
Teachers' Notes



TEMORA AND THE WORDSNATCHER

Kate Gordon

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Reading level: 7 to 12

BOOK SUMMARY

Temora Murphy is eleven years old. She lives in a world where she never really fits. The other girls make fun of her. She's not the "right" sort of girl for anyone – least of all her mother. On her twelfth birthday, Temora makes a wish, a wish that alters her life forever. Temora Tempest is welcomed into a world within a book, where everyone has been waiting for her. But when some of the other apprentices fall victim to a magical disease that could only be caused by one person – a monster thought long dead – Temora realises that there can be darkness in every story. And that it might be her job to save everyone.

THEMES

Self-belief • Belonging • Body acceptance • Friendship •

Self-acceptance • Courage • Family Neglect • Trauma • The power of reading

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**Kate Gordon is available for author talks and workshops.
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Temora's 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



Kate Gordon grew up in a small town by the sea in Tasmania.

Her first book, *Three Things About Daisy Blue* was published in the Girlfriend series by Allen and Unwin in 2010. Her second book, *Thyla*, was published by Random House Australia in April 2011 and her third book, *Vulpi*, the sequel to *Thyla*, was published in April 2012. Kate was the recipient of 2011 and 2012 Arts Tasmania Assistance to Individuals grants.

Writing Clementine was published in June 2014 by Allen and Unwin. It received the 2016 IBBY Ena Noel Award and was published in the German language by Random House, Germany. In 2018, Kate was shortlisted in the Dorothy Hewett Awards for an Unpublished Manuscript, and was commended in the 2018 Vogel's Awards.

The Heartsong of Wonder Quinn was published by UQP, in 2020. Megan Daley called the book "Just exquisite". Magpies Magazine called it "Haunting and beautiful". It was a CBCA Honour Book in 2021. Its companion books, *The Ballad of Melodie Rose* and *The Calling of Jackdaw Hollow* were published in 2021 and 2023.

The *Juno Jones*, *Word Ninja* books are a junior fiction series about books, friendship, alien lizard men, killer mermaids and an adventurous girl who definitely does not like reading. They are out now from Yellow Brick Books.

Girl Running, *Boy Falling* was released with Rhiza Edge in 2018. It is a story about grief, family, mental health and friendship, set in a small town in Tasmania. It has been long-listed in the 2019 CBCA Awards.

In 2019, Kate had her first picture book, *Bird on a Wire*, published by Hardie Grant. Her second picture book, *Amira's Magpie*, was published in 2021.

Aster's Good, Right Things was published by Yellow Brick Books in November, 2020. The companion novels, *Xavier in the Meantime* and *Indigo in the Storm* were published in 2021 and 2023.

Aster's Good, Right Things was the winner of the CBCA Book of the Year for younger readers in 2021. It was shortlisted in the Tasmanian Literary Awards in 2022.

Whalesong was published by Yellow Brick Books in 2022, following Kate's residency at the Maritime Museum of Tasmania.

Kate continues to write novels and picture books from a cottage overlooking the river and the mountain, on the Eastern Shore of Tasmania. She has two daughters, a cat and a very silly labradoodle.

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

The *Temora* series uses imagination and literature to explore self-belief, self-acceptance, and self-love. This ties into the ideas of belonging to a community, developing friendships in the midst of trauma, and drawing on one's own courage to move forward. At its heart the *Temora* series centers around a young girl and her own struggles and insecurities while also following an exciting fantasy narrative. It can help children navigate their own struggles with self-worth and image by encouraging them to bond and lean on their friends and peers.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes.

YEAR FOUR

English, Humanities and Social Science, Health and Physical Education

ACELA1488	ACELT1603	ACELY1687	ACELY1675
ACHASSI077	ACHASSI081	ACHASSK072	
ACPPS033	ACPPS037	ACPPS038	

YEAR FIVE

English, Humanities and Social Science, Health and Physical Education

ACELT1608	ACELT1609	ACELT1610	ACELA1525
ACHASSI094	ACHASSI099		
ACPPS051	ACPPS060	ACPPS057	

YEAR SIX

English, Humanities and Social Science, Health and Physical Education

ACELT1613	ACELY1709	ACELY1801
ACHASSI127		
ACPPS051	ACPPS057	ACPPS060

YEAR SEVEN

English

ACELT1619	ACELT1620	ACELT1622	ACELT1621
ACELT1803	ACELY1722	ACELT1625	

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 Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students if Temora reminds them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
2. What is their first impression of Temora?
3. How does Temora change over the course of the story?
4. Pick one of Temora's friends. How do they help her in her quest and to begin to believe in herself?
5. Did you guess who the villains were? Explain your reasoning. Is there anyone else in the text who you think might not be who they seem?
6. Ask students how they perceive Temora's situation. Does she prevail and come out of the events okay? Do you think these events will have lasting consequences?
7. Pick one of the creatures in the book. Why are they your favourite? Draw a picture of them if you'd like.
8. If you could draw an alternative cover of Temora, what would it look like?
9. What do you think might happen in book two?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SELF-BELIEF & SELF-ACCEPTANCE

- According to Collins Dictionary 'self-belief' is 'confidence in oneself and one's ability' and in the Cambridge Dictionary 'self-acceptance' is 'the ability to accept yourself as you are, including your faults'. Do you have self-belief or self-acceptance? Do you think either of these things is hard to have? Why?
- Talking down to yourself can sometimes be easier than building yourself up. What are some moments in the story where Temora talks herself down? How does that change over time? In what ways does Temora change to allow herself to accept the way she is?
- Find three instances in the text where Temora begins to believe in herself. Why do you think Temora finds a way to trust and have confidence in herself and her abilities.

BELONGING & FRIENDSHIP

- At the beginning of the book Temora struggles with her peers and having friends. Often the other children are quite mean to her. How does Temora deal with this? What are some coping strategies to help when you're struggling with friendships and peers?
- What does it mean to belong? Can you belong to a group but still be yourself? Discuss how Temora meets new friends at her new school and how she feels a sense of belonging. Does she change at all or does she simply do better with this group of children? Why might she do better in this new environment?
- Discuss how the power of friendship and belonging helps Temora to find self esteem. Is it easier to develop confidence when you are with people who accept you as you are? Why or why not?

BODY ACCEPTANCE

- What is body positivity and body acceptance? Look it up and then discuss your findings in a group of three-four people. What does it mean to be body positive? How can you be body positive yourself?
- What is the difference between body neutrality, body acceptance and body positivity? What are some pros and cons of each approach?
- Find three moments in the story where body positivity is mentioned. How is Temora body positive? How does she learn to accept and love her own body?
- How does the way the characters in the book are described help contribute to body acceptance?
- Find some pictures online who remind you of Temora. Using body positive language, describe these people.

COURAGE

- Can you think of some instances where Temora has to build up her courage to face something in the story? Write down the moments you can think of and then write some ways you might also find your own courage in similar situations.
- Having courage can be important even when you're not in a fantasy story. Why is having courage something good to try and grow? What does it mean to have courage and how might it help you? Discuss in a group some times where having courage can help you in your everyday life.

FAMILY NEGLECT & TRAUMA

- Temora's mother at the start of the book is not a very good parent. Discuss several ways Temora's mother neglects and traumatises her.
- What makes a good parent? What should Temora's mother be doing to support and care for Temora?
- Temora has some family trauma from living with her mother. How does that affect her? Write down some ways in which the things Temora's mother says and does at the beginning of the story affects the way Temora acts throughout.

THE POWER OF READING

- Stories and books are at the heart of this narrative. They're used as a way to grow and to heal. Think of some ways that stories help the characters and why. You can use these reasons in your brochure and poster activity later.
- Throughout the story Temora grows in strength and power. Find three moments in the story where Temora begins to feel powerful.
- Temora gets powers throughout the story that help her on her journey. How do you think Temora's powers resemble finding our own power in the world? While Temora's powers are fantastical they can be metaphors for real life examples.

ACTIVITIES

WRITE A SHORT STORY

Temora and the other students create stories for the children of the real world. Let's pretend to be a student at Temora's school and write some stories of our own.

Start with free writing: for ten minutes write whatever comes to mind. Go wild with your story and don't stop to think too hard. Things don't have to be perfect! Just write for fun and come up with a little story.

Now let's plan a short story. With a piece of paper fold it into three parts. Write Beginning on top part, Middle on the middle section, and End on the last one. Come up with a beginning, middle and end to your story. Go home and write your story out. Pretend it's being sent to the real world for real children to dream with. If you're able, share yours with the class the next day.

CREATE A BROCHURE

- Temora goes to a new school, Lyfthelm Tower (run by the Literati in the land of Writungeard) where they learn all kinds of new things about magic, stories and dreamers. Create a brochure or an informational poster for prospective parents of new students.
- Think about what the benefits of the school are, what they achieve, why it might be good for children to go there, what they learn and so on!