



RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 10-14

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- A beautiful depiction of resilience in the face of grief, loss and change, highly suitable for readers aged 10+ as its themes are gently and sensitively explored.

THEMES

- Identity
- Friendship
- Memory
- Grief
- Music
- Resilience
- Displacement
- Transitions and change

PREPARED BY

Emily Gale and Penguin Random House

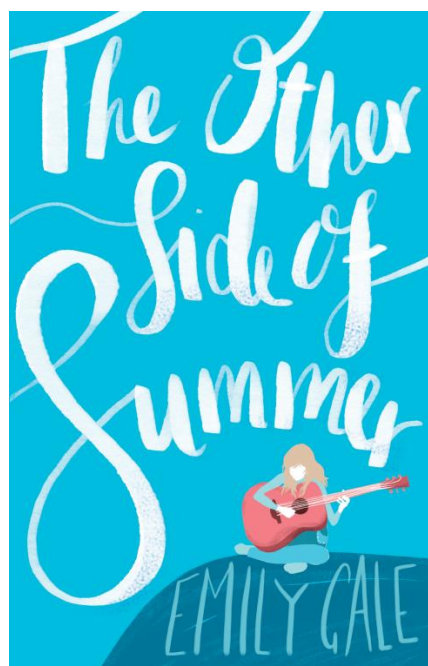
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The Other Side of Summer

Emily Gale

PLOT SUMMARY

Summer is trying her best to recover from her beloved big brother Floyd's sudden death. An unexpected knock on the door brings back his guitar – a pristine Ibanez Artwood – and although Summer is confused by how the guitar has managed to survive the London train station bomb that killed Floyd, with this return comes a soothing voice in her head: Floyd's. But the rest of the family are struggling – Mum rarely leaves her bedroom, big sister Wren is permanently angry, and Dad has become expert at hiding his feelings. Summer's best friend, Mal, a vibrant optimist, is a loyal and upbeat companion, so when Dad announces his plan to move the entire family to the other side of the world – Melbourne, Australia – Summer feels like the one thing that is keeping her spirits up is the Ibanez Artwood.

In Australia, Summer struggles with another profound change to her life – Mum has stayed behind in the UK – which brings out an anger in Summer that she never knew was there. But two discoveries quell her anger: some sheet music belonging to her brother, that he obviously meant for her to have, and a beautiful creek not far from her house. But the first time she plays her guitar

there, a strange boy interrupts her. From that moment, it seems that Summer is being haunted by this boy, who shows up when she plays, but the boy – Gabe – insists he is not a ghost. Summer begins to trust him, and life in a new country takes on a different energy with Gabe around. However, Gabe and Summer cannot avoid the truth about who he is and why he has stumbled into Summer's life. Rather than Gabe showing up to save her from her sadness, Summer has to find the strength to save him from wherever he is trapped.

PRAISE

- 'A beautifully rendered portrayal of grief, family and leaving things behind, *The Other Side of Summer* is a welcome addition to the shelves of Australian middle fiction. Emily Gale's book gives her audience the respect they deserve – recognising that younger teens need a place in literature where they too can explore the parts of their life that are challenging or sad. This perfectly pitched piece is a beauty.' – Bec Kavanagh, *Junior Books+Publishing*
- 'At 13, Summer is learning how to find herself, and find her way back into her family, after tragedy is the catalyst for moving to Australia. Gale skilfully captures the essence of Summer's grief and isolation, yet eschews woe. Instead she gives us a compelling plot of an unlikely friendship between Summer and Gabe that may hold the clues to what happened that fateful day.' – Libby Armstrong, YA bookseller, Beachside Bookshop
- 'Summer Jackman is prickly, sad, funny – and absolutely loveable. This pitch-perfect story is full of hope and magic. Exquisite and unforgettable.' Fiona Wood, award-winning author of *Wildlife*

USE IN THE CURRICULUM

This book is most suited for students of English in Years 6 to 8. It demands a level of emotional maturity and the ability to explore different family relationships and friendships. Structure, characterisation, and writer's craft can be studied in depth.

The friendship theme is dominant, and tied up in personal and cultural identity. Students can think critically about Summer's role as a friend, and how her kaleidoscope of friends support her during the most difficult time of her life.

Summer arrives in Australia from London. This could be used as a springboard for discussion about migrants from the past and present.

The Other Side of Summer is a contemporary take on a time-slip novel: time is 'slippery' and unexplained but Summer does not travel back into the distant past like most time-slip novels. This could provoke useful comparisons with texts such as *Playing Beatie Bow* by Ruth Park (for eg. how Summer and Abigail experience similar personal journeys, even though the circumstances are so different).

