

# YOU WERE MADE FOR ME



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JENNA GUILLAUME

AUTHOR OF *WHAT I LIKE ABOUT ME*

**Teachers' Notes**



Pan Macmillan Teachers' Notes

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Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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## Introduction

*The day I created a boy started out like any other.* (p 1)

Katie Camilleri begins narrating this story with frequent interruptions from her best friend Libby. She describes how the two of them accidentally made the perfect boyfriend (Guy) for Katie, and what evolved after his arrival in their world. Until then Katie had been obsessed with Declan Bell Jones, and spent her spare time hanging out with both Libby and her neighbour and other best friend, Theo Papadopoulos. Katie suffers from low self-esteem, despite her talents as both artist and writer, and hasn't yet had a boyfriend. School exacerbates her insecurities, because Katie is constantly the butt of jokes made by school bully Mikayla Fitzsimmons and her acolytes, Olivia Kent and Emily McAlister. Meanwhile, Theo, his dad Nick, and sisters Sophie and Lena are still grieving over the death of Nick's wife, and their mother, Ella.

Reference is made in the novel to the story of *Frankenstein* (1818), Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley's fictional character who created a monster (p 67). Although Guy is gorgeous and proves to be totally devoted to Katie, hiding his true identity from others proves to be a challenge. The two girls also realise the responsibility they have unwittingly taken on in creating this vulnerable creature, just as parents do with new babies: "We must protect him at all costs." She sighed. "This world is gonna break him." (p 102)

Theo is enlisted into the plot and agrees to house Guy in his granny flat. Alex, Theo's friend, offers support as well, although he's unsure what the story really is with Guy. Meanwhile, Declan starts to 'come on' to Katie and she is confused, especially since Declan is Mikayla's boyfriend. But when they attend a party at which Katie finds Michael Hartley, Libby's ex-boyfriend, in a tryst with Olivia Kent, and then Declan actually kisses Katie, things begin to unravel. Theo is aghast that she could hurt Guy like this. And Katie realises that even she is not sure who she is anymore.

*I was untethered. I didn't even recognise myself – and I definitely didn't like whoever it was that I was becoming.* (p 282)

Self-image lies at the heart of this novel, as it did in Jenna Guillaume's previous, debut novel. This is also a story about the myth of perfection, finding true romance, friendship and acting honourably. The title *You Were Made for Me* has a double meaning. Katie and Libby made Guy a perfect amalgam of what Katie looked for in a 'perfect' boy.

But, even though Guy was 'made' for Katie, it is Theo and Katie who were really 'made for each other'. And Katie has discovered that no one is perfect and nor should anyone expect them to be.



## Themes

### Self-Esteem and Self-Identity

*'I mean . . . you always say you want one thing. You have all these daydreams. You won't settle for anything less. And then – and then – when you actually get what you want, and everything is perfect and right in front of your face – you still don't seem happy!'* (p239)

**Discussion Point:** Even when she makes herself the perfect guy and he adores her, Katie's insecurity about her looks gets in the way: 'Not even hair and makeup closed the gap between Guy and me.' (p 258) Body image is a huge part of teenage insecurity. Katie refers often to aspects of her body which she dislikes, including her hair, her weight and her pimples. How should one counter such self-doubts?

**Discussion Point:** 'You are good enough. The problem is you secretly don't think anyone or anything is good enough for you.' (p 250) Katie's self-doubts feed into her high expectations of potential boyfriends. If you spend your life wanting to be perfect, then you also expect others to be the same. How much is self-esteem derived from accepting your own limitations as well as those of others?

### Friendship

*'It's the fact that you lied about it. It . . . it's just not like you. I mean you said it before, KC. You're my people. I thought you could tell me anything.'* (p 92)

**Discussion Point:** Real friendship can be like coming home to a place of safety and comfort: 'It felt like I was home again.' (p 298) But sometimes friendships aren't smooth sailing and sometimes they are toxic. How would you describe each of the friendships depicted in this novel?

**Discussion Point:** The lesson Theo gives Guy about the multifarious meanings of the word 'mate' (pp 107-8), given the tone in which the word is delivered, is not just a lesson in semantics. For the word 'mate', like the word 'friend', can have several wildly different meanings according to who is using the word; about whom; and to whom one is speaking. What makes a 'mate' a genuine friend?

### Romance & the Myth of 'Perfect' Love

*'Why do I like you?' He laughed. 'What kind of question is that? You may as well ask me why I need air to breathe. It's part of me. A part of who I am. I exist, therefore I like you.'* (p 131)

**Discussion Point:** Guy feels that his love for Katie is the essence of who he is, because he was made for that purpose alone. Is this a healthy/unhealthy way to think of someone you love?



**Discussion Point:** ‘Because Guy had been made for me. He was my fantasy come to life. Which was lovely in theory, but the reality of it was . . . unreal.’ (p 230) Is it possible to achieve a ‘perfect’ love? Are human beings capable of perfect relationships?

**Discussion Point:** Guy is perfect: sweet, handsome and kind to Katie. So why does Katie decide he isn’t right for her, and end up with Theo instead?

## Sexuality

*‘I do know I don’t feel sexual desire.’* (p 298)

**Discussion Point:** Katie is subjected to an excruciating discussion with her extended family of how much her parents should limit her love life (pp 191-2), despite not having had any experience of kissing prior to Guy’s arrival or ‘birth’. Should a teenager’s sexual life be discussed as openly as this? Does Katie have the right to some privacy?

**Discussion Point:** Libby has realised that she is asexual (p 298); Alex is gay; Mikayla and her cronies have engaged in sexual activity; Katie has never been kissed before Guy. What does this novel suggest about teenage sexuality?

## Family Relationships

*‘Your family is wonderful. Loud, a bit overwhelming . . . but wonderful.’ He looked back at the dining table. ‘It must be nice.’ ‘What must be nice?’ I said, standing on my tiptoes to get some mugs off the top shelf. ‘Complete humiliation?’ He stood behind me and easily plucked them down. ‘Having a family,’ he said.* (p 193)

**Discussion Point:** Katie loves her family but like all teenagers is often embarrassed by them. Theo has issues because as the youngest and living in the granny flat he is often not subjected to the scrutiny his sisters would have been. What makes some families so difficult to live with?

**Discussion Point:** When she discovers Katie is dating Guy, Katie’s mum lays down some ground rules (p 184). But these seem not to apply to her brother Luke. Why do parents so often adopt such double standards in relation to expectations of their daughters and sons? Are families still so gender-biased in the rules they set for their children?

**Discussion Point:** Theo and his family are suffering the loss of his mother – a loss that Katie’s family also shared. Theo’s depression has led to him gaining weight. His sisters are protective in a controlling sort of way. But when Nick brings home a new female friend they are each challenged. What strategies can a family use to deal with grief?



## Morals

*Libby and I might have created a guy . . . but I was the one who had turned into a monster.* (p 285)

**Discussion Point:** The underlying message in this novel is that we can't always get what we want, and that sometimes we lose our moral compass when we try to get it. Katie thought she wanted the perfect boy but it didn't prove as simple as that. What values does Katie learn to observe by the end of the novel?

**Discussion Point:** Is anyone in this novel without fault, in your opinion?

## Art

*'You think being an artist is about inspiration? I've got news for you. It's about work. Hard work. Even when you're tired. Even when you don't feel like it.'* (p 292)

**Discussion Point:** The novel implies that making art demands dedication and hard work, as well as talent. What does the novel suggest about the value and benefits of art to the wider community?

**Discussion Point:** Katie's talents as an artist are appreciated by her teacher Miss Lui and by those who love her. But her natural insecurity causes her to doubt even her talent: 'Failing. Being judged. I mean, what if it's terrible?' (p 176) Is Katie alone in this, or are all artists insecure?

## Bullying

*Mikayla's called me all sorts of names over the years. Pancake, thanks to my flat chest. Four-eyes, thanks to my glasses. Pinocchio, thanks to my big nose. Calamari, thanks to my surname (it's Camilleri). Cousin It. Crater Face. Freckle Fart from Kmart. Anything to remind me I'm ugly and worthless and destined to be forever alone.* (p 6)

**Discussion Point:** Katie is constantly bullied by 'Mikayla Fitzsimmons, Olivia Kent and Emily McAlister. The unholy trinity.' (p 5) They give her nicknames (p 6) and make fun of her loveless state. They also bully Libby for her Filipina-Australian background (p 6). And they use social media to taunt Katie as well (p 215). Can this verbal bullying be even more corrosive than physical bullying? Why?

**Discussion Point:** People who allow bullying to take place are also culpable. Declan knows how badly Mikayla behaves but it seems not to worry him. Is he also guilty of bullying, by default?



## Plot and Structure

**1. The novel is structured chronologically**, but also records events which happened in the more distant past.

**Discussion Point:** What events in the past are significant in this narrative?

**2. Tension or suspense are integral to a novel's structure**, and here they are created by gradually revealing things which were not obvious to the reader at the beginning.

**Discussion Point:** What elements of this plot were suspenseful, in your opinion?

**3. Pacing a story**, to achieve minor and major climaxes, is integral to a novel's structure. Each chapter begins with a tempting statement, e.g. Chapter 7: "I can't believe you talked me into this,' Theo muttered as I settled into the bed next to him.' (p 97)

**Discussion Point:** Choose a passage which you found particularly effective in maintaining or galvanising reader interest in this novel and discuss it.

**4.** The events which make up the **plot** of a novel are designed by the writer to develop or 'flesh out' both characters and themes.

**Discussion Point:** In which event did we learn the most about Katie? Which events highlighted any of the themes covered above?

**5.** Sometimes elements of a plot are left deliberately '**open**' in order to engage the reader's interest, and open endings are a particularly effective device.

**Discussion Point:** At the end of the novel, what was left unresolved?

## Characters

**1. Characters** in this novel consist of several **Major Characters**: Katie Camilleri; her best friend, Libby; her other best friend and neighbour, Theo Papadopoulos; Guy; and Mikayla Fitzsimmons, who bullies Katie.

There are also several **Minor Characters**: Declan Bell Jones, the boy Katie has been obsessed with; Katie's parents and brother Luke; Alex, Theo's friend; Michael Hartley, Libby's boyfriend; Melissa, Libby's sister; Olivia Kent and Emily McAlister, Mikayla's followers; Amina, Nat and Jordan, friends of Katie's at school; Lena and Sophie, Theo's sisters; Nick, Theo's father; Miss Lui, Katie's art teacher; and Jayden (Fitzzy) Fitzsimmons, Mikayla's brother.

**Discussion Point:** Which character did you identify with most, and why?



**2. The detail** used to create a character can provide a varied and interesting analysis of their key features. Read these two passages in the book about Theo, the first largely in dialogue, and the second a description: ‘A moment later the shaggy, wet head of my next-door neighbour . . . ready or what?’ (pp 18–22) and ‘He was always doing weird stuff like that with old clothes . . . close to her still’ (p 116).

**Discussion Point:** What do these passages tell you about Theo? Write a similar description of a person you know.

**3. Dialogue** can also add to the way in which characterisation is established.

**Discussion Point:** Read the conversation between Katie and Libby: ‘I don’t have a concussion . . . We had to mop the floor by the time we were done.’ (pp 13–16) and discuss what it reveals about these two friends.

**4.** Writers generally create a **mixture of characters, some intended to invoke sympathy in the reader, and others not to**. There are also some characters who defy categorisation – whose motives remain obscure.

**Discussion Point:** Declan Bell Jones is dismissed by Katie and Libby at the end of the novel as a terrible person because of his flirting with – and kissing – Katie while dating Mikayla, and then lying to Mikayla that Katie kissed him (and not the other way around). How do you feel about what he did? Which characters did you have sympathy for and why? Which ones were unattractive, or annoyed you? Were there any ‘minor’ characters you would have liked more information about?

**5. Contrast between characters** can also be used as a narrative device.

**Discussion Point:** Which characters in this novel are contrasted to one another?

## Style & Use of Language

**1.** The novel is written as a **first person** narrative in **immediate past tense** by Katie, but her friend Libby constantly interrupts the framing narrative to comment on what Katie has written.

**Discussion Point:** What effect do Libby’s interruptions have on the reader’s interpretation of these events?

**2. Narrative voice** is created by a range of devices including syntax and choice of words, use of language, etc.

**Discussion Point:** Examine Chapter 10, which is written in bullet points as a montage or outline for a film script, and discuss how the passage works in creating a voice.





**3. Literary devices such as metaphors** (e.g. ‘Mikayla the fire-breathing monster’ (p 8)) **and simile** (e.g. ‘But Mikayla treats anyone who isn’t her minion – or a guy – like month-old garbage. (The minions are only treated like day-old garbage, lucky for them).’ (p 6)) are used, often humorously, in novels such as this.

**Discussion Point:** Locate examples of such inventive literary devices in this novel.

**4. Humour** is another device used by this writer to deal with serious and not-so-serious themes. Often the humour relies on references to popular culture which is also referenced throughout the novel, for example, to Lisa Simpson (p 22); ‘a long-lost Hemsworth brother’ (p 26); Harry Potter (p 142); ‘a smile that reminded me of a Disney villain right before they lure the princess into a trap.’ (p 161); and ‘fanfics’ (p 230).

