



THE BOOK AND BEYOND:

An educator's guide for exploring children's and YA literature

Title: In the Dark Spaces

Author(s): Cally Black

Illustrator(s):

The aim of The Book and Beyond is to inspire an interest and passion for books and reading. This section is for your thoughts, questions and notes about different aspects of the book and to consider how you might frame discussion with students.

The book

Physical object

The book is a5 standard size, portrait oriented and deceptively thick. This quality is important as it feels like a good page length for a story (300-ish pages). The paperback cover is dark card — does that make it look smaller? There are gold markings on the front, raised or in a different ink/print, which makes it rough/bumpy to feel.

Design & cover

The cover grabs attention with the striking contrast of white on black title surrounded by a minimal abstract pattern of gold, white and grey flecks. The curve/shape of the markings suggests movement and link to the vents that Tamara hides in, the wings of the Garuwa and the deep space setting. The cover reflects elements of the book: the dark, bleak mood, trapped/fragmented/loss 'dark spaces' themes and the sci-fi/space genre.

Illustration

No illustration in the text but the book is divided into 5 parts that have grey/black page divider. The font for the cover, the divider and the chapter headings is distinctive, long and bold, as if roughly hand drawn with a thick paint brush or marker. This design element reflects the space freighter setting of the story, the futuristic/tech feel as well as the tall aliens and their Garuwa enclave flecks — the hive.

Characters

Tamara is a young teen girl; clever, brave and loving, she feels and makes connections deeply. A life in hiding makes her a keen observer and reader of people and, with time of the Garuwa. The intensity of events in the story means she develops views, resilience and abilities beyond her young age. Tootoopne, the alien leader warrior of the Garuwa is a fascinatingly clever, complex character as is Tweetoo — Tamara's guard/guardian.

Plot

Tamara is a stowaway on a space freighter, focused on survival as the freighter is attacked by alien/humanoid Crowpeople (the Garuwa) and she is taken captive to their world. Tension rises and falls with the hard, gruesome encounters she faces and grapples with to survive and to seek understanding, identity and a resolution. Her love/determination to stay alive for her young cousin drives the plot and connects us to her.

Setting

The story is set in 'deep' space, more than 100 years into the future. The freighters the humans live on are separated into circular layers that form a hierarchy according to job/status—the rich living in the easiest gravity. How does this reflect our world? The hive, Garuwas' home, is a living, intuitive, protective and responsive entity. Life is harsh in space and the characters— at times brutal behaviour — reflects their struggle to survive.

Theme & message

Provokes thinking around loss, death and grief.
 Finding identity; the challenge of finding a place between cultures — loyalty.
 Family and belonging. What is family?
 Power and importance of language for culture/identity.
 Sisterhood. Survival.

Language

First person telling of the events gives us Tamara's voice (informal/coarse) an interesting hybrid/made up language of a future plus the Garuwa's whistling language and words. Often her language is coarse, terse and angry in reaction to the events/pressure and harsh setting. Learning and developing a shared language and understanding (Tootoopne learns 'humans perfectly') is central to the story's resolution.

Mood & feeling

Fast-paced, urgent.
 Bleak, dark with glimmers of connection, hope, love.
 It is tightly written where the mood changes with Tamara's situation and feelings. The mood is expressed in fast action paragraphs heightened with short punchy sentences/word choices. Tamara's inner voice/descriptions balance this out and slow the pace/feeling.

Genre & format

This book has been described as 'genre smashing' — it is a YA — Young Adult novel in format. The author writes junior fiction under a different name. The plot, setting and theme aspects mean it could be considered as; a Sci-Fi thriller, a dystopian fiction, hostage drama, a tale of survival? Is it more enjoyable because it blends them or moves beyond the elements of one genre?

The inquiry

Rich question(s)

This section is for creating and exploring questions that might guide an overall inquiry for a particular book. These questions might be inspired by ideas in the book section and/or personal responses and/or the NZ Curriculum and/or available resources.

What are people prepared to live/die for?

How can language be powerful?

Is human kind inherently good or evil?

In the face of adversity, what makes some individuals succeed where others fail?

How do science and technology shape our future?



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Make connections

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Personal

Explore - Find out about the writer

Read the writer's own webpages at www.calantheblack.com

Students can ask her a question or make a comment in the 'Say Hello' section: "How did you come up with the idea of these space freighters, the Crowpeople and the hive?" "How did you decide to make up a language and even alphabet for the Garuwa?" "Why are the Garuwa all female?" "Did anyone inspire you to create the characters of Gub and Tamara?"

Write — List quotes/interesting words

"Every human is born into slavery and only one thnig can set them free. Money. Lots of it" pg 149

"I guess you just gotta find your iron core that can bend but never break." pg 11
 "Her being a mother makes her somehow more dangerous. Like deep in my core I know that a man kills, a woman protects. And protecting is something you gotta see through to the end." pg 114

Made up words from the future: 'Yoisho', 'hybridicrib', 'Tamade!' as an alternate expletive?
 Garuwa words: 'sha sha sha' is their laughter, 'nonee' for money. 'She' - there is no version for 'he/him'

Read more

Read the next in the series

Read another book by the same author

This is the first YA novel by this author. She does write under another name Bren MacDibble
 Check out 'How to Bee' her other novel.
 Why do you think she has chosen to have a different name for YA fiction?

Read another book with the same idea/topic/ genre

Same idea/genre *The Knife of Never Letting Go* by Patrick Ness. There is also a film version of of this released in March 2019 called *Chaos Walking*.
Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

Listen to an audio version of the book

Social (Share your experience)

Talk – to your friends.

Do you and your friends have a shared language – a word/ set of words/or gestures that only you understand between you? What are some of the words? What is the effect and feeling of using this different/special language?

Act — interview a character

Tamara/Weku goes through an interrogation/questioning when she escapes the Garuwa and manages to remain on the freighter.
 Prompt students to imagine that they have captured the ruthless Warrior Tootoopne rather than Tweetoo. Devise a scene where Weku has to translate and interview Tootoopne about her world.

What connections can you make to yourself, other texts, the world?

Text to self

Text to text

Carve the Mark Veronica Roth
 Links to well known space series with freighters/transporter and trade wars.
Star Wars

Text to world

NZ Curriculum

This section is intended as a prompt for thinking about how the book might relate to the NZ Curriculum. For example, is it a story about *cultural diversity*? What *language, symbols and text* tell the story?

Learning areas		Principles		Values		Key Competencies	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> English	<input type="radio"/> Maths & Statistics	<input type="radio"/> High expectations	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Future focus	<input type="radio"/> Excellence	<input type="radio"/> Community & participation	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Thinking	<input type="radio"/> Relating to others
<input type="radio"/> The Arts	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Science	<input type="radio"/> Treaty of Waitangi	<input type="radio"/> Learning to learn	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Innovation, inquiry, curiosity	<input type="radio"/> Ecological sustainability	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Using language, symbols & text	<input type="radio"/> Participating & contributing
<input type="radio"/> Health & PE	<input type="radio"/> Social Sciences	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Cultural diversity	<input type="radio"/> Community engagement	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Diversity	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Integrity	<input type="radio"/> Managing self	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Languages	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Technology	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Inclusion		<input checked="" type="radio"/> Equity			