

Your Time is Up

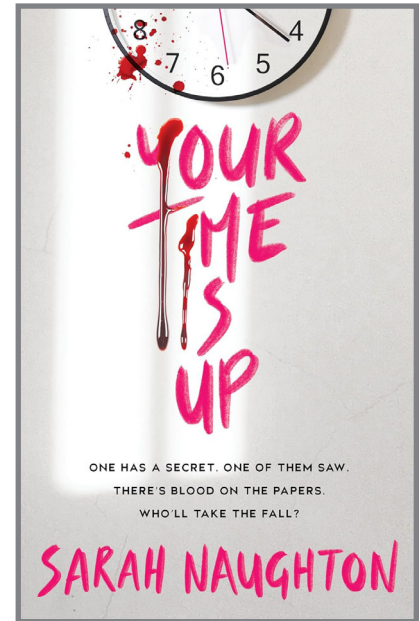
AUTHOR

SARAH NAUGHTON

SCIS: 5503054

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Secondary



SYNOPSIS

Zaina never meant to get involved. The plan was always to focus on her exams and make her dad proud. None of this is what she'd planned for. Chanelle never made it to the exam, Nero's convinced he saw something last night and Ysla can't stop crying. But now Zaina can't help but scratch the surface of secrets that desperately want to stay hidden, and as the seconds tick by, she begins to wonder: how far will the other candidates go to keep her from the truth?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Naughton's debut novel, *The Hanged Man Rises*, was shortlisted for the Costa children's award. It was followed by a second young adult thriller, *The Blood List*. Her psychological thrillers for adults, *Tattletale*, *The Other Couple* and *The Mothers* (Orion) are Amazon bestsellers. *The Festival* is out now. Sarah lives in London with her husband and sons.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
 - Based on the cover artwork and blurb, what genre do you predict this book is likely to be?
 - What audience do you think this book is aimed at? Why do you think this?
 - What does the artwork on the front cover represent?
 - Read the back cover of the novel. What does this blurb tell us about the events within the novel?
 - What questions does the blurb on the back cover raise for the reader?
 - As a class, list down as many questions as you can think of about what might happen in the novel, based on the cover art and blurb only.
 - Who do you think is the main character, and why do you think this? What do you now know about the protagonist?
 - Where and when do you think this book is most likely to be set? Why do you think this?

WHILE READING

- In the first two chapters, is the author setting the scene or raising questions? What, for a novel of this genre, is the distinction between these two activities (if any), and why might the author choose to introduce characters and events in this way?
- Having read the novel, in small groups or as a class, use the times and dates at the start of each chapter to help you construct a time-map of the chronological structure of the narrative. Once you have completed your time-map, compare the internal chronology of the novel to the actual order of events.

- Note on your time-map the order in which events occurred, as well as the order in which they were revealed
 - What reasons might the author have had for structuring the novel this way?
 - How do you think this structure influences and affects the levels of tension throughout the novel?
- Add a third set of notations to your time-map, indicating key points where questions about characters and events are raised, and the corresponding points where said questions receive answers.
- As a class, discuss what you have learnt about narrative construction from this analysis.
 - Individually, use the time-map and your associated class discussions, to help you write an analysis of the narrative structure and internal chronology of the novel, and the various impacts of this structure on both reader experience and overall plot-tension.
- What are the two competing roles of the themes of friendship and betrayal within the novel, and how are they realised within the lives of the main characters in the final chapters?
- How is the character of Zaina introduced and developed within the novel? As a class, discuss how our understanding of Zaina's character, weaknesses, emotional and personal life, etc. is gradually revealed, and how our understanding of who she is and what motivates her changes over the course of the action.
- What do you personally see as Zaina's greatest character flaw, and how does it impact her behaviour throughout? Conversely, what do you see as Zaina's greatest personal strength, and how does it affect both her and those around her during the events of the novel?
- How has Zaina's father's death influenced her decisions and affected her life?
- Create a character development table: In the first column, write down the names of eight key characters within the novel. In the second column, note down next to each character what we know about them and their personality and personal life. In a third column, write down the point where we discover this aspect of their character and behaviour, both in the narrative and in the internal chronology
 - Use this character development table to write a brief analysis of the different methods and techniques that the author has used to help build and develop at least one of these characters.
- What do you see as the moment of greatest tension within the text of the novel? Create an artwork that you feel reflects the emotions, feelings and tension encapsulated by your chosen moment or scene.
- When Zaina realises that Poppy faked her collapse in order to take Miss Zita's attention off Zaina, she realises that 'In the deepest part of herself, she always wanted to forgive Poppy, and now, finally, Poppy has given her a reason to.' How has Zaina been feeling about Poppy, Nero and friendship in general since the party? How has this impacted her? What has she told herself to make it possible for her to remain functional in daily life after this incident? How does realising that Poppy was willing to do something so dramatic and risky just to help her make Zaina feel?
- The hours of the exam are actually very busy, with students and teachers going in and out of the room more or less constantly. In small groups, track on a timeline of the exam all the events that occur during this time. Include events such as Nero leaving, Nero talking to Zaina via airpod and Nero sending notes.
- In small groups, draw a map of the school based on the different descriptions of its layout that are scattered throughout the novel.
- Ylsa's advice to the police interviewer is to tell him, when talking to his daughters, 'don't bang on about them being beautiful.' Why do you think she gave him this advice? What pressure does it put on a person to always be harping on about their beauty, their intelligence, their sporting ability or some other area in which they excel?
- What does Ylsa mean when she says 'I'm the kid aiming for the wastepaper basket from the front of the class'? In pairs or small groups, analyse this metaphor within the context of the story, specifically focusing on how Ylsa sees it as applying to herself.
- After reading the novel, as a class, discuss what you thought while you were reading the novel, specifically what were all the different hypotheses and guesses that you had. Some things to ask each other during your discussion might be:
 - When did you start to suspect what had actually happened?
 - Who did you suspect was the potential villain of the novel, and if you changed your mind, at what point did you do so?
 - What role do you think that Tabitha played in the novel, and when did you realise her actual role?
 - What did you predict had happened to Chanelle and why did you suspect this?

- Where did you think Nero had gone when he left the exam room, and why did you think he had done this?
- Who did you suspect of being inside the room where the exam papers were kept?
- Did you realise what had actually happened before the end of the novel when everything was revealed? If so, what gave it away?
- Did you suspect another character of being the villain right up until the end? What incidents and suppositions misled you?
- How did the author construct the mystery so that it wasn't until the end of the novel that all the pieces fell into place?
- What is the most important lesson that you think the four young people (Nero, Zaina, Chanelle and Ylsa) have learnt over the course of the novel?

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE