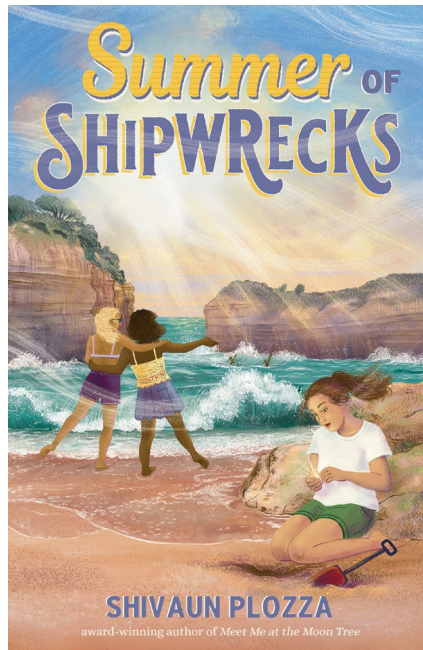


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# ***SUMMER OF SHIPWRECKS***

## Shivaun Plozza



### Teachers' Notes

Prepared by Christina Wheeler, who is a practising teacher librarian  
with a background in the Australian curriculum (English)

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**SYNOPSIS**

Sid has been waiting three hundred and fifty-one days to reunite with her best friend, Lou, at Penlee Point's campground for two weeks of holiday adventure. Their summer ritual usually hinges around searching for the *Penlee* shipwreck's lost treasure, inspired by the bravery of the ship's thirteen-year-old sole survivor, Katherine Napier.

But things have changed for Sid, especially since her parents' divorce. Mum has invited her new boyfriend, Tony, and his moody teenager, Eva, to join them, while Lou has brought her cool new school friend, Hailey, who is more interested in boys than treasure. How can things change so quickly?

*Summer of Shipwrecks* is a coming-of-age novel filled with the high and lows of friendships, growing up and change. And now more than ever, Sid needs to find the courage to follow her heart, stay true to herself and navigate the future one step at a time.

**THEMES**

- Friendship
- Change
- Integrity
- Courage
- Adventure
- Coming of Age
- Divorce
- Friendship
- Shipwrecks

**WRITING STYLE**

Shivaun Plozza has nailed the complex dynamics of relationships as Sid resists the changes happening all around her. With her parents recently divorced and her dad moving to Brisbane, Sid is struggling, so the last thing she needs is for her annual summer holiday to be gatecrashed by her mum's new boyfriend, Tony, and his daughter, Eva. She's even less prepared for the changes she sees in Lou. The two girls are growing up at different rates and drifting apart. This isn't helped by the manipulative Hailey, who seems determined to drive a wedge between the two childhood friends. Sid's innocence and naivety has been beautifully captured, as has the temptation for her to change to gain the approval of others. Sid's experiences are relatable and real, her anguish and disappointment palpable. But so too are her faults, and when Lou finally summons the courage to talk to Sid about them, she does so in a way that is refreshingly honest and constructive. The important message that friendships change – and sometimes end – is a necessary one. Original and highly effective figurative language throughout gives *Summer of Shipwrecks* a literary edge, as do the motifs of piracy, treasure and courage. Middle readers will devour this text, as it targets the angst of changing friendships at this age, along with other curveballs that life throws.

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## STUDY NOTES

- After reading the first chapter, discuss how the author engages readers through Katherine Napier's story.
- Throughout *Summer of Shipwrecks*, Sid matter-of-factly shares information in bullet-pointed lists. How does this reflect her character?
- Why, in the first few chapters, does Sid keep saying, 'I've waited three hundred and fifty-one days for this' (e.g. p. 5)? How does this add drama to what happens in the novel?
- In the role of Sid, write a journal in response to Tony's comment: 'They say change is as good as a holiday' (p. 8).
- What are your first impressions of Hailey? Why does Sid say, 'Her voice has too many sharp edges' (p. 12)? What does she mean?
- Throughout the text, Sid often refers to how her tummy feels. Track these physical reactions. How does your body respond to change, stress and worry? Why is it helpful to know your body's stress signals? What can you do to better manage these feelings? Share with a friend.
- What role does Bobbi play in *Summer of Shipwrecks*? How does she help Sid? Make predictions about the future of the *Penlee Point Historical Society and Shipwreck Museum*.
- What is your opinion of Lou's character? Why is she so reluctant to stand up to Hailey? What makes you feel for Lou? How does she show the sometimes-difficult nature of friendships?
- With reference to the following excerpt, discuss the relationship between Sid and her mum:

Mum's not a listener. She's an answerer. That means if you whinge she won't go, *That's awful, sweetie*, and pet your head while she listens to you whinge some more. No, she'll interrupt before you've even started and tell you how to fix things. *This is what you're going to do*, she'll say. (p. 27)

How is this different from Sid's relationship with her dad? Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.

- Discuss Sid's notion that 'I don't know how many memories my brain can hold, but it can't be infinite. Which means every new memory of Tony kissing Mum replaces one I have of Dad' (p. 30).
- Sid is adamant that 'Change is *never* good' (p. 30). What would you like to say to Sid about this mindset? When has change ended up being a good thing in your life? Share in a reflection.
- What does Sid mean when she refers to Tony, Eva and Hailey as 'toast crumbs' (p. 32)?
- How does Hailey use put-downs to control Lou? Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.

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- Sid, Lou and Hailey all must deal with the “d” word’ (p. 38). How have they handled this differently?
- Why, when Lou says, ‘You’re the best’, does Sid find it difficult to believe her (p. 39)?
- Why do Sid and her dad like the ocean so much (see p. 40)? Do you agree with her dad’s comment that the ocean ‘never changes’? Discuss.
- Why does Sid say, ‘I just need to find [Lou] again, like buried treasure’ (p. 54)? In what ways is the treasure a metaphor for Sid’s desperation to keep her friendship with Lou from changing?
- How are Bobbi and Sid similar? What changes are they grappling with? How do they each show bravery later in the text?
- Kiaan and Sid regard each other as *pirates*. What is a pirate? What are their character traits? Which other characters could be described as pirates in *Summer of Shipwrecks*?
- Twice, Sid uses the word *jinx* – once about Eva (p. 8) and once about Kiaan (p. 63). What does she mean by ‘*jinx*’? How does this offer readers some hope for Sid’s journey? How are these characters worthy of Sid’s *jinx* comment?
- Why do Lou’s ‘eyes glow’ for a ‘beautiful, heart-squeezing, tummy-wriggling moment’ after Sid tells her that Bobbi is back *and* she has letters from Katherine (p. 64)? What makes the light in Lou’s eyes go ‘*poof*’ moments later?
- What does it mean that Lou’s ‘smile is thin’ (p. 65)? What makes her smile like this?
- Why, when they’re shopping, does Lou throw Sid a ‘closed-lipped smile’ as Hailey calls her a ‘Party pooper’ (p. 67)? Why does Sid feel as though she’s ‘failed a test’ in this scene?
- Why does Hailey meet Sid’s ‘eyes in the mirror, a look on her face suddenly like a little girl who can’t find her mum in the supermarket’ (p. 68), asking ‘Did your parents do that? Give you money to keep you quiet while they ruined your family?’ Why does Sid ‘swallow over the thickness in [her] throat’?
- How does Hailey make Sid feel? Use evidence from the text to support your thinking. How does Hailey make you feel?
- Discuss the symbolism of Sid’s ‘phone [being] full of unanswered messages’ (p. 70). What is the importance of Sid not returning some of Kiaan’s messages?
- What makes the ‘sour gummy worms’ in Sid’s stomach ‘wriggle’ (p. 71)?
- Why does Sid like it when Lou piggy snorts? Why has Lou stopped laughing in this way?
- Why, when her mum ‘throws herself at Tony’ at mini golf, does Sid’s ‘heart [feel] like it’s been whacked thirty-seven times with a golf club’ (p. 76)?

