



BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Toxic relationships • Identity • Friendship
Grief • Mental health • Recovery

A Girl Can Dream

by Emily Barr

17-year-old Hazel is on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Venice with her two best friends to celebrate her escape from a toxic relationship with an older man. But strange events keep occurring as she recalls her troubled past, and they seem to be tied to the appearances of a mysterious girl.



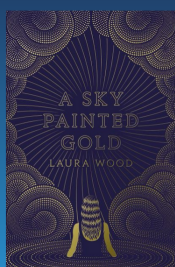
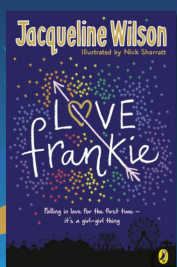
OUR THOUGHTS

"A challenging and emotionally intense read, with vivid characters that feel authentic, sympathetic, and realistically flawed. A difficult topic, well handled and innovative."

TIME TO TALK

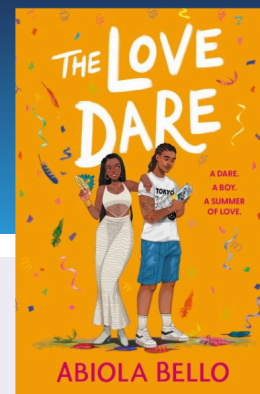
- 1 In the flashback scenes, what do you think was the earliest sign that Hazel's relationship with Freddie was unhealthy?
- 2 Phoebe and Enzo try to support Hazel through her troubles, even when she pushes them away. Can you list some of the ways in which they are supportive to her? Are all of them obvious?
- 3 Freddie's friends disapprove of his relationship with Hazel. What do you think their reasons are? Do you think there are reasons that they don't explicitly say?
- 4 Barr's descriptions of Venice make it seem magical and timeless. What sort of words and phrasing does she use? Could you try writing about a place you know in a similar style, to make it seem magical for somebody who has never been there?
- 5 The supernatural elements of the story are introduced very gradually. What do you think was the first obvious sign that something fantastical was happening? Did you work out what was going on before it was revealed?
- 6 Hazel is confused about her identity in various ways throughout the book. What elements of her identity does she question? What outside factors influence her image of herself?
- 7 Finding out the truth about Freddie's late brother is the final straw that convinces Hazel to end their relationship. What would it feel like to find out something about somebody you were close to that changed your perception of them? Can you think of any examples?
- 8 Imagine you had a friend who was going through similar problems to Hazel. Can you write them a letter offering support and encouragement? What would you advise them to do about their unhealthy relationship?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Romance • Carnivals • Relationships
Friendship • Comics • Poetry performance

The Love Dare

by Abiola Bello

Popular girl Eva Òjó is used to boys falling for her without her even trying. When her friend dares her to dance with a random guy at Notting Hill Carnival, she meets Saint - the only boy who's never shown her interest. Commence Operation Fall-in-love-with-Eva... or is it Operation Fall-in-love-with-Saint?



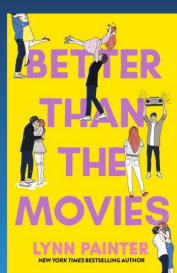
OUR THOUGHTS

"A fun romance with really likable characters. Modern, bright and relatable, a great addition to teen collections."

TIME TO TALK

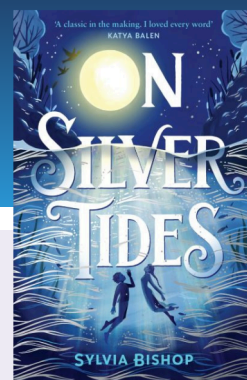
- 1 Eva's friends dare her to get Saint to ask her out on a date. Have you ever been dared to do something by your friends? Do you think it's right to manipulate someone's feelings for your own agenda?
- 2 A fight breaks out at Eva's 18th birthday party and her dad's car is damaged. Have you found yourself in a situation where things escalate beyond your control? How would you react if you found yourself in a similar situation?
- 3 Eva starts helping at the comic book shop Saint works at and discovers an interest in graphic novels as well as rekindling her interest in playing computer games. Have you discovered a hobby you never thought you were interested in before?
- 4 Eva's crush, Jayden, turns out to be a person she realizes she doesn't like or respect anymore. Have you thought you really liked someone, but discovered they aren't the person you thought they were?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Families • Rivers • Gender roles
Adventure stories • Fantasy stories

On Silver Tides

by Sylvia Bishop

Kelda and her family are silvermen, a hidden people who swim like fish and can breathe underwater. But her sister is born differently - and when betrayal comes, she and Kelda must flee on a desperate journey across Britain's waterways.



