



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Secondary  
(ages 13+)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking; Personal and Social Capability; Ethical Understanding.

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Analysing how language and writing evoke mood, tone, and character
- To discuss what makes a story extraordinary
- Encouraging creative and imaginative writing
- To discuss resilience and mental health

## THEMES

- Family
- Friendship
- Mental Health
- Romance/Love/Relationships
- Grief
- Fears

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

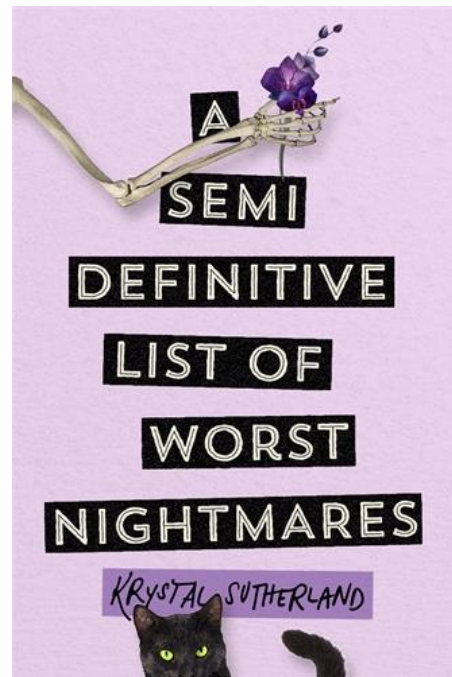
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9780143573913 (paperback);  
9781760142674 (ebook)

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## A Semi-Definitive List of Worst Nightmares

Krystal Sutherland

### PLOT SUMMARY

Ever since Esther Solar's grandfather was cursed by Death, everyone in her family has been doomed to suffer one great fear in their lifetime. Esther's father is agoraphobic and hasn't left the basement in six years, her twin brother can't be in the dark without a light on, and her mother is terrified of bad luck. The Solars are consumed by their fears and, according to the legend of the curse, destined to die from them.

Esther doesn't know what her great fear is yet (nor does she want to), a feat achieved by avoiding pretty much everything. Elevators, small spaces and crowds are all off-limits. So are haircuts, spiders, dolls, mirrors and three dozen other phobias she keeps a record of in her semi-definitive list of worst nightmares.

Then Esther is pickpocketed by Jonah Smallwood, an old elementary school classmate. Along with her phone, money and a fruit roll-up she'd been saving, Jonah also steals her list of fears. Despite the theft, Esther and Jonah become friends, and he sets a challenge for them: in an effort to break the curse that has crippled her family, they will meet every Sunday of senior year to work their way through the list, facing one terrifying fear at a time, including one that Esther hadn't counted on: love.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Krystal Sutherland was born and raised in Townsville, Australia, where crocodiles, snakes and jellyfish are always on the prowl. She grew up living directly across the road from the local library and spent almost every day after school (and weekends, too) having adventures between the pages of books (mainly because it was too dangerous to go outside). Her first book, *Our Chemical Hearts*, was released in 2016, and was published in over twenty countries. Her three greatest fears are heights, dark caves . . . and (perhaps worst of all) frogs.

## WRITING STYLE

- What is the novel's writing style? What narrative perspective is used: first person or third person? How effective is this? How is the novel structured? Consider how and when information is revealed, and the use of different modes of communication. How effectively does this contribute to the novel's storytelling? Consider the author's use of humour and magic realism. How effective is this?
- How might the story be different if it had been written from another character's point-of-view? Choose an incident in the story and write it from a different characters' perspective, e.g. Jonah, Hephzibah, Eugene or any other character, including the character of Death.
- How does personifying Death work in this novel. How effective a technique is it? Contrast it to other books where this occurs, for example *the Book Thief* by Markus Zusak.

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover design – what do you think the front cover might reveal about this novel?
2. Examine the importance of the back cover blurb in captivating the reader. Do you feel it has been successful? Why? Why not?

## KEY STUDY TOPICS

### Setting

#### Questions

- How did the author use the setting to evoke atmosphere?
- How does the setting of this story affect the characters and the events that take place?
- How is it obvious that the setting is not Australian?

- How does the author use the setting to reveal Esther's family to us?

#### Activities

- Write a scene using the setting to create an atmosphere for the story.
- Write a scene showing a certain place in the world without actually saying where it is.

### Characterisation

#### Questions

- How is Esther different from other characters?
- How is Eugene different?
- How is mental illness represented in the novel? What avenues exist for the characters to seek help?
- What is Esther's character arc in the novel? How are things different for her and her family?
- How convincing is the romance in this novel?

#### Activities

- Write a story about your own family and evoke each character within it in a distinctive way in the style of this novel.

## THEMES

### Family

#### Discussion

- What is the overall impression that this book gives about families? Give some examples of why you think that.
- What are the important things that define family versus friendship?

### Friendship

#### Discussion

- How important is friendship to Esther?
- Why does she find it easier to forgive some characters over others?
- How does family and Esther's grandfather enable her to see the big picture beyond her list of fears?
- What do you see as the most important characteristics of family and friends in this novel?