**Discussion Point:** What other humorous examples of popular culture did you notice in this text?

**Sarcasm** is another device used in the following: ‘I’ll be the bigger person and choose not to take offence at that comment.’ (p 167)

**Exaggeration** is also a humorous device used here: ‘Remember you’re not allowed to have a boyfriend until you’re thirty-five.’ (p 162)

**Discussion Point:** What other types of humour were used in this novel?

**5. Other devices are employed in the novel, too, such as repetition and short declaratory sentences** which are used to dramatic effect: ‘Declan reaches down to help me up. Let me repeat that. Declan. Reached down. To help me up. His hands. Were gripping my arms. His hands. Were moving to my shoulders. His eyes. Were peering into my face.’ (p 9) **Concise, staccato dialogues are used to develop tension:** “Should I really be leaving?’ she whispered to me. ‘No,’ I hissed back. ‘Yes. I don’t know.’ ‘Who is that?’ ‘I told you.’ ‘No way.’ ‘Yes way.’ ‘It can’t be.’ ‘It –’ (p 56)

**Discussion Point:** What other aspects of style did you identify in this novel?

## Setting

**1.** This novel is set in Katie’s suburb and the action takes place largely at her school, in her and Theo’s homes and in local places such as parks.

**Discussion Point:** How would you describe Katie’s school from the hints in this text? Make a list of its key features.

**Discussion Point:** How would you describe Katie’s home? Or Theo’s flat?



2. The author uses aspects of setting such as weather to enhance mood as well, for example when Katie discovers Guy in her bed, and races out into her garden and finds that Theo has come to investigate her screaming: ‘Rain pelted down around us.’ (p 32)

**Discussion Point:** Where else in the novel does setting relate to emotion like this?

3. The party at Mikayla and her brother Jayden’s parents’ house is described in key phrases and descriptions (pp 257-275).

**Discussion Point:** How would you describe their house and yard from the hints given in this text?

**Discussion Point:** What other aspects of setting did you notice in this novel?

**Discussion Point:** Is setting important in this novel? Why/why not?

## Writing Exercises

1. **Write a description of your perfect mate.** Try to make the description as amusing as those in this novel.

2. The **packaging of a book includes the blurb and cover** which must offer the reader an insight into the contents without giving the ending away. Examine the cover of this book after you’ve read it. Design your own cover using any medium you choose. Read the back cover blurb. Then make up your own back cover blurb summarising the themes of the novel in a few hundred words.

3. What other titles might this book have had? The author jokingly says in her **Acknowledgements** (p 328) that its working title was ‘Untitled Weird Sciencey Thing’. Brainstorm some interesting titles for this novel.

4. Write the **lyrics for a song** about Guy, the ‘perfect’ boyfriend.

5. Katie has a low impression of herself. Make a **list** of the things she doesn’t like about herself. What are the qualities which others like Theo admire in her?

## Quotes for Discussion after Reading the Novel

1. ‘I’m just trying to have the confidence of a mediocre white man over here.’ (p 15)

2. ‘You know, you’re basically slut-shaming me. I really thought you were more evolved than this.’ (p 90)



3. 'Our blanket forts were the opposite of the stark, overwhelming, uncomfortable world of the hospital. They were ours. Something we could control.' (p 105)
4. 'I swear, it's like you want there to be drama in your life. Like you can't just let yourself be happy.' (p 250)
5. 'And I wanted someone to love me for *me*.' (p 284)
6. 'If I'm not real,' he began, 'then what are these feelings?' He brought a hand to his chest. 'What is this heart?' His voice was getting louder and louder. 'If this isn't real, then why does it hurt so much?' (p 285)
7. 'It's not like perfection actually exists, anyway.' (p 302)
8. 'She had no power over us anymore.' (p 309)
9. 'I did say I wanted to experience everything with you. I guess I didn't think heartbreak would be on that list but . . . I'm happy to be alive to experience it. To experience anything.' (p 313)
10. 'You were my world, Kate. But what I didn't realise was that probably wasn't a good thing.' (pp 313-4)

## Further Reading Ideas for Class Discussion

1. This novel is based on the trope of a person being able to make another living being. Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) is referred to a number of times. Read and trace the parallels between these two narratives. What other works of fiction deal with creating another being? For example, Richard O'Brien's *The Rocky Horror Show* film (1975) and musical (1973), featuring the mad scientist Dr Frank-N-Furter and his perfect creation, have a strong connection with this tale!
2. The novel could also be compared to novels and films which play with the idea of a life being turned upside down by an 'otherworldly' occurrence stemming from a desire to be someone else. For example, *Freaky Friday* (1972) by Mary Rodgers was made into two films (1976) and (2003), and imagined a mother and daughter swapping bodies; the film *Suddenly Thirty* (2004) starring Jennifer Garner imagined a thirteen-year-old who is suddenly 30 and has achieved what she wanted in her career, but at the cost of those who most loved her. What other films or novels deal with such transformations?