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- How is the incident with the boys at mini golf used later in the story? Discuss the importance of planned-for tension points. Identify other planned-for events in the novel.
- Why does Sid scrunch up her wristband from mini golf rather than keep it as a souvenir (p. 80)?
- Why does Sid constantly look to Katherine and her bravery for inspiration? Why does Sid think of herself as cowardly? Do you agree with her? Why?
- What answers is Sid too scared to hear (see p. 83)?
- Why is Sid so determined to touch Katherine's letters (p. 88)? Why does she feel doing this will make her more courageous?
- Describe the relationship between Sid and Eva. Make predictions about the future of their relationship. Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.
- How is the ocean like the friendship between Lou and Sid?
- Why does Lou swim the Katherine? Why, later, does Sid attempt to swim the *real* Katherine? What does this reveal about their changing friendship?
- In the role of Sid, write a journal entry about your changing friendship with Lou. How does it feel to watch her with Hailey and the boys?
- At what point does Sid realise she is losing her best friend? Why does Sid think of the heart she carved as 'half buried in the sand [...] like lost treasure' (p. 116)?
- Discuss the following comment from Sid about her dad: 'My dad is funny, but sometimes I don't want him to be' (p. 117).
- At what point does Sid realise that maybe not all change is bad?
- What is the significance of Lou outgrowing her bathers with the anchors on them?
- What does the following excerpt reveal about Eva and Sid's relationship:  
Mum and Tony walk side by side, then me, then Eva so far behind she's practically in Antarctica. Anyone would think we were strangers who just happened to be walking in the same direction.  
I guess we are. (p. 122)
- Why does it make Sid sad that Tony always makes her mum laugh (p. 124)?
- What red flags do you see with Sid's 'Convince-Lou-I'm-Cool-Enough-to-Still-Be-Her-Best-Friend plan' (p. 127)? What advice would you like to give Sid?
- What does Sid mean when she says, 'Talking to Lou felt like slipping into my favourite, well-worn shoes. Now it feels like squeezing brand new school shoes onto the wrong feet' (p. 128)?
- Why, even though giving up on the treasure 'feels like an anchor dragging my heart all the way to my feet', does Sid think it's the right thing to do (p. 130)?
- In the role of Lou, write a series of journals about your time at Penlee Point.

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- Sid keeps thinking of her situation as ‘*Sink or swim*’ (p. 133). What does this mean? Does she sink or swim? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.
- Why does Sid buy the bikini even though it’s all the money she has? How does she feel when wearing it? Have you ever felt uncomfortable around your friends because they are growing up too fast? Share in a reflection.
- How might the breakdown of Sid’s friendship with Lou help Sid to better understand her parents’ divorce?
- Discuss Sid’s observation about Hailey that ‘I see that scared little girl hiding behind all that snooty scowling, and I almost want to say, *It’s okay. The “d” word sucks so it’s okay to cry about it. No one will think you’re a sook*’ (p. 170).
- Why does Sid go along with the seaweed prank? Why does Sid think, ‘*Are you sure she’s worth it*’ (p. 175)? In the role of Tony, write a reflection about this episode.
- Discuss Eva’s comment to Sid that ‘No one’s worth changing yourself to fit in with’ (p. 182). When have you found Eva’s advice to be true?
- What finally helps Sid to realise that people have choices and are in control of their own futures?
- Why does Sid feel ‘the ghost of her pinkie wrapped around mine’ (p. 195)? Why is it a ghost?
- How did you feel when Sid finally says to Hailey: “Jokes are supposed to be funny,” I spit at her. “You’re not funny. You’re just mean. You want to make everyone else miserable because that’s what you are” (p. 203)?
- With reference to the quotes below, discuss Lou’s character and her actions in *Summer of Shipwrecks*:
  - ‘Do I have to stay the same forever just because you can’t grow up? Because you’re so scared of everything?’ (pp. 204–205)
  - ‘She throws up her hands like, *I give up*. “You don’t listen, Sid. You never have. You only talk about what you’re into and you think everyone else should be into it too. I’m allowed to like different things.”’ (p. 206)
  - ‘It hurts. Because maybe it’s a little true – Dad says I’ve got tunnel vision, that I wouldn’t even notice a tap-dancing elephant in the room when I’m focused on something – but she never *started* talking about any of those things. She never gave me a chance to listen.’ (p. 206)
- Why, after Eva saves her from the ocean, does Sid say, ‘the guilt twists like a knife. Shame, too’ (p. 212)?
- Sid says, ‘I was too scared of asking the big questions’ (p. 213). Have you ever felt like Sid? Share with a friend.
- How are Sid’s experiences like Katherine’s? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a hero like Katherine?



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- Why does Sid say, 'It's brave to have hope' (p. 223)?
- What mistakes does Sid make with Kiaan that she later regrets? Why does she feel this way?
- Sid declares, 'I don't want to be like them. I want to be me' (p. 224). What can you take from Sid's realisation? What does *being you* look and feel like?
- *Summer of Shipwrecks* starts and finishes with Sid observing the giant rusted anchor in the middle of the roundabout. What anchors Sid? Why does the book start and end with this anchor? What anchors you? Share in a reflection.
- Promises mean a great deal to Sid, yet she breaks her promise to Kiaan. What does Sid learn about herself in *Summer of Shipwrecks*?
- Use a young reader's edition of *The Tempest*, such as that written by Andrew Matthews (Hachette Children's Books), as a companion text to *Summer of Shipwrecks*. In what ways are they similar?
- What makes a good friend? What are some examples of good friendships and bad friendships in *Summer of Shipwrecks*? What have you learnt about relationships from reading this text?
- Choose a scene from *Summer of Shipwrecks* to write a script for. Perform your piece to the class.
- Form a Thought Tunnel by lining up students in two lines facing one other. Choose some students to assume the roles of characters from *Summer of Shipwrecks*. As these characters walk through the tunnel, ask them questions about their thoughts and actions during different stages of the novel.
- Share the story of *Summer of Shipwrecks* in a six-word summary.
- Using what you have learnt from *Summer of Shipwrecks*, create a Guide to Change.
- Devise a series of Twenty Questions to ask Lou, Hailey and Eva.
- Write the first chapter of a sequel to *Summer of Shipwrecks*.
- In the role of Eva, retell this story in no more than two pages.
- Why does Sid find her mum's affection for Tony so off-putting? Would she have felt the same with her parents' affection? Discuss.
- What is your main takeaway from *Summer of Shipwrecks*?
- Invite your school counsellor to chat with the class about strategies to manage misunderstandings and breakdowns in relationships.
- Discuss the contribution of figurative language to *Summer of Shipwrecks* in further engaging readers. Identify the types of figurative language used, and experiment with these in your own writing. Examples include:
  - An explorer named it after himself like a dog peeing on a tree (p. 3)
  - We screamed like we'd been stung by jellyfish (p. 4)
  - The car lurches, jerking us in our seats like an earthquake (p. 6)

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- She's always got a scowl on her face like she caught a whiff of Aunt Patti's cat, Sir Isaac Newton, taking a dump (p. 7)
- My gaze ping-pongs between them (p. 13)
- My soggy thongs *thwack* against the concrete (p. 16)
- Unease crackles under my skin (p. 18)
- It's hard not to move when an ocean of worry swirls so fiercely in my chest that I feel seasick (p. 24)
- I start to sweat like a roast chook (p. 25)
- My heart sinks like a shipwreck (p. 26)
- Violet Crumble-yellow cliffs rising tall on the other side (p. 33)
- There's a tight feeling in my chest, like a giant tentacled sea monster squeezing the breath from my lungs (p. 42)
- It's like someone released a thousand butterflies inside my rib cage (p. 47)
- It's shaped like a teardrop with waves fighting through the narrow headlands to crash against rocks the colour of butter. Some days the water is a washing machine and other days, like today, it's mirror-calm. But it's always magical. (p. 50)
- My heart is filled with fireworks (p. 51)
- My words don't want to come out now, like a turtle hiding in its shell (p. 52)
- I bury all my confusion and disappointment under a wave of excitement (p. 52)
- The sun bites down, dry and sharp unlike like the sticky-sweaty-greasy heat inside the shop (p. 57)
- Lou's the one dragging me, reeling me in like a fish on a hook, towards the shop (p. 66)
- We weave between racks and people, the music loud enough to make my skin fizzle (p. 66)
- I take a deep breath, deeper than the Mariana Trench (p. 70)
- Hailey loops her arm through Lou's and they skip to the door like they're in *The Wizard of Oz* (p. 71)
- The aircon blasts as soon as the engine starts, but it's not cold yet so it's like a face full of dragon's breath (pp. 73–74)
- There's a banshee-level scream building inside me (p. 76)
- I lift my hand and, quicker than a sailfish, he snaps up the penny (p. 87)
- She looks up from the letter, eyes landing on me like a question (p. 88)
- It's a wonder it fits with all the jealousy bubbling inside me (p. 95)
- Lou's eyes widen. They're bright like a coin in the sand. (p. 95)
- Every time she speaks it's like a storm cloud blankets the sun (p. 95)