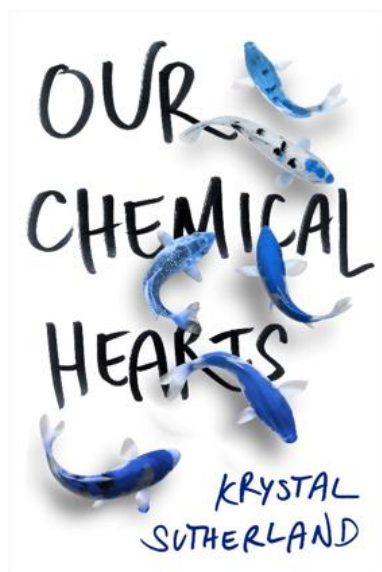
## Mental Health

### *Discussion*

- What role do fears play in this novel? How do characters overcome these fears? How does the author characterise mental illness and health?
- What avenues exist for characters to seek help? What is Esther's advice and the author's advice at the end of the book? What help is available?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



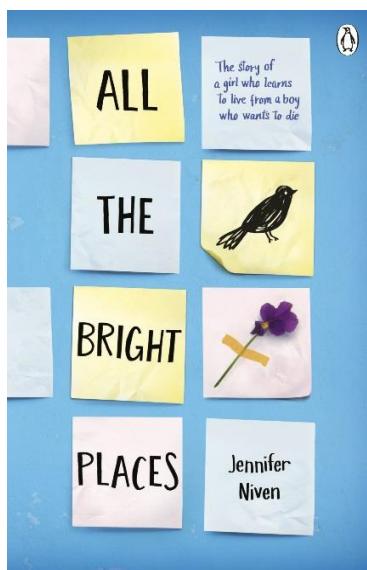
*Our Chemical Hearts*  
by Krystal Sutherland

Henry Page has never been in love. The slo-mo, can't-eat-can't-sleep kind of love he's been hoping for just hasn't been on the cards—he's too busy trying to get into a semi-decent college and become editor of his school newspaper. The rest of his spare time he spends with his best friends, Lola and Murray, playing video games and advising them on their own sordid love lives.

Then he meets Grace Town, the elusive new girl in school, who wears oversized boys' clothing, walks with a cane, rarely seems to shower, and is hiding crushing secrets. She's hardly who Henry expected his dream girl to be, but when the two are chosen to edit the paper together, sparks fly. After all this time, Henry's about to learn firsthand just how disastrous the road to first love can be—and that sometimes it's the detours that end up mattering much more.

A brilliant debut that is equal parts humour and heartbreak, Krystal Sutherland's *Our Chemical Hearts* is a potent reminder of the bittersweet bliss that is first love.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



*All the Bright Places*  
by Jennifer Niven

Theodore Finch wants to take his own life. *I'm broken, and no one can fix it.*

Violet Markey is devastated by her sister's death. *In that instant we went plowing through the guardrail, my words died too.*

They meet on the ledge of the school bell tower, and so their story begins.

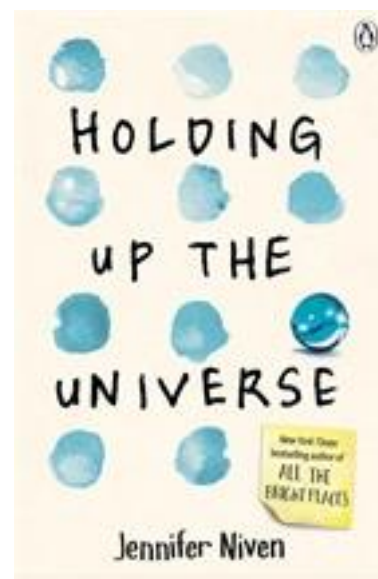
It's only together they can be themselves . . .

*I send a message to Violet: 'You are all the colors in one, at full brightness.'*

*You're so weird, Finch. But that's the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me.*

But, as Violet's world grows, Finch's begins to shrink. How far will Violet go to save the boy she has come to love?

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



*Holding up the Universe*  
by Jennifer Niven

Everyone thinks they know Libby Strout, the girl once dubbed 'America's Fattest Teen'. But no one's taken the time to look past her weight to get to see who she really is. Since her mum's death, she's been picking up the pieces in the privacy of her home, dealing with her heartbroken father and her own grief. Now, Libby's ready: for high school, for new friends, for love, and for EVERY POSSIBILITY LIFE HAS TO OFFER.

Everyone thinks they know Jack Masselin too. Yes, he's got swagger, but he's also mastered the art of fitting in. What no one knows is that Jack has a secret: he can't recognize faces. Even his own brothers are strangers to him. He's the guy who can re-engineer and rebuild anything, but he can't understand what's going on with the inner workings of his own brain. So he tells himself to play it cool: *Be charming. Be hilarious. Don't get too close to anyone.*

Until he meets Libby. When the two get tangled up in a cruel high school game which lands them in group counseling, Libby and Jack are both angry, and then surprised. Because the more time they spend together, the less alone they feel. *Because sometimes when you meet someone, it changes the world - theirs and yours.*

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
A Semi-Definitive List of Worst Nightmares	Krystal Sutherland	9780143573913	8+	\$19.99		
Our Chemical Hearts	Krystal Sutherland	9780143573906	8+	\$19.99		
All the Bright Places	Jennifer Niven	9780141357034	8+	\$17.99		
Holding up the Universe	Jennifer Niven	9780141357058	8+	\$19.99		
Frankie	Shivaun Plozza	9780143573166	8+	\$17.99		
Yellow	Megan Jacobson	9780143573333	8+	\$19.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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