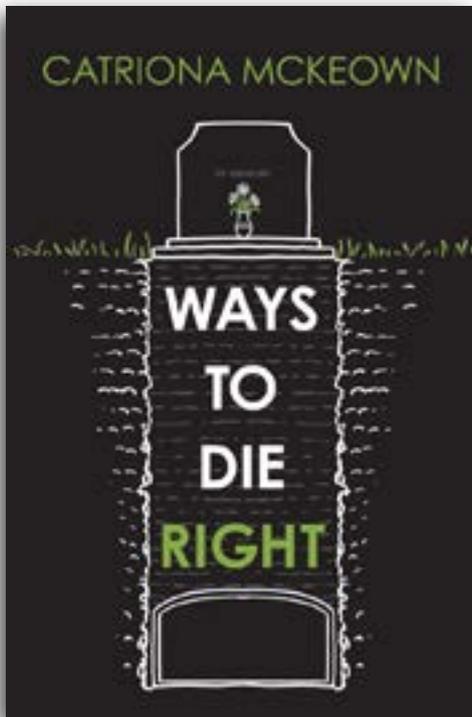

Teachers' Notes



WAYS TO DIE RIGHT

Catriona McKeown

ISBN: 9781761112515

Reading level: reading age of 10+, interest age 13+.

BOOK SUMMARY

Friends

Conflict

The future

Cancer

Family

When it all becomes too much for Joel, his only choice is to throw himself into his schoolwork: Green Burials are the way of the future and Joel's way to save the world.

THEMES

- Family • Friendships • Preoccupation with Death • OCD •
- The Environment • Dealing with the past • Contradictions and Complex Emotions •

Rhiza Shorts are a list of teen novellas for busy teens or reluctant readers. Each book has an easy to follow stand-a-lone story based on topics struggles and interests that teens are face today. When so much is going on in day-to-day life it can be hard for teens to pause and take some time to rest and focus. With that in mind, our authors have tailored their stories to help focus busy minds and support readers with writing strategies that keep them engaged. The extra spacing and shorter length of these books was specifically chosen to allow readers to turn the pages quickly, giving them a strong sense of achievement as they work through the book. We crafted these titles to make them an ideal choice for all readers from struggling or reluctant readers to busy teens just looking for a quick yet impactful read. A good reader might pick up each story in a short session, while a less enthusiastic reader might still find something accessible. Each story is available in multiple formats (print, eBook and audiobook) so any reader can find the best version that suits their individual needs.

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**Catriona McKeown is available for author talks and workshops.
Contact Rhiza Edge for more information.**

Ways To Die Right 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



Catriona McKeown lives on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, with her husband of 30+ years. Together, they have three children, all with different neurodivergent challenges.

She is passionate about issues of social justice and often writes with such ideals in mind. Her current work is in Inclusive Education; she is passionate about education that allows every child to reach their full potential and has a particular heart for teens with learning hurdles such as ADHD, Dyslexia, OCD and Autism. She uses her writing to promote the representation of these teens in her novels. She holds a Bachelor of Arts, a Graduate Diploma of Teaching and a Graduate Certificate in Inclusive Education.

Catriona hails from country Victoria, lived a short stint in Western Australia, and has now settled on Queensland as her home state.

AUTHOR NOTES

Confession: I'm bit of a nerd. I love learning. Listening to Podcasts and TED talks is a particularly great way to pick up interesting facts and get you thinking. One day I clicked on a TED talk about 'Green Burials'. I hadn't heard much about this concept, but I was fascinated by it. Secretly, I have a fear of being buried alive. It's probably based on my claustrophobia and too many Stephen King novels.

But the idea of Green Burials actually resonated with me. In green burials, people get buried straight into the dirt: with no chance of being buried alive in a coffin trying desperately to scratch your way out. The TED talk was, of course, about the positive benefits of green burials on the environment, not so much about any possible psychological issues of the listener.

But it was from this initial concept that *Ways to Die Right* was born. Even more personal, it was a time in my life when I was pondering death a bit more because my mum had recently died. She had chosen to be cremated, and her ashes ended up in a box in Mum's old study. A year passed before our family would decide where she would be "buried". At our local cemetery. We had discussed all sorts of ideas, including her favourite places that we could scatter her ashes. But we opted for her to have a plaque. A place where we could go to visit.

In *Ways to Die Right*, remembering ones we've lost was explored through our main character, Joel, and his nemesis bully, Trent. Joel feels he is burdened with the care and upkeep of his sister's grave. Trent lost a baby sister, whose ashes were scattered, and he wishes he had somewhere to go and remember her. The two characters have to present their cases to their class, while exploring the environmental impacts of burials and cemeteries in our society.

I loved exploring Joel's Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, a condition my own husband and children grapple with, and Joel's concern about the environment and his grief of a death in his family. I loved writing *Ways To Die Right*, drawing on my experiences with life, death, and wishing for a world where we can be kind to everyone around us. After all, as the memes remind us: be kind, as you never know what battle they are facing...

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OVERVIEW

MAIN CHARACTER

Joel is a 15-year-old boy living in Seduna. Despite being labeled an “Emo” by his schoolmates after he turned up wearing all black following a spill on his Stussi shirt, he does not identify with this label. His wild black hair, tendency to spend considerable time in the graveyard tending to his sister Holly’s grave, and his rejection of easy friendships or sports contribute to his unintentional fit into the Emo cliché. As one of three triplets, Joel is deeply affected by the loss of his younger sister, Holly, who passed away from Mitochondrial disease at age 6, and he struggles with the realities of his mother’s ongoing battle with cancer. Joel exhibits a strong sense of responsibility, particularly towards caring for his sister’s grave, which has become an overwhelming focus in his life.