OUR THOUGHTS

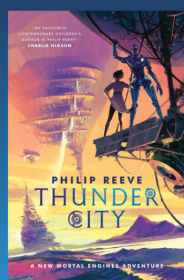
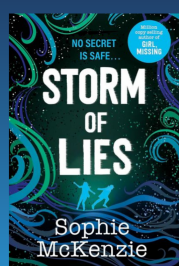
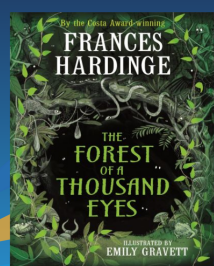
"A gripping adventure with solid characters and plenty of drama. The world building is clear, the writing is accomplished and the story is a page turner. Kelda is a heroic and inspiring main character."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 How do you feel about baby Isla's initiation?
- 2 What situations have you been in that required you to accept that although things are difficult it is for the best?
- 3 Kelda and Isla's idea of home was the boat and the river. What does "Home" mean to you?
- 4 Which beliefs do you think cause misunderstandings and distrust in the world today?
- 5 Which of the characters do feel most drawn to? Why is this?
- 6 There are many parallels to things happening in the natural world right now. What messages do you think are being shared?
- 7 Would you sacrifice your normality or life as you know it for anything or anyone? What would be the reason for you doing so?
- 8 Which scene stands out most for you? Why is this so?
- 9 Do you think this book would make a good film? Explain your reasons.
- 10 If someone asked you what this book was about what would you tell them?



TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

War • Refugees • Current affairs • Family
Death • Friendship • Immigration • Personal conflict

Seven Million Sunflowers

by Malcolm Duffy

Kateryno and her family flee Ukraine after the Russian invasion to England. But their new beginning brings a whole new set of problems.



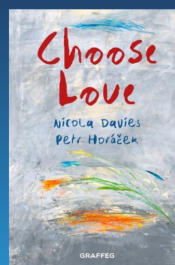
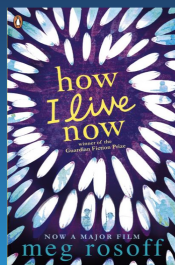
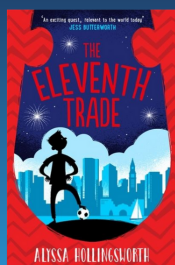
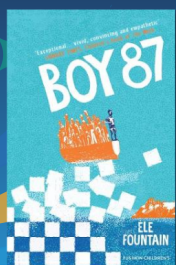
OUR THOUGHTS

"An empathic account of the effect war has beyond the drones and the battlefield. The very relatable relationships and characters offer a glimpse into lives many of us would struggle to imagine."

TIME TO TALK

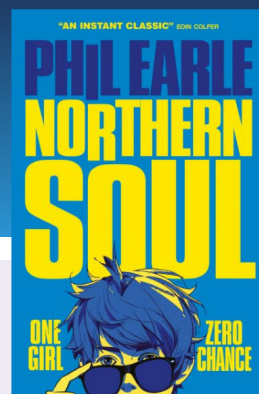
- 1 The opening chapter is very shocking, and yet is a reality in Ukraine. How would you feel if this happened to you? You could find out more by looking for news articles and feeds from the day and compare the fictionalised account with the real event. Why does Kat grab her toy and refuse to wash it? Would you do the same?
- 2 Why do you think the author skips straight to the flight into England in the next chapter and not focus on the immediate aftermath of the bombing and the longer journey the family take? What do you think Kat and the family felt during this time and how they coped with separation from Tato?
- 3 What would you think about living with a strange family?
- 4 How do cultural differences play a role in their relationships? Explore the interactions between the Kovalenko family and the Hawkins, their host family.
- 5 Why do you think the title mentions "sunflowers"? What might they symbolize?
- 6 How does the novel challenge stereotypes and encourage empathy? Can you identify the situations where Kat is feeling the effects of PTSD?
- 7 How does the book highlight the impact of war on families and individuals?
- 8 What messages about hope and survival can readers take away from the novel?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Humorous stories
Romance • Music

Northern Soul

by Phil Earle

With the arrival of new girl Carly Stonehouse, Marv's uneventful life takes a dramatic turn: he falls head-over-heels in love. There's no way a girl like Carly would look at him. Unless he gets help from an unusual source on his agonising quest for love...



OUR THOUGHTS

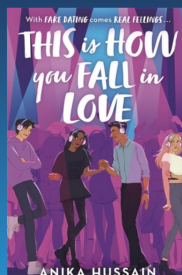
"A sweet and tender tale of unrequited love sprinkled with fabulous humour. Will the boy win over the girl with the help of Otis Redding's ghost? A brilliant light-hearted, fun read."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Who is the main character in Northern Soul and what is his favourite sport?
- 2 What challenges does the main character face in the story?
- 3 What do you think the author wants the reader to take away from this story?
- 4 How does the book connect music to personal growth and overcoming difficulties?
- 5 What role does the ghost of Otis Redding play in Marv's journey?
- 6 Why does Marv struggle to express his feelings for Carly? Is he shy, lacks confidence, doesn't think he is good enough for her? What do you think?
- 7 How does Northern Soul resonate with your own experiences of friendship or first love?
- 8 What character do you most relate to and why?



TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Toxic families • Betrayal • Crimes
Resilience • Media

The Reappearance of Rachel Price

by Holly Jackson

Bel has lived her whole life in the shadow of her mom's disappearance. But when her missing mother reappears just as a documentary about her starts filming, Bel's unanswered questions threaten sinister answers.



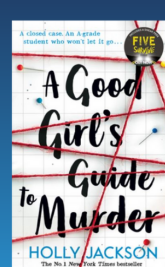
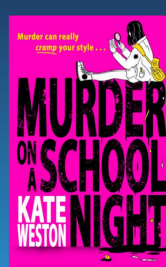
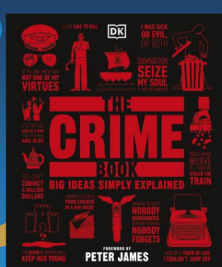
OUR THOUGHTS

"A twisty, turny thriller with an appealing framing device of a true crime documentary. Bel is dogged, resilient and refuses to be a victim despite the most toxic of family situations. A real page turner, perfect for old fans and new."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 There are lots of twists and turns in this story. When did you realise things weren't quite what they seem?
- 2 How would you respond and cope in the situation Bel finds herself in?
- 3 How valuable is Bel's friendship/romance with Ash?
- 4 What assumptions do you make about Bel's cousin Carter? How does your opinion of her change throughout the book?
- 5 Bel isn't a hugely likeable character, she's brash, rude and unsympathetic. Do you feel sorry for her at all? Would she want you to feel sorry for her? Will she be OK?
- 6 How do you feel about true crime? Is it something that should be used as entertainment?
- 7 Which character did you like the best? Which character surprised you the most?
- 8 Were you satisfied with the ending?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Racism • Justice
Poetry

If My Words had Wings

by Danielle Jawando

Tyrell Forrester is getting out of young offender's prison after serving two years for a high-profile robbery. Inspired by a poet, he discovers a whole new world through spoken word. But will society see him as anything more than a criminal?



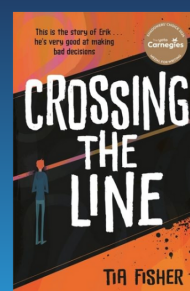
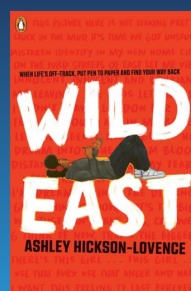
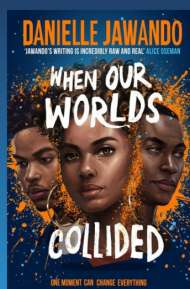
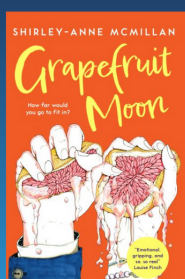
OUR THOUGHTS

"Intense and raw, this is a well-written story that leaves you rooting for characters that don't usually provoke much sympathy."

