

# Game Theory

By Barry Jonsberg

June 2016 ISBN 9781760290153 paperback  
recommended for 14-18 year old readers

## Summary

Jamie Delaware is a mathematics nerd and happy with a stress-free life. But then his sister wins millions on the lotto and his life changes dramatically. Suddenly, he has an opponent who is ruthless and the only thing Jamie has going for him is his devotion to Game Theory. But playing a game against someone who plays by his own rules brings its own, peculiar dangers. When Jamie is forced to get himself a gun, he knows the game has gone too far. But he cannot back down now. He has no choice but to keep faith with Game Theory.

## The author says:

I had so much fun writing this. I had never written a thriller before, but that wasn't the reason why I started it. Like all of my books, the idea came from a humble beginning – an interest in the concept of game theory and how it operates. I was also interested in how human nature can be predicted according to game theory. There's a section in the novel when Summerlee (Jamie's sister) asks about 'good' numbers to choose if you want to maximise your chances of winning Lotto. Mathematically, of course, all combinations are as good as any other and Jamie points this out. However, what he also says on pages 40-43, about people trying to pick unusual numbers, is true – check it out, because it's kinda funny and says something about human nature, particularly in regard to greed.

By the way (and without ruining things) I myself had no idea who the 'baddie' was going to be right up until the time I discovered the villain's identity along with Jamie. I was a bit surprised and hopefully the reader will be as well.

## Use in the curriculum

This novel is suitable for use in Years 11 and 12, across a range of English courses.

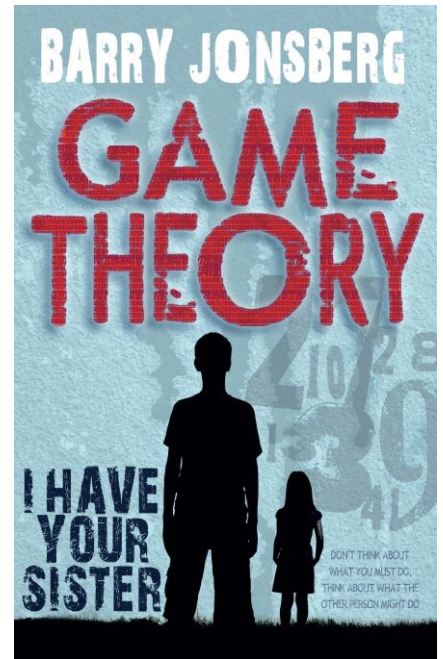
Despite the use of swear words in the novel, some teachers might find *Game Theory* is suitable for use at year 10 in the National Curriculum. In particular, the following content descriptions are applicable:

### Language

#### Language for interaction

Understand how language use can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people

Understand that people's evaluations of texts are influenced by their value systems, the context and the purpose and mode of communication



Visit <https://www.allenandunwin.com/resources/for-teachers> for free download-able teachers notes, reviews by teachers, extracts and more. And sign up to the Allen & Unwin e-newsletter to receive monthly updates on new resources!

Contact Carolyn Walsh, Education Marketing Coordinator,  
Ph: +02 8425 0150 Fax: 02 9906 2218 Email: [CarolynW@allenandunwin.com](mailto:CarolynW@allenandunwin.com)

## Expressing and developing ideas

Analyse how higher order concepts are developed in complex texts through language features, including nominalisation, clause combinations, technicality and abstraction

## Literature

### Responding to literature

Reflect on, extend, endorse or refute others' interpretations of and responses to literature

Analyse and explain how text structures, language features and visual features of texts and the context in which texts are experienced may influence audience response

Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts

### Examining literature

Identify, explain and discuss how narrative viewpoint, structure, characterisation and devices including analogy and satire shape different interpretations and responses to a text

Compare and evaluate how 'voice' as a literary device can be used in a range of different types of texts to evoke particular emotional responses

Analyse and evaluate text structures and language features of literary texts and make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts

## Literacy

### Texts in context

Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices

### Interpreting, analysing, evaluating

Identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences

Use comprehension strategies to compare and contrast information within and between texts, identifying and analysing embedded perspectives, and evaluating supporting evidence

## Before Reading:

**NB: please check all websites and pages for availability and suitability on the day of proposed use.**

It's probably a good idea to have students do a little research on game theory. [If time isn't a problem, you could show them *A Beautiful Mind*, starring Russell Crowe, the film about the life and work of John Nash, one of the greatest practitioners of game theory]. Here are some suggestions, mainly from YouTube:

- There is an episode of QI, the British TV program with Stephen Fry, that deals with the very game theory problem that Jamie Delaware tells Phoebe right at the beginning of the book. The whole episode is on games, but the game theory one is the first on the program [slightly risqué jokes warning!]: Click [here](#).
- Here is a basic introduction to game theory on YouTube that focuses on the classic Prisoner's Dilemma: find it [here](#)
- A much longer lecture on game theory and its applications [but also quite engaging] can be found [here](#).
- Here's a rather interesting site that relates game theory to parenting. Students might be interested in how parents can manipulate the 'game' of parenting to their advantage [if only to develop their own game theory about how to manipulate parents! Is there an assignment in that?]. Check it out [here](#).
- And a Q&A session about the same topic is [here](#):



# In the classroom...

# Game Theory

by Barry Jonsberg

## Themes

The following themes are by no means exclusive. Students could be divided into groups and asked to deliver a report on their chosen theme, using PowerPoint or Prezi

### Family relationships

Describe the relationships of the Delaware siblings. How is this shown in the text and how far do you think the author has made those relationships realistic? Some people have said that the characterisations of the mother and father are 'reversed stereotypes' [the mother is decisive and action-oriented whereas the father is overly emotional and indecisive]. How are stereotypes played with throughout the book?

