
Teachers' Notes



LAST CHANCE JOEY

Meredith Resce

ISBN: 9781761112614

Reading level: 13-17

BOOK SUMMARY

No phone, no wi-fi, no friends and no options. Expelled from three schools, Joey is sent to the country to live with his aunt. She asks him to help an old man recovering from an accident, and now he has a choice. It sounds like a crazy idea, but he chooses to help. What else is there to do, a million miles from anywhere?

But when Joey meets Harry, he finds in him a friend—even if he's eighty-five. Maybe life when people trust you might be a good thing.

As Joey's desire for acceptance grows, break-ins threaten the community and Joey's past starts to catch up with him. How can Joey turn his life around when his mistakes follow him everywhere he goes? And will he be there for Harry when he needs him?

THEMES

- Learning Disorders (dyslexia) ▪ Loneliness ▪ Prejudice ▪ Social Exclusion ▪ Suspicion & Gossip
- Troubled Past ▪ Second Chances ▪ Resilience ▪ Diligence & Tenacity ▪ Styles of Intelligence ▪ Loyalty
- Acceptance, Kindness and Belonging ▪

CONTENTS

Book Summary.....	1
Themes.....	1
About the Author.....	3
Overview.....	4
Discussion Questions.....	6
Classroom Activities.....	12
Key Curriculum Areas.....	22

DISCLAIMER: These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools and other educational institutions, but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Light the Dark Pty Ltd, Trading as Wombat Books
Rhiza Edge, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413

ABN: 30 137 345 941
admin@wombathriza.com.au



**Meredith Resce is available for author talks and workshops.
Contact Rhiza Edge for more information.**

Last Chance Joey 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.

Connect with Rhiza Edge

www.wombathriza.com.au
www.facebook.com/rhizaedge



These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use within schools, but not offered for commercial sale.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Meredith Resce has over twenty-five titles published since 1997.

Though she has lived in various cities over the years, including Melbourne, Geelong, Bristol (UK) and Adelaide, she spent her childhood and youth in the rural community of Melrose, South Australia. She lived with her family on a farm, and travelled on a big yellow school bus twenty-five ks to the neighbouring town for high school. Though she hasn't lived on the farm for years, she is still connected to this community where her family reside on the farm.

Meredith has taught music for most of her adult life, then later taught English, History, Drama and Music at various high schools.

AUTHOR NOTES

Last Chance Joey is my first young adult novel, and is inspired by the old farmer who lived a few ks down the road. Like Young Harry, this farmer lived alone after his older brother died, and had, for many years, lived without electricity and technology. He and his brother were known to be avid gardeners, and brought in fresh produce to the local show that no one else could match for size and quality.

We rarely saw these brothers, though when Norm was on his own, he ventured into town a little more than before. He was painfully shy, and drove a vehicle that was old. But it was rarely driven, so was still in good working order.

I often wondered what it would be like if a troubled youth was to be assigned to him as a helper, how the relationship might develop.

The story of Young Harry and Joey came to mind and developed from there.

I might have met Joey a time or two in various classrooms. As a teacher, it's not always easy to understand what might cause perpetual disruptive behaviour, but in this instance, I tried to imagine what might have been behind Joey's persistent trouble-making.

No matter what genre I write, I prefer to write with an underlying theme of redemption—in this case second chance. Or in Joey's case, last chance.

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use within schools, but not offered for commercial sale.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL QUESTIONS

- How would you respond if you went to live in a house with no electricity or internet? Do you think that would be easy? If it were you, would you do whatever possible to get electricity on to the house, or would you try to learn how to live without it?
- Joey has a learning disorder. Look up learning disorders and the definition of different types. For example, dyslexia. Do you know anyone with any learning disorders? How might a learning disorder affect your studies? How might that make you feel? Over time, might it impact your desire to learn?
- How does Joey need space from his life to reevaluate his relationships and choices? What does getting that space do to help him see the bigger picture?
- How does Joey's character change from the beginning to the end of the story?
- How does Joey's relationship with Young Harry help him see older people in a new light?
- What lessons about life and death does Joey learn through his experiences with Young Harry?
- Did Joey's mother know how to deal with his troubles? What could she have done differently?
- How was Auntie Belle different to Joey's mum?

LEARNING DISORDERS (DYSLEXIA)

1. Have you ever known someone, or experienced yourself, a learning difficulty? How did Joey respond to his learning difficulty in class?
2. Was Joey's disruptive behaviour part of his personality, a coverup for how he was feeling or both?
3. How does Joey's dyslexia affect his interactions and experiences?
4. How does Joey's dyslexia affect his feelings?
5. Discuss how Joey overcomes challenges related to his dyslexia. What strategies or support systems help him succeed?
6. Why does Joey hide the fact that he can't read?
7. How do learning disorders affect a young person's confidence and behaviour?
8. What would have helped Joey earlier in his school life?
9. How does the story challenge the stigma around dyslexia?

LONELINESS

1. Do you think it would be difficult to be separated from your friends?
2. Did Young Harry like having Joey come around to help? How do we know?
3. How do different characters in the book cope with their experience or the prospect of loneliness, death or loss?
4. How does Joey's initial sense of loneliness affect his behaviour?

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use within schools, but not offered for commercial sale.

-
5. In what ways does Young Harry experience loneliness, and how does Joey change that?
 6. How is loneliness different in the city compared to the country in Joey's experience?
 7. Does technology (or the lack of it) increase or reduce feelings of loneliness in the novel?

PREJUDICE

1. What instances of prejudice are depicted in the book?
2. How did others in the small community respond to Arjun as someone from another culture?
3. Identify and discuss an instance of prejudice in the story. How do the characters respond to it?
4. How does the story address the impact of prejudice on individuals and communities?
5. Why is it important to talk about prejudice?
6. How can communities become more inclusive and self-aware in terms of prejudicial attitudes?

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

1. Were Joey's city friends helping him to adjust and succeed? Why?
2. How did Emily respond when she first met Joey? Did she maintain that attitude, or did she change?
3. Why do some people in the town initially exclude Joey?
4. What are the effects of being socially excluded, both in Joey's past and present?
5. What actions help Joey start to feel included in the town?
6. How can assumptions and gossip contribute to social exclusion?

SUSPICION & GOSSIP

1. How did Joey feel when he was first accused of breaking into Auntie Belle's place?
2. Why didn't the town's people believe that Joey was innocent, despite the policeman's testimony?
3. Do you think Young Harry would have shot Jerome and Damo? How did Joey deal with them instead?
4. What role does gossip play in how Joey is viewed by the town?
5. What role does gossip play in how Young Harry is viewed by the town?
6. How is suspicion dangerous in a close-knit community?
7. Why are people quick to believe the worst about Joey, and what changes their minds?
8. What does the novel suggest about how to handle rumours and judgment?

TROUBLED PAST

1. How did Joey respond to Young Harry when they first met?
2. Young Harry didn't talk much—was it possible for Joey to learn anything from him?
3. How did Joey feel about Young Harry's stash of cash under the floorboards? Was he tempted in any way? How?
4. How did Joey feel when he found Deli after the break-in?

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use within schools, but not offered for commercial sale.

-
5. What decision did Young Harry make that would tip Joey's world on its head?
 6. How does Joey's past in the city affect how people see him—even before they know him?
 7. Why is it so hard for people to look past someone's history?
 8. In what ways does Joey try to move on from his past?
 9. How does the story show that a troubled past doesn't define a person's future?

SECOND CHANCES

1. Was it good that Joey was separated from his friends?
2. What did Joey find to replace his video games?
3. Was it good that Joey lost internet and phone connection for a while? Why?
4. What did Joey find in common with Arjun? How did they feel?
5. How did Young Harry feel about Joey going to study? Why was Young Harry so excited?
6. How did Joey behave when he first got back to the classroom? How did Emily respond to his actions?
7. Why did the principal give Joey a special award? How did Joey feel about it?
8. What decision do you think Joey should make in response to Young Harry's will?
9. Describe a scene where Joey helps Young . How does this act of helping change Joey's perspective on life and relationships?
10. Find two moments in the story where trust is built between characters. How does this trust affect their relationship?
11. Discuss a situation in the book where a character is given a second chance. What are the outcomes of this second chance?
12. How do the characters show respect to one another? Why is respect important in their interactions?

RESILIENCE

1. What challenges does Joey face that require emotional or mental resilience?
2. How does Joey's ability to keep going, despite setbacks, shape your understanding of his character?
3. In what ways does Young Harry show resilience after his accident?
4. Which moments in the novel highlight Joey choosing to grow rather than give up?

DILIGENCE & TENACITY

1. How does Joey show persistence even when tasks are hard or unfamiliar?
2. In what ways do his efforts in the country differ from his approach to school?
3. How is tenacity a quiet strength shown by both Joey and Young Harry?
4. How does working on the farm help Joey develop a sense of purpose?

STYLES OF INTELLIGENCE

1. What was the difference between Joey's talent and Arjun's abilities, and how did they help each other?
2. Both Joey and Arjun got an opportunity to play for the football team. How did each one feel?
3. What kinds of intelligence does Joey show that go unnoticed in a typical classroom?
4. How do Young Harry's and Emily's strengths show that intelligence isn't just academic?
5. Why is it important to value different types of intelligence in education and life?
6. How does the story argue for a broader understanding of what it means to be "smart"?
7. Joey struggles with reading, but what other forms of intelligence does he show that are equally valuable?
8. How does working with animals and the land highlight Joey's natural or kinaesthetic intelligence?
9. In what ways does Emily show different kinds of intelligence from Joey, and how do they complement each other?
10. Do you think schools value some styles of intelligence more than others? Why or why not?
11. How does the novel challenge the idea that academic intelligence is the only path to success?
12. Can you identify which characters demonstrate mathematical or language intelligence? How is this shown in their actions or dialogue?
13. How does Young Harry's lifestyle reflect a different kind of intelligence than what Joey experienced in school?
14. If you were to redesign school to better support all styles of intelligence, what changes would you make?

LOYALTY

1. What conflicts arise for Joey between loyalty to his old friends and his new relationships?
2. How does Joey's loyalty to Young Harry and Emily change him?
3. Can loyalty ever be dangerous or lead to poor choices? How does this play out in the novel?
4. What internal conflict does Joey face between staying loyal to his old friends and building a new life with Young Harry?
5. Why is it difficult for Joey to break away from his past friendships, even when they've caused him trouble?
6. How does Joey's loyalty shift over the course of the novel, and what triggers this change?
7. In what ways does Young Harry earn Joey's loyalty, and how does he show he deserves it?
8. How does the story explore the idea that loyalty can be both a strength and a weakness?
9. What does Joey's decision during the break-in crisis reveal about where his loyalty truly lies?
10. Should loyalty to friends ever come before doing what's right? Use examples from the story to explain your answer.
11. How does the author use Joey's choices to explore the difference between blind loyalty and earned loyalty?

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use within schools, but not offered for commercial sale.

-
12. How does the loyalty Joey shows toward Young Harry differ from the loyalty expected by his old gang mates?
 13. How might Joey's past sense of loyalty have been shaped by needing to survive in a difficult environment?

ACCEPTANCE, KINDNESS & BELONGING

1. Can you identify a moment in the book where trust is built between Joey and another character?
2. Was it fair of the coach to cut Joey from the team? Was Joey's reaction appropriate?
3. Identify three instances where Joey helps Young . How do these actions impact both Joey and ?
4. Discuss how Joey's attitude towards helping others changes throughout the story. What events lead to these changes?
5. How does Joey's perception of Young evolve from the beginning to the end of the story? Provide specific examples.
6. Why is it important to humanise older people, and how does the story illustrate this concept?

OTHER TEXTS THAT COULD WORK FOR COMPARATIVE WORK

Jasper Jones: Novel text by Craig Silvy or film text directed by Rachel Perkins

Suspicion and gossip; old recluse; racism and social exclusion;

To Kill a Mockingbird: Novel text by Harper Lee or film directed by Robert Mulligan

Suspicion and gossip; old recluse; racism and social exclusion;

King's Faith: Film text directed by Nicholas DiBella

Acceptance and belonging; second chances; overcoming a troubled past; loyalty

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

CREATIVE WRITING & ART

- Ask students to write a short story or draw a comic strip about a character who is given a second chance. Discuss the outcomes and lessons learned.
- Encourage students to write letters to a character in the book who is dealing with loss, offering advice and support.

DEBATES & DISCUSSION

- Hold a classroom debate on the impact of racism and how it can be addressed in society. Use examples from the book to support arguments.
- Discuss the challenges faced by individuals with learning difficulties like dyslexia.

