? What do you think stops Sarah from approaching Dan, especially since she thinks he's a nice guy?

Chapter Two

1. Why do you think Jillian was so upset with Sarah handling her phone? Do you think it was right of Sarah to try to see whatever text she thought Dan had sent his girlfriend? Why or why not?
2. What do you think Sarah saw in the bushes at school? Is she right to dismiss it out of hand or should she tell someone?
3. What do you think motivates Frank Howell to harass Sarah? Is he right to blame her for what happened in class? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Mr Hatchet declared that Sarah had won the debate? Do you think this led to what happened with Frank or do you think that was inevitable? Why or why not?
5. Have you ever known someone who was harassed like this? What would you advise them to do in this situation? Do you understand why Sarah doesn't want to tell anyone what has happened?
6. Why do you think David Fenhardt is refusing to do business with Pluvia? Do you think he should still be letting his wife's departure affect him like this after so many years, or should he have moved on? Why or why not? What steps would you take to recover from this kind of situation if you experienced it?
7. Do you think Sarah should try to find her mother? Why or why not? Why do you think she is reluctant to do so?

Chapter Three

1. Do you think Jillian is lying when she tells Sarah why Dan didn't take her to the dance? Why do you think she would lie about that? Do you have any idea what might have happened?

2. Do you believe there is distance between Sarah and Jillian? If this is the case, why are they friends?
3. What do you think really happened to Frank? Why do you think Sarah is so sure he is lying about what happened?
4. Jillian seems to have known about the 'close call'. Do you have any ideas how she knew about it?
5. Were you surprised to find that Frank Howell is not liked by the other students? Why or why not? Why do you think Sarah feels guilty about what happened to him?

Chapter Four

1. Do you think Jillian is telling the truth when she says that she doesn't know who Sarah is interested in? Why or why not?
2. Jillian says that there's nothing unusual about her fighting with Dan. Why do you think they date if they fight all the time? Do you think Sarah is wrong to be thinking about the possibility of dating Dan while he and Jillian are still together? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think Jillian is so upset about being grounded?
4. Why do you think Dan is so nervous about asking Sarah out? Do you believe he only asked her because Jillian told him to or is there another reason? If so, what do you think it is?

Chapter Five

1. If you were worried about your parents' reaction if they found out you were going out with someone, would you lie to them? Do you think this is a good thing to do or is it better to be honest?
2. Why do you think Allen and Elizabeth Bradfield don't seem to know much about art in spite of the fact they sponsor numerous artistic events?
3. Dan tempts Sarah to see if she will drink alcohol even though she is under-age. Do you think it's okay to try something like alcohol before you are legally permitted to do so? Why or why not? Are there certain situations where you would consider it acceptable to take a glass while under-age?
4. Why do you think motivates Sarah's interest in art even though she doesn't really care about the work of other artists? Do you think it's normal to be interested in something but not care what other people in your field of interest are doing?

Chapter Six

1. Do you think Dan knows what happened to Sarah's father? If so, why do you think he is hiding it?
2. Even though Sarah has been questioned about the evening, she forgets at first that her father was with Mark. Do you think this is a normal response? Have you or anyone you know ever been through a traumatic experience like this? How did you (or they) respond?
3. Sarah is suspicious of some of Dan's behaviour and explanations. Do you think her suspicions are justified? Do you know why Dan might be lying to her?

Chapter Seven

1. Why do you think Dan's parents are not happy with him taking Sarah back to her house?
2. Why do you think Dan didn't tell Sarah he was trying to do business with her father? Do you think that this connection means Dan and his family are responsible for David Fenhardt's death? If yes, then why do you think they are still offering to pay for the system David and Mark were developing?
3. Have you or anyone you know ever suffered the sudden loss of a loved one? Were your (or their) responses what you were expecting? Discuss the different ways people respond to situations like this.
4. What do you think has caused Jillian's sudden resentment of Dan?
5. Why do you think the school sent Mr Hatchet to the funeral? Do you think Jillian was responsible for that? Why would she choose him?
6. Do you think it's presumptuous of the Bradfields to pay all Sarah's debts like that or do you think they are genuinely trying to be helpful?
7. Do you think Sarah was hallucinating when she saw the table melting? If not, what do you think caused it? What do you think happened to her father's box?

Chapter Eight

1. Why do you think Sarah is so determined not to think about her father's loss? Discuss the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Discuss the best ways to support someone going through this process.
2. Do you find the Bradfields' home odd, or do you think Sarah is overreacting?
3. Do you think Mr Conroy's and the students' changed attitude to Sarah is just because they now think she is related to the Bradfields? How would you respond if people treated you this way? Why do you think the teachers and kids at Enterprise Academy think that Sarah will accept them after they have treated her so badly for so long?
4. What do you think has led to the changes in Dan's behaviour (such as coming to sit with Sarah and Jillian for lunch)? Do you believe his explanation about why he has been moved into Mr Barratt's class? If not, what do you think is the real reason?
5. What do you think Sarah saw in the bushes at school and do you think Mr Hatchet was involved? If so, how is he involved?
6. In this chapter Sarah is exhibiting the second stage of grief. Do you think the behaviour of Jillian and the Bradfields is helping Sarah or making her worse? Discuss other ways they could have handled the situations in this chapter.
7. What do you think Dan meant when he told Sarah that the people who killed her father wouldn't get away with it?

Chapter Nine

1. What do you think has prompted Dan's 'mini-debates' with Sarah? Why do you think he is withdrawing from her in some ways?
2. Do you think Sarah is right to feel that she is trapped in the Bradfields' house or is she overreacting? Do you think she should accept Dan's reassurance so easily? Why or why not?

3. What do you think of the foreman's behaviour?
4. What do you think Sarah's dream is trying to tell her?

Chapter Ten

1. Do you believe Jillian is right about Dan? What led you to that conclusion?
2. Why do you think Dan does not kiss Sarah?
3. Do you think Sarah is right to trust Dan after what happens in the park? Why or why not? Should she believe what he says afterwards?
4. Why do you think Mark doesn't know Sarah?
5. Have you ever trusted someone only to find out later that they weren't who you thought they were? Did they earn back your trust? Do you think someone can earn back trust after you've found out they lied to you or is it too late?

Chapter Eleven

1. Jillian tells Sarah that she is adopted. Do you know anyone who was adopted and found out by accident? Do you think Sarah's response to this news is to be expected? How do you think you would respond if you found out you were adopted?
2. After being treated like an outcast at school for years, Sarah is now being treated like royalty. What are the pros and cons of this situation? Do you think she handles it well?

Chapter Twelve

1. Dan is now keeping his distance from Sarah emotionally. What do you think is his reason for doing this? Do you think his behaviour towards her in the first half of the book was an act?
2. Do you think Sarah's behaviour towards Dan now is justified? Do you think she should have been harsher? How do you think you would have behaved in this situation?

Chapter Thirteen

1. In this chapter many of the things that happened in the first half of the book are explained. How does it compare with your own ideas about what was happening?
2. Hajiti treated the students in his class in much the same way as the students and teachers treated Sarah: as unworthy of notice. Why do you think he noticed the way she was treated but doesn't notice the same behaviour in himself? Can you think of any circumstances where you have accused someone of poor behaviour only to find out that you were doing the same thing (or similar) to someone else?
3. Do you think Keridan was justified in beating up Frank Howell because of what he did to Sarah? Why or why not? Was there a better solution to the problem?

Chapter Fourteen

1. What do you think has caused the tension between the two races on Verindon? Can you identify similar tensions in your neighbourhood/city/country? How could they be overcome?
2. Do you think the life the agents are forced to live is necessary? Do you think that, given their dangerous work, it is best that they are trained not to love?

Chapter Fifteen

1. Do you think it's a good idea for Sarah to go looking for Keridan? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think Keridan is so rude to Sarah at first, especially considering she is his Overlord?
3. Why do you think Sarah helped Frank without hesitation? Is this something you would do, or would you gloat or take your revenge, at least at first? Why do you think Keridan finds Sarah's behaviour so baffling?
4. Do you think Keridan does have feelings for Sarah? If so, why do you think he is fighting them?

Chapter Sixteen

1. Do you think Keridan is right to change course at the last moment like that? Why or why not?
2. Sarah feels unworthy of love because of the fact that her mother left her and because of the way she was treated at school. Do you think she is right to draw this conclusion, especially considering how much her adoptive father loved her? Why or why not?
3. Do you think the law prohibiting marriage between Vendel and Verindal is as binding as Keridan thinks it is or do you think Sarah the Overlord could change it?
4. Had you come to any conclusions about why Sarah liked colour so much? If so, what were they?

Chapter Seventeen

1. What is your impression of the people awaiting Sarah when she first lands on Verindon?
2. What do you think motivates Crazaan to silence Letz? Do you think he is really concerned about his niece?
3. Sarah is now enduring behaviour similar to that of the students at Enterprise, except now she is the main object of interest. How do you think she should respond to the behaviour of her ladies in waiting? How do you think you would behave if you were in this situation?
4. Sarah now sees her real mother for the first time. What difference do you think this will make to her self-esteem? Explain your answer.
5. Do you think Sarah overreacts to the news of the way they are treating Keridan? Why or why not?

Chapter Eighteen

1. Why do you think the agent at the desk obeyed Sarah?
2. Why do you think the corridors in the depths of the High Command are stark white?
3. Do you think Denzik is interrogating Keridan like this because it's standard procedure or do you think he has another reason? If so, what is it?
4. Why do you think Denzik lies about Sarah's inability to tell a lie? Do you think he has forgotten that she can detect lies or is there another reason?
5. What do you think motivated Hajitis to support Sarah, in spite of the fact that, by doing so, he risks incurring Denzik's wrath?

Chapter Nineteen

1. Are you surprised to discover that Jillandrina survived? Why do you think Denzik didn't believe her?
2. Although Sarah discovers that Jillandrina was the one who got Keridan into trouble she refuses to take revenge on her. Do you think she was right in doing this? How do you think you would have behaved in a similar situation?

Chapter Twenty

1. Sarah now discovers that her contemporaries – the aristocracy – all appear just as shallow as the students of Enterprise Academy. How do you think she will handle their behaviour? For example, do you think she will distrust them if they compliment her, etc?
2. Sarah notices the poor way the agents are treated. What do you think motivates the aristocracy to marginalise the agents so much? Is it just because of their race? Have you seen this kind of attitude reflected in our society? What can be done to overcome it?
3. Sarah does not take the adulation of the people at face value. She knows people can be fickle. In what ways have we seen this attitude exhibited in our society? (i.e. have you seen the public turn against an individual they had previously feted and adored).
4. Do you think Sarah will find a way to have Keridan as her bond partner? How would you go about changing a law if you felt it was unjust?