### How money changes family dynamics

At the centre of the book is the notion that money can and does corrupt. How is this explained and detailed within the text. How far is it true to say that "money is the root of all evil"?

As a creative piece, write a story about how a member of the family wins the lotto and the changes, good and bad, that brings.

### Loyalty and responsibility

Family loyalties shift throughout the book. Examine Jamie's decision-making in regards to saving Phoebe. Are the family members loyal to each other all the time? How do we, as readers, feel about each character?

### Ethics

Is Jamie right in 'going it alone'? Show the advantages and disadvantages in Jamie's thinking regarding game theory.

## Structure

The novel is structured in three parts and involves a shifting time scale. Part One takes place five months before Part Two. Part Three dovetails with where Part One leaves off. Why do you think the author structured the book this way and how effective is it?

Elements of structure can be viewed here:

<http://www.teachit.co.uk/attachments/5023.pdf> (a 'teachit' worksheet on types of narrative structure – you need to register)

<http://johnwatsonsite.com/MyClassNotes/Topics/Narrative/NarrStruct.html> (includes a useful link to Freytag's triangle)

[http://www.narrati.com/Narratology/Narrative\\_Structure-Plot.htm](http://www.narrati.com/Narratology/Narrative_Structure-Plot.htm) (a comprehensive glossary of narrative structure techniques and terms)

## Discussion questions

1. Jonsberg is known for his humorous writing and *Game Theory* contains a number of funny scenes, despite it being a thriller. Does the use of humour add to or detract from the effectiveness of the book? Give reasons.
2. The character of Summerlee can divide opinion. Is she just a 'bitch' or does Jonsberg help us to identify with her? If so, how?
3. Check out the book trailer for *Game Theory* [here](#): How effective is this trailer? Give reasons for your judgement. Create your own book trailer [iMovie for Apple is a good resource, though book trailers can be made in a number of ways. Most students know much more than most teachers!]
4. How effective is Part One as a 'hook' opening? Does the reader want to carry on reading? Why? How else could the novel have been structured?
5. What part does Gutless Geraghty play in the novel? Do you find him a sympathetic and/or realistic character?
6. In part, the book is a whodunit. Did you spot the villain? Give reasons for your suspicions. Does it matter if you got the answer right or wrong?
7. Draw up a list of suspects and make notes on evidence for and against them being the kidnapper.
8. Jamie's parents react in very different ways to the kidnapping of their daughter. How understandable are their reactions and where do you find your sympathies lie?
9. "Jamie is entirely irresponsible and puts his sister's life in further danger." Do you agree?
10. Have a look at this article: [How the lives of ten lottery millionaires went disastrously wrong](#). Does it have to be this way? What would you do if you won \$7.5 million on the lotto?
11. How effective is the use of present tense in Parts One and Three? Give reasons.

## Further assignments:

### Creative

1. Choose a scene from the book and recreate it in a short film or photo-story.
2. Interview a character from the book about the things that happen.
3. Write an extra chapter to be inserted at the beginning, end or a specified place in the novel.
4. Present a monologue in character as Jamie or Summerlee or Phoebe.

### Analytical

1. Present an oral presentation exploring the character of Jamie.
2. How important is humour in the story?
3. How is tension employed in the book?
4. Write a detailed review of the novel.

***Allen & Unwin wishes to thank the author, Barry Jonsberg, for providing these curriculum notes and notes on the writing of Game Theory.***

# In the classroom...

# Game Theory

## Barry Jonsberg

Barry was born in Liverpool in England a very long time ago and moved to Australia in 1999. He and his wife, Nita, were offered teaching jobs in Darwin in the Northern Territory and they have been there ever since.

As an English teacher Barry was always very interested in books but he never got around to writing his own until he arrived in Australia. His first novel, *The Whole Business with Kiffo and the Pitbull*, was published in 2004. Since then, he has written a further seventeen. Barry's writing has been translated into eight languages and published in fourteen countries. His many awards and shortlists include:

### ***My Life as an Alphabet***

Winner, Victorian Premier's Literary Award, Writing for Young Adults, 2014

Winner, Children's Peace Literature Awards - Older Readers, 2013

Winner, Inky Awards, Gold Inky, 2013

Winner, Territory Read Awards, Children's Literature/Young Adult Fiction, 2014

Shortlisted, Adelaide Festival Awards for Literature, Children's Literature, 2014

Shortlisted, CBCA Award for Younger Readers, 2014

Shortlisted, NSW Premier's Literary Awards, Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature, 2014

Shortlisted, REAL (Reading & Enjoying Literature) Award, Fiction Years 7 - 9, 2014

Short-listed, WA Premier's Literary Awards

Shortlisted, Prime Minister's Literary Awards, Prize for Children's Fiction, 2014

### ***Being Here***

Winner Queensland Premier's Award 2011

Shortlisted: Prime Minister's Award 2012

Highly Commended, 2011 FAW Christina Stead Award

Shortlisted, Territory Read 2012

### ***The Whole Business with Kiffo and the Pitbull***

Shortlisted 2005: CBCA, Older Readers category.

2005: White Ravens Selection

### ***It's Not All About You, Calma!***

Winner 2006: Festival Awards for Literature (SA), Children's Literature

Shortlisted 2006: CBCA Awards, Older Readers.

### ***Dreamrider***

Shortlisted, NSW Premier's Awards for the Ethel Turner Prize 2007

### ***Pandora Jones: Admission***

White Ravens Selection 2015

His Facebook page can be found [here](#).