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Emily says:

'A secret – any secret – was a source of power.' Helen Cresswell, *Moondial*

When I was young I felt out of place and I minded about that a lot, as you would. I felt awkward with strangers, friends, and in my own skin; I embarrassed easily and was anxious about everything. I couldn't yet imagine that others felt the same way, except in books. Books were a refuge, and the stories I loved the most were time-slips.

Time-slips always started out with a main character who felt out of place, whether it was Tom or Minty being sent away to stay with boring relatives (*Moondial*, *Tom's Midnight Garden*), Charlotte starting a new school (*Charlotte Sometimes*), or Abigail feeling cast aside by her parents' behaviour (*Playing Beatie Bow*). But then they'd become *truly* out of place, in a profound and inexplicable, magical way, and begin an adventure. Through this they'd learn so much about themselves and how they might relate to others. Eventually Minty, Tom, Charlotte, Beatie and the rest found their way back home, in more ways than one, and were left with a powerful secret to carry inside for the rest of their lives.

Many years down the line, I have tried to create my own version of a time-slip novel through a young teenager called Summer, who is displaced, grieving, and badly needs her own adventure. Although my story sometimes makes time 'slippery', it isn't a journey back into a different historical period, but it *is* about looking back in order to go forward. Music, memory, ghosts and dreams play an important role in Summer's journey to a new sense of herself and her rightful place in her world.

In some ways I've been on Summer's journey, which is set in my two homes – London and Melbourne. I live on the other side of the world from the place I

grew up and most of my family. The concepts of home, belonging and displacement have long occupied my mind.

When I first moved to Australia, I'd see 'living ghosts' everywhere I went – people who, from a distance, looked like my friends and family back home. For heart-stopping moments I'd believe it was really them. Afterwards I'd feel silly, and I'd keep it secret. That's where I got the idea of giving Summer a 'living ghost'; her own powerful secret. I wanted Summer and her 'ghost' to find a renewed sense of agency by meeting: they need each other because they are both neither here nor there.

The role of objects in our lives is important to the story. Summer is care-taking a particularly special one that holds memories strong enough to cause magic. She learns the value of a precious thing, as well as the value of knowing when to let go of it. Relics from our old lives are especially important if we're uprooted – for me it's two egg cups, a barometer and an old typewriter! Whenever I move house, those things need to be unpacked before I can begin to think of a place as home. For Summer it's a beautiful guitar that belonged to her brother.

As I approached my 40th birthday I promised myself that I would learn to either drive or play the guitar. I decided on the guitar. I'm still learning – Summer is great deal more talented and persistent. The song at the end of Summer's story is one that beginner learners will be able to accomplish and experienced players can master. My friend, Australian singer-songwriter Tim Reid, read Summer's story and wrote the music, and together we worked on the lyrics.

Summer's story is about music and memory, family and secrets, grief and home. It's a thank you to the stories that gave me a place when I was young. I hope it will be a little refuge for my readers.

CHARACTERISATION

Small journeys inside big journeys: At 12 (she turns 13 in the first third) Summer Jackman hates being physically small, mistaken for a younger girl, but her sense of powerlessness is something she has to solve for herself. Making physical journeys is a part of this, eg. riding to the creek, or going to the bookshop, or to Gabe's apartment building. These are all new places that Summer travels to independently.

Absence of dialogue and action: Cecelia Jackman, Summer's mother, is extremely withdrawn. She barely speaks or moves.

High emotion: Wren Jackman, seen through the eyes of her sister Summer, is angry on the inside and the outside. She dresses in the Gothic style, and in London behaves in a way that intimidates the whole family. Once in Australia, Wren transforms as much as Summer does.

The solid character: Doug Jackman, Summer's father, is the only character whose emotional journey is not on view either for the reader or for the characters. How does this affect his relationship with Summer, either positively or negatively?

The non-human character: Bee, the dog, is as much of a crucial friend to Summer as Mal, Milo and Becky. But everything between Summer and Bee is non-verbal. How does Bee teach Summer about friendship?

Dialogue-only: Floyd, Summer's brother, has already died by the time the story begins. However, he speaks to Summer when the guitar arrives. What sense can we get of Floyd from dialogue alone? What other aspects contribute to our opinion of the person Floyd was (eg. Summer's anecdotes about him; the dream sequences featuring Floyd and Gabe).

STRUCTURE

The novel is structured according to time and place. Part One takes place in London, giving the reader a sense of Summer's current lifestyle and of what she is leaving behind. It ends when the Jackmans first arrive at their new house in Melbourne. Part Two takes place in Melbourne, and includes dream sequences, taking us up to the climax when Summer finally figures out who and where Gabe is. Part Three is one and a half years later, also in Melbourne, providing the denouement.

The structure is based on emotional transitions, not just physical ones. Part One ends when they first arrive in Melbourne, rather than as soon as they leave London, because emotionally Summer has not left the UK even when the plane touches down on the other side of the world. When we pick up again in Part Two, Summer has been transformed somewhat by her recent experiences. Between Parts Two and Three the reader can breathe, take in the climax and begin to wonder what life looks like for Summer a little further down the line, which is all explained in Part Three, with a further, crucial reunion of two characters, Summer and Mal.



THEMES

- Identity
- Friendship
- Relationships between siblings
- Relationships between parents and children
- Relationship to your surroundings
- Grief
- Memory
- Music
- Resilience
- Displacement
- Transitions and change
- Language
- Depression
- Coming-of-age

ACTIVITIES DURING READING

Part One

- Imagine you are moving to a new country and you can only pack one suitcase. Describe the contents and say why you would choose them.
- Playing with time: read Summer's description of the exact moment the bomb goes off. Think of something that happens very fast – an accident, a cheetah running after a gazelle, the speed of light – and try to write it very slowly with a lot of detail. Next, reverse it. Think of something that happens slowly – a child growing into an adult, a flower opening in the morning – and speed it up with descriptive writing. Teachers may like to use this for reference: '6 Everyday Things That Look Completely Insane In Slow Motion'
http://www.cracked.com/article_20524_6-everyday-things-that-look-completely-insane-in-slow-motion.html
- Mal thinks of several plans to get Summer out of the move to Australia, but Summer shuts them down and decides not to put up a fight. What do you imagine these plans were like?
- Describe how the characters – Mum, Dad, Wren and Summer – behave differently when they are

in their London house compared to when they are in Gran's house in Cornwall.

Part Two

- You have just arrived in a completely new country (use the country you are currently living in; then try using another country you have visited, or somewhere you used to live). Imagine that everything looks new and different to you. Now try to describe what you see and your thoughts as you look around.
- The role of objects in our lives: Summer is very attached to the Ibanez Artwood guitar. What is your most precious object and why?
- Mal sends Summer three books, to represent their Past, their Present, and their Future as friends. Think of three books you would send to a friend who had moved far away, to show them that you were thinking about them. Explain each choice.
- Summer tries to find the courage to write to her best friend. Write a letter from Summer to Mal, explaining what has been happening.
- Milo draws Summer a map from their house to the creek. Draw a classmate a map from your own house to somewhere they might like to go, and make sure to annotate with anything they should look at along the way.
- Discuss what Milo tells Summer about star light and time. How does this make you feel about the universe?
- Using imagery: Re-read Gabe's description of dreaming that he's trapped inside a guitar. Watch this video (3 minutes) showing what it looks like when a man put an iPhone inside his guitar and plays. Observe the strings as they move. They look like the lines on a life support machine.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INqfM1kdfUc>
Now imagine you are trapped somewhere. You have to use descriptive writing to tell the other person where you are, but you cannot give it away too easily. Make it a rich but mysterious description.
- Learning the guitar is a crucial part of Summer's healing process, and the guitar and its music is what connects her to Gabe. Music is so much a part of our identity, and so personal to us. Make a

playlist of ten songs that you think best describe your life, including old songs you know from being a young child and newer songs that you love. Describe to a person who has never heard the songs why they are special to you and how they make you feel.

- When terrible things happen to us we can lose our language, our ability to communicate with words, and our ability to put into words what has happened to us. Music transcends this. Music gets through to Gabe's brain as if it has found a secret door. Watch: 'Music on the Brain' a Catalyst documentary (30 minutes) produced by the ABC. <http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/4421003.htm> This documentary supports the idea that music has the power to awaken the brain when nothing else works.

Part Three

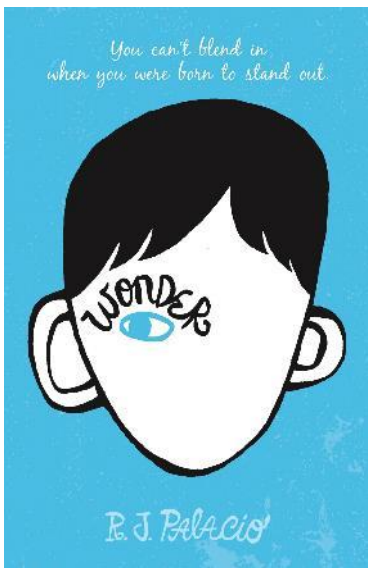
- There are song lyrics and guitar chords in the back of the book, which tell Summer and Gabe's story in a different way. Write the lyrics of a song by basing it on a novel you have read recently (or you could write a different song based on *The Other Side of Summer*). Break the story down into the elements that most interest you and try to think of words and phrases that you want to include. Come up with a chorus that sums up the main message of the book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Gale was born in London and moved to Australia in 2008. She has worked in the children's book industry for nearly twenty years, as an editor, as a reader for a literary agent, and as a children's book buyer for Readings, where she initiated the Readings Children's Book Prize in 2014. In 2015 Emily was a judge for the Young Adult category of the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

Emily's young adult novels are *Girl, Aloud* (2009), *Steal My Sunshine* (2013), and *The Other Side of Summer* (2016). Her illustrated two-book junior series, *Eliza Boom* (2014), for 5-9 year olds, is about a young inventor.

FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Wonder
by R. J. Palacio

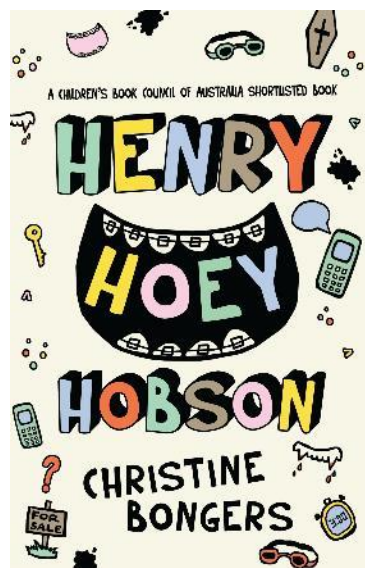
'My name is August. I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse.'

Auggie wants to be an ordinary ten-year-old. He does ordinary things – eating ice cream, playing on his Xbox. He *feels* ordinary – inside. But ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. Ordinary kids aren't stared at wherever they go.

Born with a terrible facial abnormality, Auggie has been home-schooled by his parents his whole life. Now, for the first time, he's being sent to a real school – and he's dreading it. All he wants is to be accepted – but can he convince his new classmates that he's just like them, underneath it all?

Wonder is a funny, frank, astonishingly moving debut to read in one sitting, pass on to others, and remember long after the final page.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Henry Hoey Hobson
by Christine Bongers

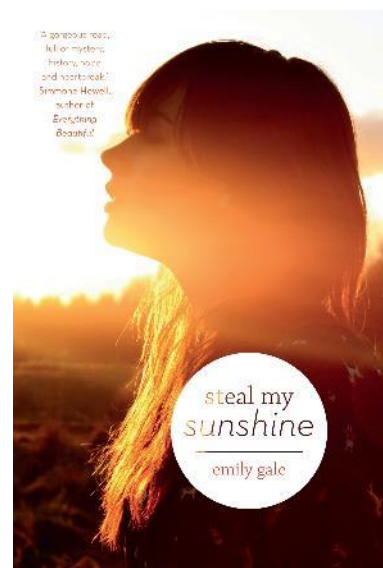
Henry Hoey Hobson arrives at his sixth school, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, to discover he's the only boy in Year Seven.

Friendless, fatherless and non-Catholic, Henry is not only a Perpetual Sucker, but a bloodsucker, according to his catty classmates.

When he's caught moving a coffin into the creepy house next door, it drives a stake through the heart of his hopes of fitting in.

His only chance to fight back is the school swimming carnival – sink-or-swim time in the treacherous waters of Year Seven.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Steal My Sunshine
by Emily Gale

During a Melbourne heatwave, Hannah's family life begins to distort beyond her deepest fears. It's going to take more than a cool change to fix it, but how can a girl who lives in the shadows take on the task alone?

Feeling powerless and invisible, Hannah seeks refuge in the two anarchists of her life: her wild best friend, Chloe, and her eccentric grandmother, Essie, who look like they know how life really works.

But Hannah's loyalty to both is tested, first by her attraction to Chloe's older brother, and then by Essie's devastating secret that sheds new light on how the family has lost its way.

Even if Hannah doesn't know what to believe in, she'd better start believing in herself.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)

ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
The Other Side of Summer	Emily Gale	9780143780113		\$16.99		
Wonder	R.J. Palacio	9780552565974		\$19.99		
Henry Hoey Hobson	Christine Bongers	9781925324921		\$16.99		
Steal My Sunshine	Emily Gale	9781742758497		\$19.99		
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