Joel’s Strengths	Joel’s Weaknesses
Determined and Intelligent: He is committed to his goals and conducts thorough research on topics that interest him.	Anxiety and Fear of Dirt: He experiences significant anxiety, particularly about germs and dirt, leading to compulsive behaviors, such as carrying hand sanitiser and avoiding certain foods.
Supportive Friend: Despite his anxieties, he demonstrates kindness by encouraging others, such as a younger boy to join him in activities.	Social Awkwardness: He often lacks social graces, struggling to engage with peers, which can come across as cold or disinterested.
Caring: His dedication to his sister’s memory shows his capacity for love and remembrance.	Rigid Thinking: Joel finds it difficult to change his perspective on issues, leading to a narrow view of social interactions and emotional boundaries.

OTHER CHARACTERS

Mum is battling cancer and has already lost her hair due to treatment. She exemplifies wisdom and kindness, taking time to process her grief in private before confronting her family. This shows her strength in managing her emotions while being a supportive figure for her sons.

Dad is a caring and patient presence in the family, encouraging his sons to share responsibilities at home. He is protective of his wife and strives to maintain a sense of normalcy during challenging times.

Harry is Joel’s older brother by 20 minutes. He is confident, outgoing, and popular, often cooking for their mother to cheer her up. Harry possesses social skills that make him adept at connecting with others, including girls, and he remains supportive of Joel, helping him navigate school life.

Holly is Joel’s younger sister who died at age 6 after years of illness. Her memory profoundly impacts Joel, driving his commitment to maintaining her gravesite.

Alex is Joel’s best mate, characterized by his excitable and enthusiastic nature. Clumsy and prone to dropping items from his locker, he often has unrealistic ideas—like his plan to connect with the Lloyd family—but he has a genuinely good heart and deeply cares for Joel. Fun, outgoing, and imaginative, Alex provides a balance to Joel’s more serious demeanor.

Jessica is a girl in Joel’s class who captivates attention with her striking appearance, often fluttering her

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enormous eyelashes and laughing while teasing Joel about his blind spot regarding electromagnetic radiation from his laptop. Strategic and occasionally bored, she chooses the easiest topics for research but is also seeking friendship with Joel and Alex, offering to help with their assignment. She later reveals her Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background when she refers to 'our mob' in Cairns.

Her appearance raises questions about her self-esteem; she wears false eyelashes and lip gloss at school and sports hair extensions at a party. Jessica seems to feel disappointed at home, interpreting her father's gifts as compensatory for his frequent absences due to work commitments. Clever and somewhat manipulative, she often breaks rules, like persuading her father to take her and Joel to a private party for a school project. Jessica exhibits troubling behaviour regarding boundaries; she takes a photograph of the Lloyd family portrait without permission. Despite this, she shows some self-awareness when she admits to her manipulative tendencies. Her unhappiness stemming from a lack of attention at home becomes evident.

Trent Harshborrow was once Joel's best friend and is the oldest of three brothers, all of whom practice Taekwondo. Partway through the novel Trent disrupts a lunch with Joel, Harry, and Alex to announce that he will argue in favor of graveyards—contradicting Joel's topic—and has secured permission from the tutor to present first. It isn't clear why Trent is determined to counter Joel's argument, or why he's so passionate about it, leading to heavy tension between the two boys.

During his presentation, it is revealed that Trent lost a baby sister, an experience that shattered him. Although he can come across as arrogant, he is also charming, intelligent, and fair-minded. However, his followers often act meanly to impress him, and Trent himself can display bullying tendencies.

THE NOVEL CONTEXT

In *Ways to Die Right*, Joel faces the challenge of delivering a science presentation on green burials. He is met with opposition from Trent, who argues against the idea. Throughout this conflict, Joel learns to fight for his beliefs while confronting his fears and finding his voice.

Mystery Grave and the Search Subplot

Joel is captivated by the ornate grave of Lloyd Wood in the churchyard, which drives him to uncover its story. With friends' help, he learns that Lloyd was married to Patti and had a daughter named Chelsea. Tragically, Lloyd died at 40 when a flight crashed into his house. After his death, Patti moved away but later returned to the Seduna area, organising a family party for her 50th birthday to reconnect with her roots. Chelsea had moved overseas with her new husband, but returned to Coonabarrabran when pregnant with their first child, Cassie.

MESSAGES IN THE NOVEL

- An unkept grave does not mean a lack of love or remembrance.
- We can speak to lost loved ones anytime and anywhere, but many prefer a physical place to help them cope.
- Death can affect the young (Trent and Joel's little sisters), adults (Joel's mum), or occur as complete accidents (Lloyd Wood). It's normal to grieve and remember those we love with joy despite the finality.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL

1. What do we learn about Joel's personality that might make him passionate about green burials?
2. How has the death of Joel's sister and his mum's cancer diagnosis affected him and his family?
3. Joel and his brother Harry differ in looks and personality. List both their differences and similarities.
4. Joel's family is aware of his dedication to caring for Holly's grave. Why do they only agree to help him at the end of the book?
5. How does Jessica try to establish her friendship with Joel and Alex? Do you think her strategies are effective? Why or why not?
6. Joel believes caring for Holly's grave is his responsibility. What are other ways people can remember and show love for someone who has died?
7. Reflecting on Bernice Johnson Reagon's quote, which of Joel's challenges has paralysed him more: Holly's death or his mum's cancer?
8. Research green burials. Do you side with Joel or Trent? Is there a middle ground that could satisfy both?
9. How does Joel exhibit anxiety? Is he aware of how others perceive his anxiety? Discuss examples from Chapters 1–3. Examples:
 - a) Chapter 1: Hiding to avoid bullying.
 - b) Chapter 2: Speaking in long, irrelevant sentences.
 - c) Chapter 3: Constantly carrying hand sanitiser, suggesting he may need help.
10. Joel decides that if his mum dies, she must have a green burial. He plans to rehearse a presentation on 'Ways to Die Right' despite his family's struggles.
 - a) What might have happened to change his mind?
 - b) What might Harry do to convince him to try something different?
 - c) How could a schoolfriend persuade him to focus on family instead?

