
Teachers' Notes



SOMEWHERE

Shelby Matheson

ISBN: 9781761112232

Reading level: Middle Fiction 9+

BOOK SUMMARY

The second book in the Elsewhere series.

A new semester means new surprises at Miss Coleridge's Academy for Gifted Youths. Elsie tries her best to be a good Guardian, but a few terrible mistakes causes Elsewhere's trust in her to falter.

To make matters worse, Gifted kids from around the world have gone missing, taken somewhere the Gateways can't reach.

A mysterious figure offers Elsie a tempting solution—a way to keep Gifts for good instead of borrowing them—but the deal comes with a heavy price.

Do the ends truly justify the means?

THEMES

World War I • Childhood • Coming of Age •

Moral Dilemmas • Identity & Acceptance • Courage •

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**Shelby Matheson is available for author talks and workshops.
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Somewhere 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



Shelby Matheson is a born-and-raised Australian, currently residing in the quiet, beachside town of Hervey Bay, Queensland. She has a Bachelor in journalism and creative writing, and a graduate diploma in editing and publishing from USQ. She has been writing full-length novels since she was fourteen and has always known that being an author is the only career for her. In her spare time, she enjoys video games, drawing, crochet, collecting books (and even reading them), but her greatest passion will always be writing and escaping to the worlds in her head.

AUTHOR NOTES

Somewhere is the sequel I never thought I'd finish, but I'm so glad I did. It continues the story of Elsie Clarke and her Gifted friends as they encounter new challenges and face new foes, bringing a new bunch of Gifted kids along for the ride. Elsie has a go at being a Gifted mentor—which doesn't go quite to plan—Gifted kids are going missing across the world, and a mysterious stranger offers Elsie a tempting power that comes with too high a price.

The new characters in this book are just as fun as the original cast, with their own stories to tell, and I had a lot of fun bringing them to life in *Somewhere*. But this story is still Elsie's and with the war looming ever closer to home, she starts to see her home life affected for the first time. The world is changing, and she has two choices—rising up to meet it or running away to hide.

Just like *Elsewhere*, this book required a lot of research to get it right. I wanted to represent Britain's role in the war as authentically as possible – both the positives and the negatives. In *Somewhere*, we get to see a big historical moment take place, as well as some fictionalised accounts of real issues that were taking place at that time. The Easter eggs to classic children's literature also continue in this book and once again, I invite readers to have fun spotting them within the text.

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REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

The Elsewhere trilogy continues to follow the events of World War I through the eyes of Elsie Clarke, an imaginative young Guardian navigating an increasingly complex world of responsibility, power, and consequence. *Somewhere* builds on this foundation by deepening Elsie's role within Elsewhere and expanding the global impact of the war through the disappearance of Gifted children and the ethical challenges this creates.

Students are able to engage with a significant historical period in a way that is accessible and memorable, combining real historical ideas from World War I with fantasy and mystery elements. The narrative continues to use a fantasy structure to support younger readers in understanding complex emotional and moral situations.

The series further develops themes of growing up, identity, and responsibility, particularly as Elsie is forced to confront the consequences of her decisions in ways that directly affect others. The novel explores ethical ambiguity, the misuse of power, and the difficulty of making "right" choices in uncertain circumstances.

Across the trilogy, the impact of World War I is used not only as a historical backdrop, but also as a symbolic reflection of adolescence—highlighting transformation, instability, and the pressure of entering adulthood before one feels ready. The cross-curricular links further include English as themes and character development are intertwined, and visual arts with the included creative activities. The author has included literary Easter Eggs that will encourage students to make connections with classic children's literature and reinforce literary traditions and understanding.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

CURRICULUM V9

YEAR 4

English

AC9E4LY03 - identify the characteristic features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text.

AC9E4LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, to expand topic knowledge and ideas, and evaluate texts.

AC9E4LE01 - recognise similar storylines, ideas and relationships in different contexts in literary texts by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors.

AC9E4LE02 - describe the effects of text structures and language features in literary texts when responding to and sharing opinions.

AC9E4LE03 - discuss how authors and illustrators make stories engaging by the way they develop character, setting and plot tensions.

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YEAR 5

English

AC9E5LY02 - use appropriate interaction skills including paraphrasing and questioning to clarify meaning, make connections to own experience, and present and justify an opinion or idea.

AC9E5LA03 - describe how spoken, written and multimodal texts use language features and are typically organised into characteristic stages and phases, depending on purposes in texts.

AC9E5LE01 - identify aspects of literary texts that represent details or information about historical, social and cultural contexts in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors.

