



## RECOMMENDED FOR

Secondary students (ages 13+)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Creative and critical thinking; Ethical understanding; Literacy

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Discuss the intersection between politics, the media and privacy in modern democracies.
- Read the novel to examine techniques used in the media and how the media shape narratives in their portrayal of issues.
- Consider the first-person structure and how it reveals and conceals secrets.

## THEMES

- Music
- Politics
- The media
- Right to privacy vs public interest
- Family
- Secrets
- Friendship
- Photography
- Trust and forgiveness

## PREPARED BY

Random House Australia

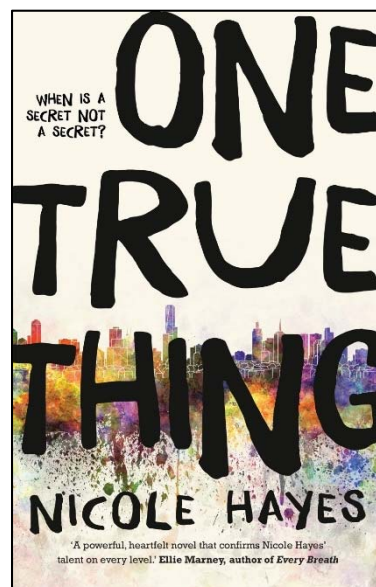
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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## One True Thing Nicole Hayes

## PLOT SUMMARY

**When is a secret not a secret? When your whole life is public.**

Frankie is used to being a politician's daughter, but with her mum now running for Premier, life's a whole lot crazier than usual. All Frankie wants is to lose herself in her music. So when her best friend, Kessie, invites a student journo to interview the band, Frankie is less than thrilled.

But Jake's easy to talk to, and he seems to really like Frankie. That doesn't stop her from wondering if he's just after the ultimate scoop, especially when photos surface of Frankie's mum having a secret rendezvous with a younger man. With her family falling apart around her, Frankie is determined to find out the truth – even if it means losing Jake.

*“The personal is political” has never been more sincerely brought to life, as Frankie struggles to keep her head above the fray in the powerful, wonderful One True Thing. As her mother battles for the premiership in an election year, the wry, determined Frankie draws us into her personal disasters, her rock-goddess dreams, and her family's media rollercoaster. One True Thing is a compelling, heartfelt novel that confirms Nicole Hayes' talent on every level. Go, Frankie, go!*  
– Ellie Marney, author of EVERY BREATH

*'A truly unputdownable read. One True Thing is smart, original and compelling, and especially topical and relevant in the current climate. I loved Frankie – she's such a deliciously flawed and complex protagonist, one that I found myself cheering on, wanting to hug, while at the same time wanting to give a good, stern talking to. Nicole does an amazing job at creating authentic, multifaceted female characters. A really wonderful second novel.'*

–Melissa Keil, author of LIFE IN OUTER SPACE

## SYNOPSIS

Frankie's home life is complicated at the moment thanks to her mother being the Premier of Victoria, and an important upcoming election. Frankie is expected to participate in events on behalf of her mother, and to be on her best behaviour at all times. Frankie is sick of hearing about politics and being forced to live and breathe it.

She relies on her band for escape, but even at rehearsal, politics wins out when her best friend, Kessie, changes the lyrics to Frankie's song to make a political statement.

At rehearsal there's also an unexpected visitor – Jake, who Frankie had mistakenly berated earlier in the day after being knocked down by someone wearing the same football jersey. Now she's embarrassed to see him again.

Jake is charming, friendly, and good-looking, and Frankie finds herself warming to him. Kessie has invited him along to interview the band and Frankie for an article he's writing as a student journalist. Frankie's annoyed at Kessie for not respecting her boundaries – Frankie gets enough media at home – but she reluctantly agrees to an interview.

Things heat up between them when Jake appears at her mother's election campaign launch, then invites her on a date to see a photographer Jake admires.

But when the press hears a rumour – and worse, publishes images – that seem to show Frankie's mother having an affair with a younger man, the family goes into crisis mode. Frankie overhears her parents fighting, and suspects the worst.

With Mum out campaigning in rural Victoria and Dad away on a novel-writing retreat (deliberately absent, Frankie suspects), Frankie and Luke are left to fend for themselves, with only their prickly grandmother to look after them, and with a media circus gathering at their house looking for answers.

Although Frankie's mum does finally reveal the unexpected and shocking truth about the man to Frankie and Luke, the damage has been done and Frankie finds it difficult to forgive her. Her mother refuses to tell the story publicly, and Frankie can't understand why, when it is tearing their family apart – and affecting her mother's chances in the upcoming election.

At the same time, Frankie discovers that Jake has betrayed her in a shocking way, and that Kessie has her own secrets that make Frankie feel even more alone.

With bullies at school taunting her about the family's misfortunes, and her brother's asthma always threatening, Frankie feels powerless.

She decides the only thing to do is to take matters into her own hands and seek out the man in the photographs. Can she find him, and will he be interested in meeting with her? Will her efforts bring her family back together?

As the election looms closer – along with Frankie's band's audition, and Luke's state swimming championships – secrets will be revealed, trust will be broken and regained, and a life-threatening incident will bring the family together.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicole Hayes lives in her hometown of Melbourne after more than a decade living overseas. Her debut novel, *The Whole of My World*, was longlisted for the 2014 Gold Inky Award, and shortlisted for the 2014 Young Australians' Best Book Award (YABBA). She has a Master of Arts in Creative Writing, and taught fiction and screenwriting at University of Melbourne for six years. She runs writing workshops for different organisations and is the Creative Writing Facilitator at Phoenix Park Neighbourhood House. See: [www.nicolehayesauthor.com](http://www.nicolehayesauthor.com) or follow her on Twitter: @nichmelbourne.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

The idea for this novel was borne of two key events in recent history. The first began with my growing frustration with the injustices and double standards surrounding the treatment of women in public office, in particular, our first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. The media and public asked endless questions about her relationship with her partner, her appearance and her manner, the fact that she had chosen not to have children, and even the pitch



of her voice – all were questions that had no impact on her ability to perform her job, and which had never been aimed at male Prime Ministers in the past. My frustration culminated in the former Prime Minister's famous misogyny speech, and the rousing call I believed it to be – a call that the mainstream media initially seemed to dismiss without consideration. How did they not get it? I wondered.

The second event was the disappearance of a businessman from a leafy, upper-middle-class suburb of Melbourne. For several days this mystery captured the attention of the city, as his wife and teenaged children made public appeals for information. And then everything changed – there were no more public appeals, no more family pleas. It was no longer a missing person case, but a homicide investigation. Details of this man's secret and sordid life unfolded. I remembered thinking how horrible it must be for his wife, and then, with a shudder and a thud of my heart, I thought about his kids. They were old enough to know what it all meant, to suffer the humiliation and shame of their father's behaviour and choices, but not old enough or empowered enough to change it or affect it. Nor could they escape it. This 'in-between' space inhabited by young adults is a complex and tricky place to be – to have the sophistication and understanding to feel the full effect of your parents' choices, but to have no or little ability to influence them. I knew I wanted to explore this idea, but I wasn't sure how. I kept thinking about what these teenagers' first day back at school would look like, and my heart ached for them.

I started to imagine this day, just to see, and almost immediately, Frankie Mulvaney-Webb appeared on the page. And the two events blurred suddenly. I knew what my story would be: the fallout for a teenage girl following a very public scandal surrounding her successful politician mother.

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- What do you know about how election campaigns are run in Australia (or elsewhere)?
- What other books have you read, or what films and TV shows have you watched, that have politics as a setting? What are some of the recurring themes of these?
- What recent political scandals or controversies are you aware of? What was the media's role in

reporting and shaping the public's perception of those issues?

- Do you have a creative pursuit, such as music, art, photography or writing, that is important to you? What does that creative endeavour mean to you?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *'The personal is political'* – discuss this saying in relation to the themes of *One True Thing*.
- What might the title, *One True Thing*, refer to or symbolise? What is true in Frankie's life, and what is false?
- *'I know it's only partly true. But truth, I'm quickly learning, is a slippery thing. What's true one second isn't even close to true the next. Sometimes it feels like there is no one true thing.'* (p. 222) Is 'truth' subjective?
- Most of the chapter names in the book are political or media-related terms. Make a table with three columns. In the first column, list all of the chapter names. In the second column, write the definition of the term in its political or media-related sense. In the third column, note what significance the title has to the story (it might be literal or symbolic).
- *'[T]he tabloids can be nasty and careless in their reporting, and talkback radio is brutal like no other. But nothing beats the anarchy of the political blogosphere . . . I scan several websites and decide that the tabloid articles are about the same, though with big pictures and fewer words. Nothing dodgy and nothing new. And yet, together, they're making a case – building a narrative, as Harry would say'* (pp. 163–4)
  - Examine the case that the media build against Premier Mulvaney through the course of the novel. How much is true and how much is conjecture (or outright lies)? What narrative are they trying to build?
  - Relate this back to the real world and research the media portrayal of a recent political event or controversy. Can you see some of the techniques the media have used to create a narrative? How does the portrayal change in different types of media – for instance, how much is fact and how much is opinion?
- *'Unfortunately, anyone with a smartphone is their own little publishing site'* (p. 73) How has the



political and media landscape changed in recent years with the proliferation of smartphones, social media and blogs? Is this 'unfortunate' as Frankie says, or is it a good thing?