FAMILY AND FRIENDSHIPS

1. How does Joel's relationship with his sister influence his actions in the graveyard?
2. What does Joel's reaction to his dad's call reveal about his family dynamics and the stress they are under?
3. How does the interaction between Joel and his brother Harry highlight their different approaches to environmental issues?
4. What role does family support play in Joel's life as he deals with bullying and his mother's illness?
5. How does the relationship between Joel and his mother highlight the theme of family support in the face of illness?

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6. What does Joel's memory of his sister Holly reveal about the dynamics within his family and how they cope with loss?
 7. How does Joel's relationship with Harry reflect the different ways siblings can cope with family challenges?
 8. In what ways does Alex's enthusiasm provide a contrast to Joel's more serious nature? How does their friendship illustrate the importance of support?
 9. How does Jessica's persistence in helping Joel and Alex reflect her desire for connection and friendship?
 10. In what ways does Joel's interaction with Alex demonstrate the dynamics of their friendship, especially in contrast to his relationship with Jessica?
 11. How does Harry's support help Joel navigate the confrontation with Trent, and what does this say about their brotherly bond?
 12. In what ways does Alex's presence during the lunch scene contribute to the dynamics of friendship among the boys?
 13. How does Joel demonstrate a lack of awareness in valuing friendships?
 14. Analyse Jessica's behaviour towards Joel and Harry at the lockers. What suggests she may be interested in them?
 15. How does Joel communicate with Jessica? Is he aware of her interest? How could he react differently to show his feelings?
 16. How does the notion of a "Facebook friend" versus a "real friend" relate to the concept of authenticity in relationships?
 17. What does Jessica's willingness to share the address of Chelsea reveal about her views on friendship and loyalty?
 18. How does Alex's lighthearted comment about Lloyd's death impact the group dynamic, and what does it suggest about his understanding of sensitive topics?
 19. In what ways does the interaction between Joel and Susan reveal the complexities of forming new friendships amidst grief and loss?
 20. How does the scene at the hospital highlight the importance of family support during times of crisis?
 21. In what ways do Joel and Harry's reactions to their mother's situation reflect their individual coping mechanisms and their bond as brothers?
 22. How does Joel's perception of his family's care for Holly's grave reflect his feelings of isolation within his family?
 23. In what ways does the interaction between Joel, Jessica, and Alex demonstrate the complexities of friendship during emotional turmoil?
 24. How does Joel's sense of unfairness about tending to Holly's grave reflect the dynamics of his family relationships?
 25. In what ways does Harry's arrival provide comfort to Joel during a moment of crisis, and what does this say about their brotherly bond?
 26. How does Harry's scooter crash serve as a metaphor for the challenges the family faces? What does

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it reveal about their dynamics?

27. In what ways does Joel's conversation with his mother highlight the different ways family members cope with grief?
28. How does Harry's role as the team mascot reflect the dynamics of support and camaraderie among the brothers?
29. In what ways do Joel's relationships with his family and friends influence his ability to cope with the day of the presentation?
30. How does Joel's interaction with Jessica and Alex illustrate the complexities of friendship in times of grief?
31. What does Jessica's sharing about her granddad reveal about the importance of familial connections and cultural perspectives on death?
32. How does the agreement to tend to Holly's grave every six months symbolise the evolving nature of Joel's family dynamics and their approach to grief?
33. What does Joel's reluctant agreement to see his psychologist again suggest about the role of support systems in dealing with loss?

JOEL'S OCD

1. How does Joel's OCD manifest in his daily life, and how does it affect his relationships with others?
2. In what ways do Joel's compulsions and obsessions influence his feelings about cleanliness and order, particularly in relation to his sister's grave?
3. How does Joel's OCD contribute to his anxiety about death and loss, and how does this shape his coping mechanisms?
4. What role does Joel's relationship with his psychologist, Lucy, play in helping him navigate the challenges posed by his OCD?
5. How does Joel's need for control, stemming from his OCD, impact his ability to process grief and move forward after his sister's death?
6. In what ways do Joel's interactions with other characters highlight the misunderstandings surrounding OCD and mental health?
7. How does Joel's struggle with OCD reflect broader themes of vulnerability and the quest for connection in the story?
8. How does the author use Joel's OCD to explore the theme of memory and the ways people cope with loss?
9. What coping strategies does Joel develop to manage his OCD, and how effective are they in helping him deal with his grief?
10. How does Joel's experience with OCD challenge or complicate the perceptions of others regarding mental health and grief?