AC9E5LE02 - present an opinion on a literary text using specific terms about literary devices, text structures and language features, and reflect on the viewpoints of others.

AC9E5LE03 - recognise that the point of view in a literary text influences how readers interpret and respond to events and characters.

YEAR 6

English

AC9E6LA02 - understand the uses of objective and subjective language, and identify bias.

AC9E6LY01 - examine texts including media texts that represent ideas and events, and identify how they reflect the context in which they were created.

AC9E6LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, and to connect and compare content from a variety of sources.

AC9E6LE01 - identify responses to characters and events in literary texts, drawn from historical, social or cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors.

HASS

AC9HS6S01 - develop questions to investigate people, events, developments, places and systems.

YEAR 7

English

AC9E7LE01 - identify and explore ideas, points of view, characters, events and/or issues in literary texts, drawn from historical, social and/or cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors.

AC9E7LE02 - form an opinion about characters, settings and events in texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others' opinions and justifying a response.

AC9E7LE03 - explain the ways that literary devices and language features such as dialogue, and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts.

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AC9E7LE05 - identify and explain the ways that characters, settings and events combine to create meaning in narratives.

AC9E7LE06 - identify and explain how literary devices create layers of meaning in texts including poetry.

AC9E7LA03 - identify and describe how texts are structured differently depending on their purpose and how language features vary in texts.

History

AC9HH7S07 - explain historical interpretations about significant events, individuals and groups.

YEAR 8

English

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, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors.

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.

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

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

AC9E9LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to compare and contrast ideas and opinions in and between texts.

History

AC9HH9K09 - the places of significance where Australians fought, their perspectives and experiences, including the Gallipoli campaign, the Western Front and the Middle East.

AC9HH9K10 - significant events and turning points of the war and the nature of warfare, including the Western Front Battle of the Somme and the Armistice.

AC9HH9K11 - the effects of the First World War on Australian society, such as the role of women, political debates about conscription, relationships with the British Empire, and the experiences of returned soldiers.

AC9HH9K12 - the commemoration of the First World War, including different historical interpretations and debates about the nature and significance of the Anzac legend and the war.

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TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Year Four to Year 6 primary aged children, and Year Seven to Nine secondary school teenagers. We advise teachers to use best judgement due to the large age range as to what will suit their students.

KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Give the students a moment to analyse the cover and ask them if there are any interesting details they can see. What makes these details interesting and what do they think it will mean within the book?
2. Read the back cover blurb and discuss. Ask what themes they think might be prevalent in the novel. Ask what other books it reminds them of.
3. Ask if the students have read any famous children's literature and which ones are their favourites. Ask them to keep an eye out for any references during the novel.
4. Ask if the students have any prior knowledge of WW1 before beginning the book.

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students if they related to any of the new characters. Which one and why?
2. What is their impression of Elsie at the beginning of this book and how did she change over the course of the novel? What new things did she learn?
3. Elsewhere changes in this novel, doing things readers haven't seen before, like raining, giving shortcuts and changing its façade. What do these changes tell us about Elsewhere in those moments? Do you think Elsewhere has feelings?
4. Elsie gets to see what Elsewhere looks like for those living in Japan and Australia. What do you think Elsewhere would look like in other countries? What would Elsewhere look like for you?
5. How many references did they find to famous children's literature? List examples.
6. In this book, we learn about Emmeline Pankhurst and the Suffragettes. Why were they important to history? And why do some people have such a strong dislike of them?
7. Violet makes a return in this book. What are your impressions of her? Do you agree with her plan or do you think she is going too far?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- Of the new Gifts that were introduced, which was your favourite and why? What would you do with that Gift if you had it?
- What new aspects of WW1 were learned in this book and why were they significant?
- Elsie has a knack for doing things impulsively with good intentions, but it often comes with consequences. Have you ever done something impulsively? How did it work out?
- How does Elsie's play act as an allegory for the war? What can be learned from the story of The Magic Garden?
- What does Tryll mean by "the moments that matter"? What do we learn in this book about what it means to be Gifted? What role do the Gifted play in society?
- Find three instances in the book where characters make a mistake. Which characters own up to their mistakes and which ones don't? What does this tell us about those characters?

WORLD WAR I

- In chapter 1, Elsie witnesses a bomb landing on 16 Arkham Rd. Why was this moment significant? If you're not sure, Google the house to find out and take a look at a picture of the house (which is still standing today!)
- In chapter 2, Mr Clarke is presented with a white feather. What does this feather symbolise and why were women giving them to men? Do you think this is a good or bad idea and why?
- Do some research on the Suffragettes. What role did they play in WWI? How has history changed due to their involvement and campaigning?
- How does *Somewhere* continue to represent World War I as more than just a historical setting? In what ways does it affect the characters' personal lives?
- What new aspects of World War I are introduced in this book, and why are they significant to understanding the broader impact of the war?
- How do the events of World War I influence the choices characters make, particularly when they are faced with fear, uncertainty, or loss?
- In what ways does the novel show that World War I affected not only soldiers, but also children and families on the home front?
- How does the presence of war in the background of the story shape the mood and decisions within *Elsewhere*?

IDENTITY & ACCEPTANCE

- Jaime has a hard time making friends. Why do people think Jaime is different? What can we learn about Jaime's theory of being "box-less"? How might this apply in ways other than gender?

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- Greta is great at making friends but has a hard time keeping them. Why is that? Can you find an example in the text where we see this happen?
 - Aleksi hides his face due to the burn scars that give him a frightening appearance. Why is he so afraid of being seen? Can you find examples in the text where we see the effects of this? In what ways could the other students be kinder to him? Why is it important that Aleksi learn to accept his appearance and how might this apply to other kinds of physical differences?
 - Have you ever been treated differently by someone, or do you know someone who has been? What do you think was the reason for this? What are some ways that you, or others, could be kinder to others and more understanding of their circumstances?

COURAGE

- Find three examples of a character standing up for others. What do they do for them and how does it help?
- Elsie and Hugo return to the toy factory to save the workers from their predicament, putting themselves in danger in the process. Can you think of any examples in other books where the heroes have risked everything for total strangers?
- Violet and Silas have been tracking down Gifted children and stealing their Gifts for their own gain. Violet wants to use these Gifts to make herself stronger so that she can help others. Do you agree or disagree with her plan and why? Do you think there is a better way to do it? Do you think there might be a way to help others without the use of Gifts?
- On Christmas day, Elsie is sent to her room for asking why her mother is being so rude to the Amaras. Why was Mrs Clarke acting like this? Do you think it was right for Elsie to point this out? Was it fair or unfair that she was sent to her room?
- After the bombing of London, Mr Clarke turns their home into a temporary refuge and medical centre. In what ways did this inconvenience the Clarkes? Was the help they gave to others worth all the trouble and why? What are some examples in real life where this kind of help can be found? Are there any in your own community?

COMING OF AGE

- How does Elsie's role as a Guardian force her to grow up faster than she is emotionally ready for? What moments show this most clearly?
- In what ways does Elsie still think and act like a child, even when she is making adult-level decisions?
- What responsibilities in the novel feel unfair for someone Elsie's age? Why do you think she is still expected to carry them?
- How does Elsie's understanding of leadership change throughout the book?
- Which character best represents the idea of "growing up" in this novel, and why?
- What does Elsie lose as she grows older in this story? Does she gain anything in return?
- At what point in the novel do you think Elsie stops being "just a student" and starts becoming something more?

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- How do other characters respond to Elsie's growth and changing role? Do they support or resist it?
 - What does the novel suggest about whether growing up is something that happens suddenly or gradually?
 - Do you think Elsie is ready for the responsibilities she is given? Why or why not?

MORAL DILEMMAS

- Elsie is offered a solution that comes with a heavy cost. What makes this offer so tempting for her?
- Do you think Elsie's mistakes are caused more by pressure, emotion, or poor judgment? Explain your reasoning.
- At what point does a "good intention" stop being enough to justify a decision? Use examples from the text.
- Are there moments in the novel where Elsie's actions could be seen as both right and wrong at the same time?
- How do desperation and fear influence decision-making in this book?
- Which character makes the most ethically questionable decision? Do you think they believe they are doing the right thing?
- Can doing something wrong for a "good reason" ever be justified? Why or why not?
- How does power influence moral decision-making in the novel? Who has power, and how do they use it?
- What consequences arise from characters trying to "fix" problems quickly rather than carefully?
- In this novel, both Violet and Tryll make the same observation - "Sometimes it takes extreme to make a new normal." What were they referring to when they said this, and why does it matter? In what ways might this sentiment apply in real life?
- Do you think the novel suggests that desperate actions are understandable, forgivable, or dangerous? Support your answer.
- How does Elsie's role as a Guardian complicate her ability to make moral choices?
- Is it possible in the world of *Somewhere* to make a completely "right" decision? Why or why not?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

SCHOOL PLAY

Imagine your school is putting on a play. Write a summary of what your play would be about and the themes you would like to explore. What kind of stage props or backgrounds would you use? Which Gifts would you choose to make your show more magical?

POETRY

Have a go at Madam Tryll's poetry exercise from chapter 10. Pick a nursery rhyme and rewrite it with new words, keeping the rhythm the same.

YOUR ELSEWHERE

Design your own Elsewhere. What kind of trees would it have? What would the weather be like? Draw a picture to go along with your description. You can use the attached worksheet to help.

DIFFERENT ELSEWHERE'S

What do you think Elsewhere would be called in other languages? Jump on Google Translate and have a go at finding new names for it. It doesn't have to be a direct translation of the word 'Elsewhere', it could be whatever you like!

MS MSOMI'S ART

Have a go at Ms Msomi's art activity from chapter 5. Think of something that makes you "you", whether it be a memory, a place, an object, or your dream future and draw it.

FAVOURITE CHARACTER

Draw a picture of your favourite character in the book. If they are Gifted, you could draw them showing off their Gifted powers. Add a brief explanation as to why they are your favourite.

WORKSHEET: DESIGN YOUR OWN ELSEWHERE

Name:

Date:

YOUR TASK

The world of Elsewhere does its best to mimic reality, but it often gets details wrong, resulting in a place that is ever-so-slightly surreal. Water is only an illusion; the dew never falls from the leaves; the land is flat and flowers grow on the wrong kinds of trees. But Elsewhere can change its facade, and in Somewhere, we get to see just what Elsewhere is capable of. This worksheet will help you **design your own version of Elsewhere**, one that suits your imagination.

Think carefully about:

- How your world would look and why
- The feeling of living there
- What makes it unique

PART 1: THE LANDSCAPE

What kind of trees would your Elsewhere have?

Choose or design your own:

- Eucalyptus (Australia – tall, oil-rich leaves, gum trees found in dry climates)
- Willow (Europe/Asia – drooping branches, often near water)
- Cherry Blossom (Japan – seasonal pink flowers, symbol of beauty and change)
- Oak (Europe/North America – strong, long-living hardwood tree)
- Rainforest canopy trees (South America/Southeast Asia – dense, layered ecosystems)
- Pine trees (cold climates – cone-bearing evergreen trees)
- My own tree: _____

Describe your trees:

- What do they look like?
- Do they move, speak, or behave magically in your Elsewhere?

PART 2: THE WEATHER

What is the weather like in your Elsewhere?

- Constant sunshine
- Endless rainstorms
- Four shifting seasons in one day
- Floating clouds you can walk on
- Snow that never melts
- Mist that reveals hidden paths
- My own weather: _____

Describe your weather:

- How does it affect people living there?
 - Does it change based on mood or events?
-
-
-

PART 3: WHERE DOES YOUR WORLD COME FROM?

Elsewhere is shaped not only by trees, but by the land, water, and natural environments that exist in the real world. These features help decide what a place feels like and how people live within it. Choose or design elements for your Elsewhere:

LANDSCAPES (choose one or more)

- Mountains (e.g. Himalayas – high, snowy peaks, remote and powerful)
- Forest valleys (e.g. Europe / North America – sheltered and green spaces between hills)
- Deserts (e.g. Sahara – vast, dry, open landscapes with extreme conditions)
- Islands (e.g. Pacific Islands – surrounded by ocean, isolated and unique ecosystems)
- Wetlands (e.g. Kakadu, Australia – flooded landscapes full of life)
- My own landscape: _____

WATER WORLDS

- Rivers that change direction depending on emotion or time
- Deep oceans with hidden cities beneath the surface
- Frozen lakes that preserve memories in the ice
- Endless rainfall that reshapes the land each day
- My own water feature: _____

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ATMOSPHERE & SKY

- Constant golden light (no true night or day)
- Storm-filled skies that reflect emotional tension
- Floating landmasses in the clouds
- Aurora skies (inspired by polar regions like Iceland/Antarctica skies)
- Shifting weather that reacts to people's choices
- My own sky/atmosphere: _____

Which real-world environments inspired your choices? (*Think about deserts, oceans, mountains, islands, rainforests, or polar regions.*)

PART 4: THE FEELING OF ELSEWHERE

- How does your Elsewhere feel?
- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| - Safe | - Lonely |
| - Mysterious | - Magical |
| - Chaotic | - Dangerous |
| - Peaceful | - Changing |

Explain why:

PART 5: DRAW YOUR ELSEWHERE

Draw your Elsewhere in the box on the next page.

(Include your trees, weather, and any special features like buildings, creatures, or landscapes.)

Alternatively you can create a moodboard using photos and other art as inspirations.

PART 6: EXTENSION

Write a short paragraph:

If someone from Elsewhere visited your world, what would they notice first? Would they feel comfortable there? Why or why not?

BONUS CHALLENGE

Give your Elsewhere a name.

What would it be called? _____

Why?