- *'Luke and I are just window dressing.'* (p. 59) How important is it for a politician to have their family visibly supporting them in their campaigns?
- *'Harry's always saying that journalists are never off-duty'* (p. 73) Do you think this statement is true?
- How has the ease of publishing photographs or information directly to the public affected our right to, or expectation of, privacy?
- Was Frankie's mother right in choosing to maintain silence about who the man was, in order to maintain his right to privacy?
- *'If I wanted to be a journalist and I saw a politician shrieking at a stranger in the middle of the night, I'd be tempted to yank out the iPhone too.'* (p. 355) What would you do in this situation?
- What is the significance of Frankie's mother becoming the first elected female Premier of Victoria? What other 'firsts' in politics do you know of? Research statistics on gender in politics.
- *'All these faces staring up at her, hopeful and expectant, as though she belongs to them . . . here are these strangers demanding more. Demanding her.'* (p. 103) What are a politician's obligations and responsibilities to their electorate?
- What does Frankie's music mean to her? What does Jake's photography mean to him? Discuss how their artistic endeavours give meaning to their lives in *One True Thing*. Do you agree with Jake's dad when he implies that art is only useful if it makes money?
- In fiction, interest is created by characters' internal dilemmas and the interplay of light and dark within each character – no one is perfect. Consider the decisions made by Frankie, her mum, her dad, Jake, Kessie and others. Which decisions did you think were 'right'? At what moments were you frustrated by the character, or felt they were being unreasonable? How did that change as the story progressed? What narrative techniques did the author use to influence your response to the characters?





## FURTHER READING FROM RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*Steal My Sunshine*  
by Emily Gale

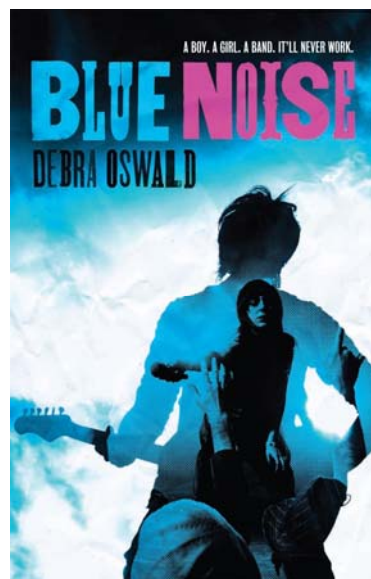
**Why this story?** A novel about the impact of forced adoption practices on several generations.

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.

*Teachers' resources available.*



*Blue Noise*  
by Debra Oswald

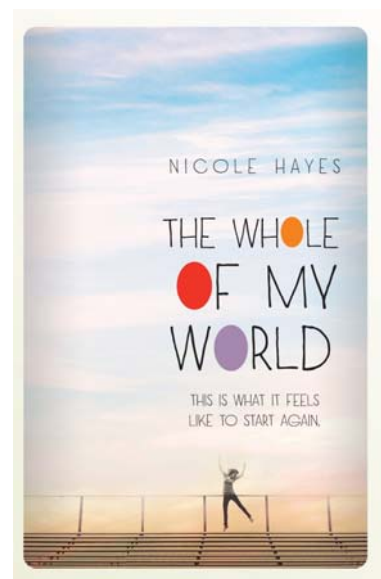
**Why this story?** Like *One True Thing*, it's about people letting you down, how to survive your family and the amazing thrill of making music with your friends.

Ash is drooling over his favourite guitar when he meets Charlie Novak. One jam session later and Charlie convinces Ash to play in his band. But it'll never work. Bands never do.

Erin is wandering down a corridor at school when she runs into Charlie. The guy is a fruit loop with his weird hair and hyperactive rantings. When Charlie invites her to be the band's keyboard player, Erin can't get a word in to say no. She's a classical pianist. It'll never work.

But maybe this time things will be different. Maybe blues music is just what Ash and Erin need.

*Teachers' resources available.*



*The Whole of My World*  
by Nicole Hayes

**Why this story?** Read Nicole's first novel to explore recurring themes of family, friendship and feminism.

Desperate to escape her grieving father and harbouring her own terrible secret, Shelley disappears into the intoxicating world of Aussie Rules football. Joining a motley crew of footy tragics – and, best of all, making friends with one of the star players – Shelley finds somewhere to belong. Finally she's winning.

So why don't her friends get it?

When the whole of your world is football, sometimes life gets lost between goals.

*Teachers' resources available.*



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
One True Thing	Nicole Hayes	9780857986887	8-11	\$19.99		
The Whole of My World	Nicole Hayes	9781742758602	8-11	\$18.99		
Steal My Sunshine	Emily Gale	9781742758497	8-11	\$18.99		
Blue Noise	Debra Oswald	9781741663754	8-11	\$21.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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<p>NAME: _____</p> <p>SCHOOL: _____</p> <p>ADDRESS: _____</p> <p>STATE: _____</p> <p>POSTCODE: _____</p> <p>TEL: _____</p> <p>EMAIL: _____</p> <p>ACCOUNT NO.: _____</p> <p>PURCHASE ORDER NO.: _____</p>	<p>PLEASE SEND ORDER FORMS TO YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION SUPPLIER.</p>
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