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THE ENVIRONMENT

1. In what ways does Joel's anxiety about dirt reflect his views on the environment and cleanliness?
2. How does Joel's interest in the graves, particularly the ornate grave of Lloyd Wood, connect to his appreciation for the environment?
3. How does Joel's research topic reflect his passion for environmental issues? What does it reveal about his character?
4. In what ways does the conversation about burial pollution illustrate the broader environmental themes in the novel?
5. In what ways does Joel's fascination with graves reflect his thoughts about life and death? How might this relate to environmental themes?
6. How does the conversation about Chelsea and her lack of attention to the grave connect to Joel's feelings about responsibility and care for the environment?
7. How does Joel's comment about Jessica's eyelashes highlight his preoccupation with environmental issues?
8. What does Joel's perspective on graves and burial practices suggest about his understanding of the environmental impact of traditional funerals?
9. How does Joel's research into Lloyd Wood's death connect with his established concern and interest in environmental safety and burial practices?
10. What arguments does Trent present regarding the preservation of graves, and how do they contrast with Joel's views on environmental hazards?
11. How does the lunch setting serve as a microcosm for the larger debate about burial practices and their environmental impact?
12. In what ways does the setting of the birthday party at Patti's property symbolise the intersection of personal and environmental histories?
13. What does Joel's description of the hospital's smell reveal about his state of mind and how he perceives environments associated with illness?
14. How does the hospital setting serve as a stark contrast to the party atmosphere in previous chapters, emphasising the theme of reality versus escapism?
15. What is the significance of Joel's concern about toxins from cremation, and how does it tie into his overall project on environmental issues related to burials?
16. How does the mention of the Kabi Kabi burial ground introduce the theme of alternative burial practices and their environmental implications?
17. How does Joel's fear of his ashes polluting the air connect to his ongoing concerns about environmental issues related to death?
18. What role do graves play in Joel's perception of how the deceased are treated and remembered in society?
19. How does the state of Mrs. McReedy's hedge reflect Joel's inner turmoil and the unintended consequences of his actions?

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20. What points does Trent make about the ecological significance of graveyards, and how does this perspective challenge Joel's initial views on burial practices?
 21. How does Joel's reaction to Trent's presentation reveal the complex relationship between personal grief and environmental concerns?
 22. In what ways does the conversation about burial practices reflect different cultural attitudes toward death and remembrance?
 23. How can Jessica's perspective on her grandfather's burial inform broader discussions about environmental considerations in funerary practices?
 24. In what ways does Joel's recognition of the human need for a gravesite balance his concerns about environmental pollution?
 25. How does the inclusion of a plaque for Trent's sister reflect a compromise between honouring the dead and maintaining environmental considerations?

DEALING WITH THE PAST

1. What significance does caring for his sister's grave have for Joel in terms of his grief and memory and how does Joel's fascination with graves symbolise his struggle with his past?
2. How does the bullying Joel experiences connect to his unresolved feelings about his sister's death?
3. What impact does his mother's cancer recurrence have on Joel's ability to cope with the past?
4. How does Joel's preoccupation with the age he will be when his mother dies illustrate his struggle to come to terms with the past?
5. What role does his psychologist, Lucy, play in helping him navigate his feelings about loss and grief?
6. What role does the discussion about Chelsea's family dynamics play in Joel's understanding of loss and moving forward?
7. How does learning about Lloyd Wood's life and death impact Joel's feelings about his own experiences with loss?
8. What role does the setting of Coonabarrabran play in understanding the implications of Lloyd Wood's tragic accident?
9. In what ways does this chapter highlight the struggle to understand and process the past through the lens of new information?
10. How does Joel's reaction to Trent's taunts reveal his unresolved feelings about Holly?
11. What does this confrontation signify about Joel's struggle to come to terms with the public perceptions of his family's loss?
12. How does Joel's reaction to the envelope and the news about Chelsea reflect his ongoing struggle with the legacy of his sister's death?
13. What significance does the address hold for Joel in terms of confronting his past, and how might it complicate his feelings about burial practices?
14. How does Joel's exploration of Chelsea's home serve as a metaphor for his own exploration of loss and memory?

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15. In what ways does Susan's comment about where her mother feels closer to her grandfather reflect the differing ways families cope with grief?
 16. How does Joel's regret about missing time with his mother reflect his unresolved feelings regarding grief and loss?
 17. In what ways does this moment serve as a turning point for Joel in confronting the realities of his family's situation?
 18. In what ways does the confrontation with Jessica prompt Joel to reflect on his own insensitivity regarding others' grief?
 19. How does the confrontation with Trent reveal Joel's unresolved grief regarding Holly's death?
 20. In what ways does the experience at the graveyard force Joel to confront his feelings of neglect and the idea of being forgotten?
 21. How does Joel's struggle with the burden of maintaining Holly's grave illustrate his inability to move forward? Is this made harder by not sharing that burden?
 22. In what ways does his mother's reassurance about the family's memories of Holly help Joel reconsider his own relationship with the past?
 23. How does Trent's personal story about his sister impact Joel's understanding of grief and loss?
 24. In what ways does Joel's decision to leave during Trent's presentation signify his struggle to confront his own past?
 25. How does Joel's stubbornness about the presentation indicate his difficulty in accepting differing views on grief and loss?
 26. In what ways does Jessica's experience with her granddad provide a contrast to Joel's struggle with his sister's death?
 27. How does Joel's acceptance of the twice-yearly visit signify his growth in coping with the loss of his sister?
 28. In what ways does the book emphasise the importance of addressing unresolved grief and the need for closure?

PREOCCUPATION WITH DEATH

1. What do Joel's frequent visits to the graveyard say about his thoughts on death and loss?
2. How does the grave of Lloyd Wood intrigue Joel, and what does it reveal about his preoccupation with mortality?
3. Why does Joel's reaction to the bullying reveal his deep-seated concerns about death and loss?
4. How does Joel's focus on burial pollution signify his struggle to understand and process his grief?
5. How does Joel's darkened room and his flicking through grave pictures symbolise his mental state and fixation on death?
6. What do Joel's thoughts about Chelsea indicate regarding his fears of abandonment and loss?
7. How does Joel's belief that tending a grave is the only way to show love reflect his fears and anxieties?

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about death?

8. In what ways does the concept of being “forgotten” tie into Joel’s thoughts on mortality and remembrance?
9. How does the mention of Lloyd Wood’s untimely death resonate with Joel’s own fears about mortality and loss?
10. What does Joel’s interest in researching deaths reveal about his coping mechanisms regarding his sister’s passing?
11. How does the mention of graves in a school setting affect Joel’s mental state, and what does this reveal about his ongoing preoccupation with death?
12. In what ways does the physical proximity of Trent during the confrontation symbolise Joel’s fear of facing difficult truths about mortality?
13. How does Joel’s physical reaction to the envelope symbolise his deeper anxieties about death and contamination?
14. In what ways does the dark humour presented by Alex and Jessica serve as a coping mechanism for dealing with the realities of mortality?
15. How does Joel’s conversation with Susan about her grandfather’s grave illustrate his fixation on burial practices and the fear of being forgotten?
16. What does the emotional reaction from Susan when confronted with the photo of her grandfather’s grave reveal about the complexities of mourning and memory?
17. How does Joel’s joke about spending time with his mother underscore his struggles with fear and anxiety surrounding death?
18. What does the scene convey about the emotional impact of being in a place associated with sickness and mortality for Joel?
19. How does Joel’s horror at the idea of toxins being released during cremation illustrate his ongoing preoccupation with death and its consequences?
20. What does the discovery of the Indigenous burial ground reveal about different cultural attitudes toward death and remembrance?
21. How does Joel’s anxiety attack highlight his deep-seated fears about death and the permanence of loss?
22. What do Joel’s thoughts about being forgotten alongside Holly reveal about his understanding of legacy and memory?
23. How does Joel’s perception of his father’s awareness of his grief impact his emotional state?
24. What does Joel’s focus on the public aspect of Holly’s grave reveal about his fears surrounding legacy and memory?
25. How does the act of sharing memories and feelings about lost loved ones contribute to the theme of mourning in the narrative?
26. What does Joel’s physical reaction to Trent’s presentation reveal about the intensity of his feelings regarding death?

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27. How does Joel's desire to resolve his grief and find happiness highlight the internal conflict he faces regarding death?
 28. What role does the concept of "being with" loved ones play in Joel's understanding of death as opposed to physical graves?
 29. How does the act of visiting Holly's grave serve as a way for Joel to connect with his memories and emotions surrounding her death?
 30. What does the decision to clean and bring flowers to the grave indicate about the ongoing relationship individuals can have with their deceased loved ones?

CONTRADICTIONS AND COMPLEX EMOTIONS

1. Why do you think Joel feels both a sense of duty and anxiety when he's at the graveyard?
2. How do Joel's actions, such as using hand sanitiser while caring for a grave, illustrate the contradictions in his character?
3. In what ways does Joel's decision to talk about environmental issues instead of resorting to violence demonstrate his internal conflict?
4. How does the revelation of his mother's illness juxtapose with Joel's preoccupation with the topic of death and burials?
5. How does Joel's response to his mother's cancer returning illustrate the conflict between his desire for connection and his fear of loss?
6. What does the interaction between Joel and his mother reveal about the complexities of their emotions surrounding illness and mortality?
7. How does Joel's logic about graves reveal his conflicting feelings about love, care, and neglect?
8. What does Joel's reluctance to accept Alex's perspective on being forgotten suggest about his own fears of loss and abandonment?
9. How does Jessica's disregard for Joel's non-verbal cues exemplify the complexities of social interactions and boundaries?
10. How does Joel's aversion to touching Jessica's envelope reflect his struggles with cleanliness and possible obsessive behaviours?
11. What contradictions can be seen in Joel's desire for independence in his work while simultaneously being drawn to the attention and help from others?
12. How does Joel's internal conflict about wanting to defend himself while also feeling supported by his brother illustrate the complexities of his emotions?
13. What contradictions can be seen in Trent's attitude toward graves as both a challenge to Joel's research and a reflection of his own experiences with loss?
14. How does Joel's internal conflict about being rude versus protecting himself from perceived contamination highlight the complexities of his anxiety?
15. What contradictions arise in Jessica's character as she navigates her desire for connection with Joel while simultaneously exhibiting a lack of empathy?

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16. How does Joel's intention to connect with Susan ultimately lead to misunderstandings, illustrating the contradictions in his desire for closeness and his anxiety-driven behaviour?
 17. What complex emotions arise in Susan when Joel mentions her family's choices regarding visiting graves, and how does it impact their interaction?
 18. How do Joel's feelings of anger and guilt contradict his desire for connection with his mother?
 19. What does the setting of Patti's home do to contrast Joel's life and Chelsea's life?
 20. What complexities arise in the dynamics between Joel, Harry, and their father as they navigate their grief and responsibilities in the wake of their mother's collapse?
 21. How does Joel's reaction to Jessica's comment about privacy expose his internal conflict regarding vulnerability and the need for connection?
 22. In what ways does Jessica's unexpected revelation about her appearance challenge Joel's understanding of beauty and self-acceptance, prompting him to reconsider his previous judgments?
 23. How does Joel's anger towards Trent reflect his internal struggle between wanting to protect Holly's memory and his feelings of vulnerability?
 24. In what ways does Joel's belief that he might be "cremated and forgotten" illustrate the contradiction between his desire for connection and his fear of being unloved?
 25. How does Joel's list of burdens reflect his conflicting feelings of responsibility and resentment regarding his family's grief?
 26. In what ways does the impending return of his mother symbolise both hope and anxiety for Joel as he navigates his feelings about death?
 27. How does the public nature of Holly's grave impact how the family navigates their private memories and how they view each other during that process?
 28. How does Joel's initial anger at Trent's use of Holly's grave evolve throughout the presentation?
 29. What contradictions arise in Joel's feelings as he recognises the love and memory associated with his sister's grave, even as he grapples with his own pain?
 30. How does Joel's insistence on "sticking to the facts" reflect his struggle with his own emotional vulnerability?
 31. In what ways does Jessica's viewpoint challenge Joel's understanding of grief, illustrating the complexity of human emotions surrounding loss?
 32. How does Joel's initial reluctance contrast with his eventual acceptance of the plan to maintain Holly's grave?
 33. In what ways does the chapter highlight the complexity of emotions surrounding grief, especially in terms of finding peace with the past while still honouring the deceased?

SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Green Burial Design Project

Objective: Create a concept for a green burial site that prioritizes environmental sustainability.

Instructions:

- 1. Design Brief:** In small groups, design a conceptual layout for a green burial site. Consider:
 - Natural features (trees, wildflowers, water sources).
 - Types of biodegradable materials for graves (caskets, markers).
 - Community spaces for remembrance and gatherings.
- 2. Creative Model:** Create a 3D model using recycled materials (e.g., cardboard, paper, natural elements). Include elements like paths, memorial areas, and plantings.
- 3. Presentation:** Present your model to the class, explaining your design choices and the environmental benefits of your green burial site.

Activity 2: Chemical Scavenger Hunt

Objective: Investigate household products for harmful chemicals through a scavenger hunt.

Instructions:

- 1. Preparation:** Each student or group will choose three household items to analyze (e.g., shampoo, detergent, air freshener).
- 2. Scavenger Hunt:** Create a scavenger hunt checklist that includes:
 - Identify the product and its purpose.
 - List any harmful chemicals found in the ingredient list.
 - Research one potential health effect of each harmful chemical.
- 3. Creative Reflection:** After the hunt, write a short story or poem from the perspective of a product (e.g., "The Life of a Hand Sanitizer") that includes its ingredients and the impact it has on users and the environment.

Activity 3: Cultural Burial Practices Art Gallery

Objective: Explore and express different cultural burial practices through art.

Instructions:

- 1. Research:** Individually or in pairs, research two different cultural burial practices around the world (e.g., water burials, tree burials, mummification).
- 2. Art Creation:** Create a piece of art (painting, collage, digital artwork, or sculpture) that represents the burial practice you studied, incorporating symbols and elements significant to that culture.
- 3. Gallery Walk:** Set up a classroom art gallery. Each student presents their artwork, explaining the cultural significance and environmental considerations of the practice.

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Activity 4: Create Your Own Eco-Friendly Product

Objective: Design a new product that is safe for both people and the environment.

Instructions:

- 1. Brainstorming Session:** In groups, brainstorm ideas for an eco-friendly product (e.g., personal care item, cleaning supply).
- 2. Product Design:** Create a prototype or advertisement for your product, including:
 - Ingredient list (ensuring all are non-toxic).
 - Packaging design (using sustainable materials).
 - A catchy slogan and marketing strategy that emphasizes its environmental benefits.
- 3. Class Pitch:** Present your product to the class in a "Shark Tank"-style pitch, explaining its benefits and how it differs from conventional products.

Activity 5: Exploring False Eyelashes and Their Environmental Impact

Objective: Investigate the materials, production processes, and environmental implications of false eyelashes, promoting awareness of consumer products.

Research Questions

- 1. Materials and Production:**
 - What materials are false eyelashes made from (e.g., synthetic fibers, silk, mink)?
 - How are these materials produced and processed into false eyelashes?
- 2. Packaging Analysis:**
 - What types of packaging are used for selling false eyelashes (e.g., plastic, cardboard)?
 - What are the environmental impacts of the packaging materials used?
- 3. Manufacturing Locations:**
 - Where are false eyelashes typically manufactured?
 - How far do they travel to reach your town, and what environmental footprint does this journey create?

Instructions

- 1. Group Research:** Divide into small groups and assign each group one of the research questions. Use online resources, articles, and videos to gather information.
- 2. Present:** Write your findings on some paper or posterboard and share with your class. See if each new group can add something not shared before.
- 3. Class Discussion:** Consider questions such as:
 - What surprised you about the materials and production processes?
 - How do these products affect the environment, and what alternatives might be more

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sustainable?

Creative Component

1. **Infographic Creation:** Each student will create an infographic summarising their findings. The infographic should include:
 - Key statistics about materials and environmental impact.
 - Recommendations for more sustainable alternatives or practices.
 - Contact information for local stores selling more eco-friendly products.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. **Green Burials:** In your opinion, what are the most important elements of a green burial site? How can these practices reshape how we think about death and memory?
2. **Chemical Awareness:** Why do you think many consumers are unaware of harmful chemicals in products? What steps can individuals take to make more informed choices?
3. **Personal Connection:** How does exploring the themes of death and burial in the novel influence your personal views on how we honor those we've lost?
4. **Cultural Perspectives:** How do different cultural beliefs about death influence the design of burial practices? What can we learn from these variations when considering environmental impacts?
5. **Consumer Choices:** After this activity, how might your perspective on buying beauty products change?
6. **Sustainability:** What are some sustainable alternatives to false eyelashes that you learned about? Would you consider using them?
7. **Environmental Impact:** How do the environmental impacts of false eyelashes compare to other beauty products you use?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ENGLISH, VISUAL ARTS AND DRAMA

The Letter

Write a letter to Joel encouraging him to rethink his plan regarding “Ways to Die Right.” Emphasise the importance of focusing on living well and spending time together as a family. Be kind and logical, providing reasons and activities he could do with his mum and family.

Character Perspective

Rewrite the scene where Joel learns about his mum’s cancer returning from Harry’s point of view. How does Harry feel in that moment?

Writing a Story

Joel has a secret bag of strange treasures (Chapter 3).

STIMULUS: *Inside is a bag filled with hair from our family dog, Robby, who died just before Mum was first diagnosed. A feather from my chicken, Chook, who had to go to a farm to live when things got too much for Dad. A prayer card a teacher had given me when Mum found out her cancer wasn’t all gone. And my secret treasure—a piece of cloth, white with tiny pink flowers on it.*

I pull out the plastic bag from my pocket and add the grave’s leaf to my collection.

Read the excerpt. It is interesting, varied and mysterious. It may seem strange and eerie in places but at one time it was common for people to keep a lock of hair inside a piece of jewellery.

Write a two-page story inspired by one of the following prompts:

- **Grandmother’s Treasures:** Discover hidden items in a cupboard that your mother has kept all her life.
- **Thrift Shop Discovery:** You buy a tightly fastened box out of curiosity. What strange

items do you find inside?

- **Deserted Structure:** During a hike, you discover an abandoned stone structure and find a mysterious bag inside.

Product Analysis and Information Poster

Choose a skin cream, hair product, fitness product, or health food item. Research its packaging, appealing aspects, and the chemicals used.

1. **Create an Information Poster:** Include the item in the centre with its packaging. Add text panels detailing:
 - The chemicals and their effects on the body.
 - Environmental impacts of rinsing these chemicals down the drain.
 - The degradation time of the packaging and whether it can be recycled.
2. **Presentation:** Present your analysis to the class and engage in a Q&A session. Vote for the best and worst products.

A New Friend

1. **Group Activity:** Imagine Joel waiting at the psychologist’s office when another person enters.
 - **Brainstorming:** Define the other person’s age, story, and characteristics.
 - **Silent Mime:** Create a scene where someone hurriedly enters, mistakes the clinic, and leaves. How does Joel react?
 - **Role Play:** Joel shares his latest hobby with an elderly patient. How does the conversation unfold, and what strange questions does she ask?
 - **Game Show Concept:** Joel becomes a TV personality running a silent mime challenge where contestants perform activities silently, rated by the audience.

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: THE LOOMING FUTURE

Introduction

An important theme in the novel is the concept of the “looming future,” which centres on the uncertainty surrounding loss and its impact on family dynamics.

Joel and Harry’s mother, who has a recurrence of cancer, is likely the next family member facing death. This is juxtaposed with Harry’s accident and Lloyd’s story, showing that death can occur at any time.

When their mother dies, will she be cremated, or buried? Will her passing cause a resurgence of Joel’s anxiety and potential OCD? All of these concerns underscore Joel’s growing preoccupation with death and the rituals surrounding it. It might be that Joel’s parents arranged a psychologist’s care for Joel anticipating that he will need support in the coming months rather than for the present?

In contrast, there’s no explicit indication that Harry will require support; he seems to navigate the situation well. However, it’s implied that he too must be feeling vulnerable. Similarly, the boys’ father does not emerge as a person who is potentially frail in physical or mental health, and the novel gives signs of his strategies (walking in the garden) to re-calibrate and come to terms with challenges. He is facing months of his wife’s illness and possible death, and the likelihood that he will have to support two distressed teenage boys through that process, and their remaining years of school and growth to adulthood, as a single parent.

Classroom Activity: Exploring Themes of Grief and Coping Strategies

Objective: Students will analyse the theme of the “looming future” in relation to family dynamics and coping mechanisms.

1. Discussion Starter:

- Begin with a class discussion about the theme of loss and its impact on families. Ask students:
 - How do different characters in the novel respond to the idea of impending loss?
 - What coping strategies do they observe among Joel, Harry, and their father?
- Write key points on the whiteboard.

2. Character Analysis:

- Divide students into small groups and assign each group a character (Joel, Harry, their mother, or their father).
- Ask them to discuss how their assigned character handles the concept of loss and what coping mechanisms they employ. Encourage them to find textual evidence to support their points.
- Each group will prepare a brief presentation (3-5 minutes) to share their findings with the class.

3. Creative Reflection:

- After the presentations, ask students to reflect on the theme of the “looming future” through a creative medium. They can choose to:
 - Write a diary entry from the perspective of one of the characters.
 - Create a visual representation (drawing, collage) that captures their understanding of the

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theme.

- Provide art supplies for those who choose the visual representation option.

4. Sharing and Discussion:

- Allow students to share their creative reflections with the class.
- Conclude the activity with a group discussion on how the theme of loss resonates with their own lives and the importance of coping strategies in facing difficult times.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: MANAGING DIFFICULT TOPICS

Introduction

In the novel, school is depicted as a challenging environment where familiar structures and routines significantly affect family life. The demands of preparing for assignments, the thrill of team competitions, and the complexities of social dynamics all come into play. However, the narrative highlights a crucial gap: schools are not portrayed as spaces equipped with adequate support systems for students experiencing emotional and psychological distress or for families navigating mental health issues.

Today, we will explore these themes further and discuss how schools can better address the needs of students facing loss and illness, both personally and within their families. Through this activity, we aim to foster understanding and empathy, as well as brainstorm potential solutions for creating a more supportive school environment.

Objective:

To explore the themes of loss and illness as presented in the novel, understand their impact on students and families, and brainstorm ways to enhance support systems in schools.

1. Introduce:

- Begin with a brief discussion about the themes of loss and illness in the novel. Ask students to share their thoughts on how these themes are represented and their significance in the context of school life.
- Highlight the gap in support systems for students facing emotional and psychological distress.

2. Group Discussion

- Divide the class into small groups (4-5 students each).
- Assign each group one of the following topics:
 - The impact of loss on student behavior and performance
 - How illness affects family dynamics and responsibilities
 - The role of teachers and school staff in supporting students with mental health issues
 - Strategies for creating a more supportive school environment
- Instruct groups to discuss their assigned topic, focusing on specific examples from the novel as well as their own experiences or observations.

3. Brainstorming Solutions

- Still in their groups, ask students to brainstorm practical solutions for improving support systems in schools. Encourage them to think creatively and consider:
 - Programs or resources that could be implemented
 - Training for teachers and staff on mental health awareness
 - Ways to foster a more empathetic school culture
- Each group should write down their ideas on sticky notes.

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4. Group Presentations

- Each group will present their ideas to the class, sticking their notes on a designated area of the whiteboard or flip chart.
- Allow a couple of minutes for questions and discussion after each presentation.

5. Reflection

- Conclude the activity by asking students to reflect on what they learned about the themes of loss and illness and the importance of support systems in schools.
- Encourage students to think about how they can contribute to a more supportive environment, both as individuals and as a community.

OPTIONAL FOLLOW-UP ASSIGNMENT

Students can write a short reflection (1-2 paragraphs) on how their understanding of loss and illness has changed through this activity and what actions they believe are necessary to support peers in similar situations. This can be submitted as homework for further reflection and assessment.

TEACHER'S NOTES: SUPPORTING STUDENTS THROUGH CHALLENGES

At the end of the classroom activities, consider prompting students with the question:

"Who can help?"

DISCUSSION POINTS FOR TEACHERS:

1. Available Support at School:

- Explore what support systems exist for students facing emotional and psychological challenges, health issues, loss, bullying, illness, or family difficulties.

2. Activity Review:

- After students design their support posters, encourage them to reflect on:
 - **Who?** Identify individuals and groups available for help (e.g., school counselors, trusted teachers, friends).
 - **Where?** Discuss locations within the school where students can find support (e.g., counselor's office, health center).
 - **How?** Outline ways to seek help and approach the relevant individuals.

3. Privacy Considerations:

- Address concerns related to confidentiality: **"If I seek help, will it lead to problems for my family?"**

4. Informal Support Networks:

- Encourage students to think about support outside school:
 - **Quality and Integrity:** Discuss who they can turn to for help (friends, family, community groups) and the importance of trust.
 - **Online Resources:** Talk about the role of websites and apps in providing support. Guide students on evaluating the reliability of these resources and potential concerns about increased anxiety from certain online communities.

By facilitating these discussions, you can help students recognise the various support systems available to them, both formally and informally, fostering a sense of community and encouraging them to reach out when needed.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

CURRICULUM V9

YEAR 8

English

AC9E8LA02 - Understand how layers of meaning can be created when evaluating by using literary devices such as simile and metaphor.

AC9E8LE01 - Explain the ways that ideas and points of view may represent the values of individuals and groups in literary texts, drawn from historical, social and cultural contexts.

AC9E8LE03 - Explain how language and/or images in texts position readers to respond and form viewpoints.

AC9E8LE04 - Identify intertextual references in literary texts and explain how the references enable new understanding of the aesthetic quality of the text.

AC9E8LE05 - Analyse how language features such as sentence patterns create tone, and literary devices such as imagery create meaning and effect.

AC9E8LY01 - Identify how texts reflect contexts.

Science

AC9S8H03 - Examine how proposed scientific responses to contemporary issues may impact on society and explore ethical, environmental, social and economic considerations.

YEAR 9

English

AC9E9LA02 - Understand how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices such as allusion, evocative vocabulary, and metaphor.

AC9E9LA05 - Identify how authors vary sentence structures creatively for effects, such as intentionally using a dependent clause on its own or a sentence fragment.

AC9E9LE01 - Analyse the representations of people and places in literary texts, drawn from historical, social, and cultural contexts.

AC9E9LE04 - Analyse texts and evaluate the aesthetic qualities and appeal of an author's literary style.

AC9E9LY01 - Analyse how representations of people, places, events, and concepts reflect contexts.

AC9E9LY03 - Analyse and evaluate how language features are used to represent a perspective of an issue, event, situation, individual, or group.

AC9E9LE02 - Present a personal response to a literary text comparing initial impressions and subsequent analysis of the whole text.

AC9E9LE05 - Analyse the effect of text structures, language features, and literary devices such as extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, symbolism, and intertextual references.

Civics and Citizenship

AC9HC9K05 - How and why individuals and groups, including community, religious, and cultural groups, participate in and contribute to civic life in Australia and global citizenship.

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Science

AC9S9H04 - Examine how the values and needs of society influence the focus of scientific research.

AC9S7U02 - use models, including food webs, to represent matter and energy flow in ecosystems and predict the impact of changing abiotic and biotic factors on populations

AC9S9U01 - compare the role of body systems in regulating and coordinating the body's response to a stimulus, and describe the operation of a negative feedback mechanism

YEAR 10

English

AC9E10LA01 - Understand how language can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people.

AC9E10LE01 - Analyse representations of individuals, groups, and places and evaluate how they reflect their context in literary texts by First Nations Australian and wide-ranging Australian and world authors.

AC9E10LA03 - Analyse text structures and language features and evaluate their effectiveness in achieving their purpose.

AC9E10LE06 - Compare and evaluate how "voice" as a literary device is used in different types of texts to evoke emotional responses.

AC9E10LE05 - Analyse how text structure, language features, literary devices, and intertextual connections shape interpretations of texts.

AC9E10LE04 - Evaluate the social, moral, or ethical positions represented in literature.

AC9E10LY03 - Analyse and evaluate how language features are used to implicitly or explicitly represent values, beliefs, and attitudes.

AC9E10LY01 - Analyse and evaluate how people, places, events, and concepts are represented in texts and reflect contexts.

Civics and Citizenship

AC9HC10S03 - To analyse information, data, and ideas about political, legal, or civic issues to identify and evaluate differences in perspectives and interpretations.

Science

AC9S10H04 - Examine how the values and needs of society influence the focus of scientific research.

CURRICULUM 8.4

SENIOR SECONDARY

English

Ways To Die Right 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 environmental studies/geography, psychology, and science as well as the genres of contemporary fiction and literary fiction within the young adult bracket. Character arcs and motivations can also be observed.