TIME TO TALK

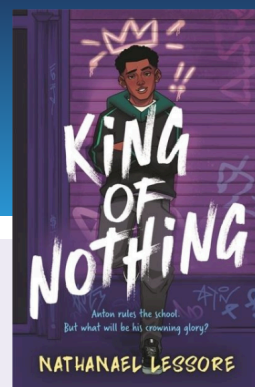
- 1 What do you think the main themes of the book are?
- 2 Ty was sent to a Young Offenders Prison after he was convicted of a crime. Do you think this is a suitable environment for these young people?
- 3 Can you think of some words to describe how reading about prison life made you feel?
- 4 Do you feel differently about young offenders after reading this book?
- 5 Had you heard of institutionalised racism before reading this book? Did the book help you understand what it is?
- 6 Did this book feel like a hopeful story?
- 7 Ty borrows books from the library and says to Gareth, the Prison librarian, that he might not know what the books are saying or if they're any good. Gareth replies 'Whatever you think when you read them...it'll be right' (p.98). What do you think this means? Do you agree?
- 8 Has this book made you feel differently about poetry?
- 9 Did you know that prisons have to have libraries but schools don't? Do you think this is right?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Friendship • Family • Community
Identity • Masculinity

King of Nothing

by Nathanael Lessore

Anton and his friends are the kings of Year 9. But then the loser of the year, Matthew, saves Anton's life. The boys strike up an unlikely friendship, and Anton begins to question everything he thought was important.



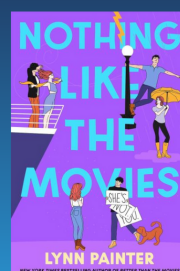
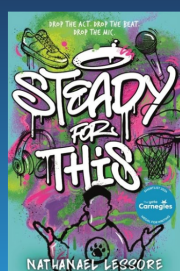
OUR THOUGHTS

"Unlikely friendship is hugely endearing and the characters are great - it's easy to read and pretty tame while still getting to grips with a few issues. Great stuff - an author to watch."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Anton makes friends with 'loser' Matthew but makes sure at first they don't speak to each other at school. Is it important to be cool or popular? Is it better to have good friends who will have your back? Is it ever ok to be friends with someone who ignores you in public?
- 2 Who is your favourite or least favourite character? What are your reasons?
- 3 Do you know of anything like the Happy Campers scheme in your area? Does a community project like that sound appealing to you? What hobbies or activities outside of school are you involved in?
- 4 Anton has good support from his teachers Mr Wall and Mr Benjamin who want to see him succeed in school. At first he is keen to just choose the same GCSE options as his friends, but is it more important to go your own way to achieve what you want? Do you have any teachers or school staff members who have been inspirational for you personally?
- 5 Anton's friend Kehinde has some ideas about how to treat females that Anton personally doesn't agree with. He hosts his own podcast but Anton doesn't always want to hear about it. Do you think it's hard for young men to find safe role models online? What is Kehinde doing or saying that Anton finds objectionable?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Belonging • Love • Self-esteem
Sibling rivalry

Some Like it Cold

by Elle McNicoll

Arthur, a budding filmmaker, is turning the town of Lake Pristine into a small town story worthy of the big screen. His plans are disrupted by the arrival of the town's golden girl - the antagonist of his school days; a girl he's never forgotten.



OUR THOUGHTS

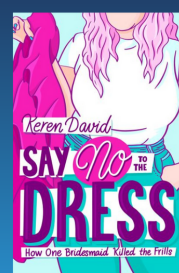
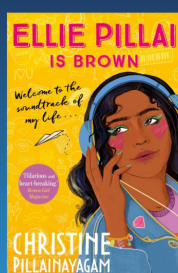
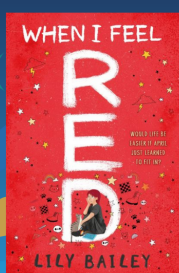
"A light but enjoyable read with endearing characters and a sweet romance. It deals with the difficulties of fitting in when you're different. The writing is succinct and keeps the reader involved and the conclusion is satisfying."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Jasper has a difficult relationship with her sister. Do you have siblings, and what is your relationship like with them?
- 2 Arthur runs an old cinema - are you a film watcher? What type of films do you enjoy watching?
- 3 Why do you think Jasper and Arthur find it difficult to accept that they care about each other?
- 4 Jasper is autistic, which means that sometimes she reacts differently to everyone else. Do you have moments when you react differently to everyone
- 5 Why do you think Jasper's family are dysfunctional?
- 6 If you were making a film about your own neighbourhood, what things would you include?
- 8 What do you think makes a relationship healthy, happy and loving?



TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Power
- Courage
- Hope
- Friendship

Thunder City

by Philip Reeve

Tamzin Pook is a fighter trained to battle with Revenants - reanimated brains within armoured engine bodies. When a rebel faction brutally takes control of the wheeled city Thorbury, Tamzin must lead an oddball gang of mercenaries to secure a peaceful future.