GROUP PROJECTS

- Life Lessons: In groups, students can create posters or presentations on the life lessons learned by Joey throughout the book. Each group can focus on a different theme, such as trust, respect, or coping with loss.
- Community Service: Organise a community service project where students can help older adults in their community, similar to Joey's experience with Young . Reflect on the experience and its impact.

MIND MAPPING

Create mind maps that connect the book's themes with real-life examples and personal experiences. This can help students see the relevance of the book's messages in their own lives.

JOURNAL WRITING

Students write a series of journal entries from Joey's perspective at key points in the novel (e.g. first day in the country, meeting Young Harry, being accused of the break-ins, standing up for himself).

POSTER MAKING: STYLES OF INTELLIGENCE

In small groups, students create posters showcasing different styles of intelligence (natural, kinaesthetic, mathematical, language), and match each style to characters from the book with examples from the text.

VISUAL MAPPING - THEN VS NOW

Create a character transformation chart or visual timeline showing Joey's growth from the beginning of the novel to the end. Include labels for key events, relationships, and emotional shifts.

LETTER TO A CHARACTER

Students write a letter to Joey or Young Harry, offering advice, asking questions, or expressing thoughts about their decisions.

COMPARE & CONTRAST: CITY VS COUNTRY LIFE

Students create a T-chart or Venn diagram comparing Joey's experiences in the city versus the country (e.g. relationships, challenges, sense of belonging, routines).

MEDIA PROJECT: BOOK TRAILER

Students work in teams to create a short trailer or TikTok-style teaser for *Last Chance Joey* using visuals, music, and key quotes (can be done with video or slides).

CREATIVE EXTENSION - JOEY'S FUTURE

Write a short story or script set one year after the book ends. Where is Joey now? Has he stayed in the country?

READER'S THEATRE

Select key scenes from the book and assign roles for a dramatic reading. Students can rehearse and perform selected moments.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

CURRICULUM V9

YEAR 8

English

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

AC9E8LY01 - identify how texts reflect contexts

AC9E8LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to interpret and evaluate ideas in texts

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

AC9E8LY03 - analyse and evaluate the ways that language features vary according to the purpose and audience of the text, and the ways that sources and quotations are used in a text

YEAR 9

English

AC9E9LA08 - analyse how vocabulary choices contribute to style, mood and tone

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

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

AC9E9LA01 - recognise how language empowers relationships and roles

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

AC9E9LE03 - analyse how features of literary texts influence readers' preference for texts

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

AC9HC9K06 - the influence of a range of media, including social media, in shaping identity and attitudes to diversity

YEAR 10

English

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

AC9E10LE06 - compare and evaluate how “voice” as a literary device is used in different types of texts, such as poetry, novels and film, 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

AC9E10LE03 - analyse how the aesthetic qualities associated with text structures, language features, literary devices and visual features, and the context in which these texts are experienced, influence audience response

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

AC9E10LE07 - analyse and evaluate the aesthetic qualities of texts, for example, analysing and evaluating the use of literary devices.

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

AC9E10LA02 - understand that language used to evaluate, implicitly or explicitly reveals an individual's values

CURRICULUM 8.4

SENIOR SECONDARY

English

Last Chance Joey 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 culture, health and language. Character arcs and motivations can also be observed.

KEY LEARNING AREAS

Personal and Social capabilities – “... students develop personal and social capability as they learn to understand themselves and others, and manage their relationships, lives, work and learning more effectively. Personal and social capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for others and understanding relationships, establishing and building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams, handling challenging situations constructively and developing leadership skills.” (Australian Curriculum, Personal and Social Capabilities)

Intercultural understandings – "... students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others. They come to understand how personal, group and national identities are shaped, and the variable and changing nature of culture. Intercultural understanding involves students learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect.

Student diversity/supporting learners with disabilities – "... Students with disability represent a significant number of students accessing the Australian Curriculum. Students' individual strengths and abilities should be central to the teaching and learning planning process." (Australian Curriculum)

Ethical understandings – "... students develop ethical understanding as they identify and investigate the nature of ethical concepts, values and character traits, and understand how reasoning can assist ethical judgement. Ethical understanding involves students building a strong personal and socially oriented ethical outlook that helps them to manage context, conflict and uncertainty, and to develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behaviour have on others. It does this through fostering the development of 'personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others', and the capacity to act with ethical integrity..." (Australian Curriculum, Ethical Understandings)