

THE BOOK AND BEYOND

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

AUCKLAND
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Title: Concrete Rose

Author(s): Angie Thomas

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

- This softback edition is a standard A5 size and middle weight/thickness, with standard paper that is soft, vanilla and musty.
- The cover sleeve has a velvety feel and is matte.

Design & cover

- Title written as if graffitied on concrete gives the cover texture/appeal. It curves along/around the side of the face.
- A rose, stencilled in paint is a footnote to the title and links to the motif in the novel/title.
- The colour tones are dark/muted, which adds impact/contrast to the acid orange of the author name and the spine.
- Refers to *The Hate U Give* (without mentioning this is a prequel).

Illustration

Characters

- Maverick (17) is main character. A high school student. Strong relationships with Dre (cousin), his Ma and father, Adonis (in prison). He is warm, proud, reflective, thoughtful and tender.
- Lisa & Iesha — teen mothers
- Mr & Mrs Wyatt provide care, a job and advice.
- Deconstruction of stereotypes around Black representation.

Plot

- Maverick negotiates living in the large urban suburb Garden Heights, the complex gang tensions/expectations (King Lords), and high school life.
- Maverick changes, succeeds in dealing with a personal shooting tragedy, becoming a young father with family/community support.
- Structured into 3 parts with the titles: Germination; Growth; Dormancy; linking to a central rose symbol that represents Maverick.

Setting

- An urban/city neighbourhood called Garden Heights.
- Builds a world with the layers of the homes, gang life, streets, streetball, church, workplaces, language and school that are raw/realistic.
- It is set in the late 1990s, seen in use of pagers, fashion, culture and music references.

Theme & message

- The big ideas are social justice and representation:
- Community.
 - Loyalty, grief and loss.
 - Gang culture: the complexity and traps of the culture.
 - Responsibility.
 - Teen pregnancy.
 - Becoming a man/adult.
 - Identity and finding self.
 - Searching for identity.

Language

- We experience this world as seen through Mav's eyes — first person point of view / narrative.
- Powerful, teen dialogue — reflected in use of slang/colloquial language and rhythm.
- A central symbol or motif of the title — the rose and the concrete.

Mood & feeling

- A sense of underlying sadness and desperation in the constant stress of survival. For Maverick this is in the quest to be doing the right thing in the face of events/obstacles. Set against moments of joy and love in family events and connections.
- An uplifting resolution and hinting at Maverick and Lisa's success, happiness (tying in to *The Hate You Give*) and love.

Genre & format

- YA novel format.
- Genre: A coming-of-age narrative.
- Features of this genre; growing up and change, search for identity and sense of self, dealing with obstacles and desires vs responsibility.

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.

How can the creation of texts/books be considered to be activism?

How can books be a vehicle for creating social change?

How can we show respect to others?

What impact does family have during different stages of life?

What turning points determine our pathways to adulthood?

What creates prejudice, and how can individuals overcome it?

What are stereotypes? How do stereotypes influence how we see the world?

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Make connections

The aim of The Book and Beyond is to inspire an interest and passion for books and reading. This section is designed to help students use the book as inspiration to share, wonder, question, and explore ideas, possibilities, connections, feelings, experiences and other viewpoints — either alone or together.

Personal

Explore

- Check out Angie Thomas' website — angiethomas.com — to find out more about her story, other projects and her reasons for writing these Garden Heights stories.

Explore connections

- Angie Thomas is influenced by the music/lyrics of Tupac Shakur, and the title relates to Shakur's song/lyrics 'The Rose that Grew from Concrete'.
- Prompt students to find and read the poem 'The Rose that Grew from Concrete' by Tupac Shakur.
- You can find a reliable/interactive copy of the song/poem at commonlit.org

Read more

Read the next in the series

- [The Hate U Give](#) — read or re-read Angie Thomas' first novel with some of the same characters. (*Concrete Rose* is a prequel to *The Hate U Give*.)

Read another book by the same author

- [On the Come Up](#) — set again in Garden Heights, centred on a different set of characters but with the same energy and similar themes.

Read another book with the same idea/topic/ genre

- [Long Way Down](#) by Jason Reynolds.
- Try a verse novel by [Kwame Alexander](#).
- Try non-fiction linked to the ideas such as [Stamped: Racism, Anti-racism and You](#) by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi.

Listen to an audio version of the book

Social (share your experience)

Create and share a playlist

- Check out the Official *Concrete Rose* Spotify playlist at epicreads.com.
- Use this as inspiration/background and encourage students to create their own playlist of tracks.
- Tracks chosen could be in response to the ideas, the characters and/or to capture and reflect the mood, feel and themes in the novel. Students could share and talk about / discuss 1 or 2 of the choices.
- You can even take a ['Do you know the 90s?'](#) quiz.

Join/Connect/Take action

- This is a story to read for pleasure but also for wellbeing and empowerment. Check out organisations that help, related to the themes, such as [Birthright](#), [Youthline](#), [Black Lives Matter](#), [#SayTheirName](#).
- What can you do to contribute?

Talk: What's in a name?

- Adonis and Maverick talk together about the importance of names, and Maverick names his son Seven because of the idea of perfection. Talk about the significance of your own name and encourage students to share with each other the story of their name.

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

Text to self

Questions to think about:

- Do you know someone who you would see or describe as a rose growing from concrete?
- What makes them like a rose?
- Have you ever felt like a rose that grows from concrete?

Text to text

- Students may have seen the film of *The Hate you Give*
- Connect students to recent books celebrating Black lives and in response to the BLM movement such as:
- Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice* by Mahogany L. Brown, Elizabeth Acevedo and Olivia Gatwood
- Say Her Name: Poems to Empower* by Zetta Elliott

Text to world

- What are the similarities and differences between Maverick's world in Garden Heights and the world today?
- Can students make connections to the aims and stories of the Black Lives Matter movement?

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 type="radio"/> Future focus	<input type="radio"/> Excellence	<input type="radio"/> Community & participation	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Thinking	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Relating to others
<input checked="" type="radio"/> The Arts	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/> Community engagement	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Diversity	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Integrity	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Managing self	
<input type="radio"/> Languages	<input type="radio"/> Technology	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Inclusion		<input checked="" type="radio"/> Equity			