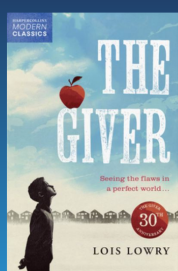
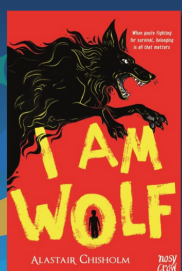
OUR THOUGHTS

"An exciting adventure that keeps the reader gripped. The fabulous characters overcome their limitations because they have to. The world building is masterful and the plot is flawless."

TIME TO TALK

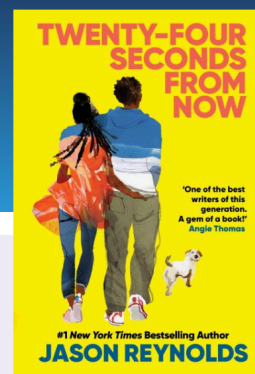
- 1 If you were a skilled player, would you help to save your team from the revenant or would you just save yourself?
- 2 Why did Miss Torpenhow believe that she had to be the one to leave Thorbury to find Max?
- 3 Who is your favourite character in the story and why?
- 4 If you lived in a city on wheels, what five key things would you like the city to have in it?
- 5 What is so significant about the picture called
- 6 "An incident in the amusement arcade on Margate?"
- 7 If you woke up and discovered you were a revenant, what kind of revenant would you want to be?
- 8 Hazel is confused about her identity in various ways throughout the book. What elements of her identity does she question? What outside factors influence her image of herself?
- 9 Why do you think the group of unlikely heroes succeed in their quest?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Relationships • Sex • Adolescence
Romance • Friendship

Twenty-Four Seconds From Now

by Jason Reynolds

Seventeen-year-old Neon is about to have sex with his girlfriend, Aria, for the first time. In 24 seconds to be precise. He's hiding in the bathroom, nervous, wanting to do everything right.



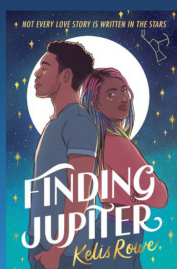
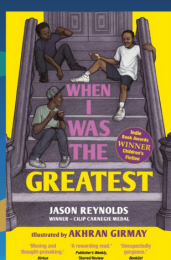
OUR THOUGHTS

"Neat premise and a powerful, thoughtful, sweet and romantic tale, that's in accessible style with really well crafted, engaging characters."

TIME TO TALK

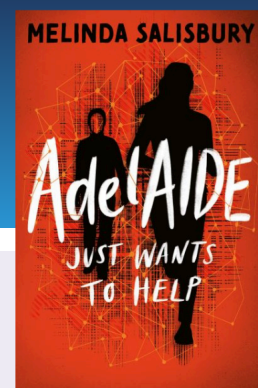
- 1 What do you make of Neon and Aria as a couple? Are they too young to really be in love or does this seem like an authentic relationship?
- 2 Neon makes sure he gets Aria her favourite chicken tenders as a romantic gesture. What are your favourite takeaway/fast foods?
- 3 Do you think it's right that Neon's sister Nat is 'judged' by the family for having a few different boyfriends?
- 4 Neon believes his friend Dodie exaggerates and makes up lies about his experiences with girls. Why do you think he would he do this?
- 5 Neon and his friends are busy getting the yearbook together for the end of high school. Is it important to have a record like this to preserve memories of school life or does it just not matter much in the long run?
- 6 The characters get their information about sex from a range of sources. What's the best place to find credible and accurate safe sex information – from your friends, Google searches, social media, information books, school lessons? Or a combination of these things?
- 7 Neon seems like a caring and considerate boyfriend and respectful of all the women in his life. How does this contrast with the idea of 'toxic masculinity'? Would it be a good thing if more boys and men were sensitive like Neon?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Robots • Friendship • Fame
Climate change • Artificial Intelligence

AdelAIDE Just Wants to Help

by Melinda Salisbury

Freya wants to be a famous influencer like her former best friend. Her family's new home-assistant robot, AdelAIDE, wants to help. But when Freya starts following AdelAIDE's more radical advice, things quickly start to spiral out of control...