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- There's no way to argue with Mum. Trying to stop her when she's got an idea in her head is like trying to trap a tsunami in a bucket (p. 119)
- Eva's gaze darts around like a sandfly, landing everywhere but me (p. 123)
- Her hair is iron-straight with flyaways that shine like embers in the sunlight (p. 127)
- I smile, but it stretches thinner than a jellyfish tentacle (p. 138)
- His burnt nose is peeling like dried glue (p. 142)
- You can see whales migrating, breaching the water like rockets (p. 142)
- Mickey steps towards us, like a shark circling its prey (p. 144)
- If I don't say something the silence will surge over our heads like a tidal wave (p. 149)
- My lungs feel like they've been dunked in icy water (p. 161)
- I race back to my annexe, guilt curdling in my stomach (p. 169)
- I can taste guilt in the back of my throat burning sour (p. 176)
- The sun stings like it wants to punish me (p. 186)
- The words crumble like sandstone in my mouth (p. 194)
- Silence crashes over us (p. 195)
- She turns her back on him, swooshing the detector side to side like she's playing the Australian Open (p. 197)
- The undertow is strong against my legs, tugging at me like tentacles, like the sea monster from the stories Lou and me used to scare each other with when we were younger (p. 207)
- My limbs feel like they've been filled with concrete (p. 208)
- My brain's muddled, like a snow globe all shook up into a blizzard (p. 212)

**AUTHOR MOTIVATION**

Sid's story began with a desire to explore how every child navigates the jump from childhood to adolescence differently, with some making the change easily and others struggling to keep up. When I was Sid's age, I was someone who struggled to keep up. While my closest friends charged into their teenage years, desperate to shed their younger selves as quickly as possible, I clung to my childhood, wanting to play make-believe forever. While they suddenly knew everything about periods and shaving their legs and crushes and what to wear – seemingly by osmosis – I was perpetually clueless. I couldn't shake the feeling they were disappointed in me for being five steps behind and it placed significant strain on our friendships. So Sid's story is a personal one for me, exploring the fractures that can form in even the tightest of friendships when one friend is growing up faster than the other. Importantly, I wanted Sid to realise that growing up at her rate – on her own terms – is more than okay.

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Considering I was already drawing on personal experiences for this story, I decided to dig into another source of inspiration plucked from my own life: the setting. I grew up on a sheep farm just a stone's throw inland from Port Campbell, part of Victoria's iconic Shipwreck Coastline. Just like Sid, I spent many summers camping at the beach, fascinated by the hundreds of tragic shipwreck tales that took place along this iconic stretch of water. One story in particular enraptured me, that of the *Loch Ard*, which I used as inspiration for my own invented shipwreck, the *Penlee*. Being a child with a vivid imagination, I was completely enamoured with this story of survival against all odds, treasure and an unwilling heroine. And, more than simply a desire to bring a familiar setting to life, a shipwreck felt like the perfect thematic backdrop for a tale of being on the cusp of growing out of childhood, about fear of change, about the ending of important friendships.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Shivaun Plozza is the award-winning author of *Frankie*, *Tin Heart*, *The Boy, the Wolf and the Stars*, *A Reluctant Witch's Guide to Magic*, *Meet Me at the Moon Tree* and *The Worst Perfect Moment*. Her writing has been shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year, the ABIA awards and the Gold Inky. She won the Davitt Award for Best Young Adult Crime Novel in 2017. She lives in Geelong with her cat, Fenchurch. *Summer of Shipwrecks* is her latest book.