*'Do you know how many important discoveries started out as freak accidents?'*



*She waved her arms around as she talked. ‘Penicillin, microwaves ... Viagra!’*

(p 102)

3. Jenna Guillaume has written about a scientific experiment in this novel. Is there any scientific discovery which relates to this? Or is it all pure fantasy?
4. Read and compare this novel to other YA novels, many of which feature self-esteem as an issue. **[See Further Reading.]**
5. Read about young women’s issues and the choices they make in relationships, work and life in texts such as those listed below under **Further Reading**. Discuss this reading in relation to this novel.

## Further Ideas Using Technology

1. Access websites which deal with **body image** and attitudes to self-image.
2. Locate information about **Jenna Guillaume** online.
3. **Research** the idea of ‘Frankenstein’ online.
4. Create a **poster** advertising this book using an online design program.
5. Create a **book trailer** for this novel.

## Conclusion

*You Were Made for Me* is an examination of the unreal expectations we often place upon both ourselves and others. Expecting anyone to be perfect is a recipe for disappointment. And expecting oneself to be perfect is even more unlikely to lead to happiness.

## Author Note

Jenna Guillaume is a journalist and author who grew up in Wollongong and now lives in Sydney. By day, Jenna writes for publications such as BuzzFeed, Junkee, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Guardian* about very important things like pop culture, identity, feminism, social media, and her fave OTPs. By night she writes young adult fiction, binges Netflix, and spends far too much time on Twitter.



Previously, Jenna was editor-at-large for BuzzFeed Australia and features editor at *Girlfriend* magazine. *You Were Made for Me* is her second novel.

## Further Reading

### Fiction:

*Begin, End, Begin: A #LoveOzYA Anthology* edited by Danielle Binks. HarperCollins, 2017.

Atkins, Clare *Between Us* Black Inc, 2018.

Binks, Danielle *The Year the Maps Changed* Hachette, 2020.

Crowley, Cath *Graffiti Moon* Pan Macmillan, 2010.

Gale, Emily *I Am Out with Lanterns* Random House, 2018.

Gough, Erin *Amelia Westlake* Hardie Grant Egmont, 2018.

Guillaume, Jenna *What I Like About Me* Pan Macmillan, 2019.

Harry, Pip *Because of You* UQP, 2017.

Kenwood, Nina *It Sounded Better in My Head* Text Publishing, 2019.

Pung, Alice *Laurinda* Black Inc, 2014.

Wakefield, Vikki *In-Between Days* Text Publishing, 2015.

Wood, Fiona *Six Impossible Things* Pan Macmillan, 2010.

Wood, Fiona *Wildlife* Pan Macmillan, 2013.

Wood, Fiona *Cloudwish* Pan Macmillan, 2016.

Wood, Fiona; Howell, Simone; and Crowley, Cath *Take Three Girls* Pan Macmillan, 2017.

Zorn, Claire *One Would Think the Deep* UQP, 2016.

### Non-Fiction:

Cooke, Kaz *Girl Stuff for ages 13+: Your full-on guide to the teen years* Penguin, 2013.

Ford, Clementine *Fight Like a Girl* Allen & Unwin, 2016.

King, Madonna *Being 14: Helping fierce teens become awesome women* Hachette, 2017.

Maguire, Emily *Your Skirt's Too Short: Sex, Power, Choice* Text Publishing, 2010.



Sparrow, Rebecca *Ask Me Anything (Heartfelt answers to 65 anonymous questions from teenage girls)* UQP, 2014.

**Websites:**

'Frankenstein' *Wikipedia* <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankenstein>>

'Book Trailers for Australian Children's Literature' *Ipswich District Teacher-Librarian Network* <<https://idtl.net.au/book-trailers.php>>

'How To Make a Book Trailer' *Tristan Bancks* <<https://www.tristanbancks.com/2016/03/how-to-make-book-trailer.html>>

'6 tips for making a book trailer that works' *The Reading Agency* <<https://readingagency.org.uk/young-people/003-skills/5-tips-for-making-a-book-trailer-that-works.html>>