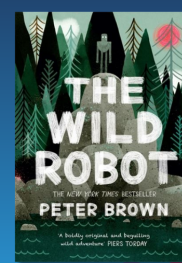
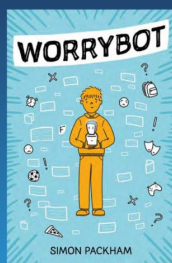
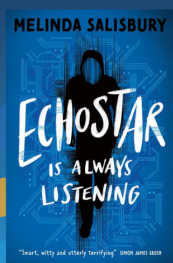
OUR THOUGHTS

"A well written cautionary tale of the dangers of social media plus the advancement and power of AI. Freya, a climate activist, is desperate to get online popularity. A relevant techno-thriller that all teens will relate to."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Why does Freya desperately want to become an influencer? Discuss her aspirations and the pressure she feels to gain likes and followers, especially in comparison to her former best friend Hye-jin.
- 2 How does AdelAIDE differ from other virtual assistants? What are her unique qualities and how does this affect Freya's life?
- 3 Is it ethically correct to rely on AI like AdelAIDE? Could following a robot's advice work for everyday human life?
- 4 What is the impact of social media on mental health? How does Freya's obsession with getting likes on her videos and the desire to become an influencer affect her well-being?
- 5 Freya hates being average. What is wrong with being average?
- 6 Why did Freya never question some of the things that AdelAIDE wanted her to do? Is it dangerous to totally trust and rely on AI?
- 7 AdelAIDE advises Freya to rebrand herself if she wants to be noticed. What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing this?
- 8 How is Freya's online persona different to how she is in real life? What complications could this cause for her and for others who do the same?
- 9 Artificial intelligence is advancing at an alarming rate. What does the future look like for teenagers? How would you want AI to help you in your life?
- 10 Freya desperately wants to be a climate change influencer. How could AI help with climate change?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Friendships • Death
Grief • Ghosts

Us in the Before and After

by Jenny Valentine

At the start of a long, hot summer, best friends Elk and Mab face the fallout of a sudden death, and the lifelong consequences of a single tragic act.



OUR THOUGHTS

"Beautifully written and utterly devastating study of friendship and grief. Sure to stay with readers for a long time and a fantastic comeback for this author."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Have you ever had a best friend? What is/was so special about them?
- 2 The girls first meet when Mab leads Elk out of a maze she is lost in. Why do you think their friendship starts in this way?
- 3 Why do you think Elk's mum describes Mab as 'free range' (p.40)? How are the two girls different from each other?
- 4 Mab and Elk's friendship is threatened by Elk beginning a relationship with France. Do you think she should have got together with him? Why or why not?
- 5 Why do you think the author sets the book during a heatwave? Do you think a setting of colder weather would be as effective?
- 6 Ghosts feature heavily in the novel. Do you believe in ghosts?
- 7 Elk speaks to a grief councillor about the death of her gran. How do other characters deal (or not) with their grief? Which approaches do you think are useful?
- 8 Mab frequently suggests she would have done things differently or 'lived more' if she had the time again. What, if anything, would you do differently if you had to live your life over again?
- 9 Do you think the book would work as well if the two main characters were boys? Why or why not?
- 10 Why do you think the author created the character of Knox, a little boy? What role does he play in helping the protagonists accept the events of the 'after'?

Why or why not?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Revenge • Betrayal • Pakistani culture
Feminism • Magic and myth • Retellings

For She Is Wrath

by Emily Varga

When a fellow prisoner offers a chance at escape and the keys to a dangerous Jinn magic, Dania seizes the opportunity and, armed with a brand-new identity and all the power she could want, enacts a plan to bring down those who betrayed her and her family.



OUR THOUGHTS

"Gripping from the outset with pacey action, a feisty female lead, strong cultural references and a buzzing, well-developed plot. A harsh but excellent debut, an author to watch."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Have you ever been betrayed by someone? How did it make you feel?
- 2 What did you think of the story's setting and the world-building? Were you convinced by it? Can you give examples or moments which left an impression?
- 3 Do you think Dania's relationship with Noor was realistic? Would you have liked to have seen more of that character?
- 4 Which was your favourite character? Why?
- 5 The story encapsulates a variety of genres, such as Romance, Fantasy, and Historical, as well as exploring Pakistani culture and heritage. Did this mixture work for you? What genre aspects do you generally enjoy most?
- 6 Dania takes the chance to access Jinn magic to give her the power to seek revenge. If you had Jinn magic, what would you do with it? What might it help you achieve?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:

