

ALEX AND THE ALPACAS RIDE AGAIN

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YEAR LEVEL: Y4–7

ABOUT THE BOOK

After her adventures in Tasmania, Alex is back home in Melbourne and ready for the next one. But Grandpa Jacob wants to keep Alex protected, and he wants her to go back to being a regular kid and forget that she is the saviour of the world. Why can't he understand that she's not normal, she's special? When things start to happen around the olive sapling housing Kiala's spirit, Alex sees her chance to prove how important she is, but at what cost?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathryn writes novels, screenplays, articles – and the occasional shopping list. She has a PhD in marketing, several screenwriting credits, and her stories have appeared in magazines, journals and online. She spends way too much time in conversation with imaginary characters, and not-so-secretly wishes she lived in a dance movie.

THEMES

- Mythology and magic
- Ancient civilisations
- Family
- Friendship
- Teamwork

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

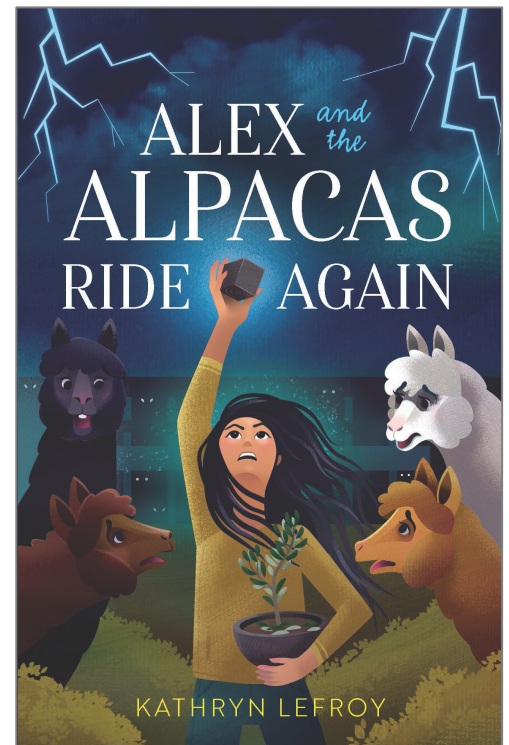
Y4–7 English

Y4–7 Biological Sciences

Y4–7 History and Geography

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: kathrynleeroy.com
- Author's Facebook: facebook.com/KathrynLefroyAuthor
- Author's Twitter: twitter.com/kathrynleeroy



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think it's difficult for Alex to adjust to being a regular kid again after her adventures in Tasmania? 'Feeling important and remarkable ... those are powerful sensations ... it's hard to let go of them.' (p. 27) Why might it be difficult to let go of these feelings in particular? Have you ever experienced something similar?
2. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the fortieth sun (Alex) and the fortieth moon (Ivette). How do they appear similar/different?
3. Initially, Alex is jealous of Ivette's 'seemingly glamorous life ... her many languages, her fighting skills.' (p. 138) What changes her opinion? How might you feel if you were Ivette?
4. Ivette meanwhile assumes that Alex's 'life is perfect' (p. 137) – is anyone's life ever truly perfect?
5. Why do you think Alex and Ivette are jealous and completely misread one another? Have you ever felt jealous of someone? Why is it important not to compare yourself to others? Why is it important not to make assumptions about people based on appearances and first impressions?
6. 'Every single thing about her was a million times better, cooler, stronger than Alex would ever be.' (p. 100) What is 'self-esteem'? Alex thinks that her fortieth sun powers are the only thing that make her special – do you agree? What other strengths does she have? Give some examples from the story. What are some of your strengths and talents? What makes you unique?
7. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Kiala and Resila – how are they similar/different? Kiala is gifted with nature's power of destruction, while Resila is gifted with regeneration. Create a list of examples of this duality within the natural world (e.g. a bushfire destroys insect, plant, animal and human lives/homes. Simultaneously however, the fire itself is a necessary ingredient for many native plant species to germinate). Is this a paradox?
8. 'You don't have power as strong as theirs and just stop using it. Once you've had a taste ... there's no going back.' (p. 97) What do you think Ivette means by this? Why do you think the twins' power has the potential to be addictive and all-consuming? How might it corrupt even someone with the best of intentions? If you had superpowers, do you think it would be difficult to give them up?
9. "If you use it," Ivette said, "it will own you." Alex shook her head. No, this power wouldn't own her. She would own it ... She would never be anything like the twins. She would use her powers to do good things. Not hurt anyone.' (p. 229–230) Do you think Resila may have once thought this way too? What led her to ally herself with Kiala?
10. 'Alex hated it when adults told her to "find the silver lining" or "look at things from a different perspective."' (p. 107) What do these phrases mean? Can you think of a time when you have followed this advice? Write a recount of this experience.
11. "Strength and weakness are two sides of the same coin," Moraika said. "Perhaps knowing where you're weakest will actually make you stronger. It'll help you uncover your true power." (p.107) What do you think Moraika means by 'true power'? What could Alex's 'true power' be? Create a list of your personal strengths and weaknesses to discover your true power – do you possess more than one?
12. Alvarro would rather risk death than allow Alex to succumb to the magic. Would you have respected his wishes in this moment? Grandpa Jacob deems Alex 'a true hero' (p. 232) for resisting the temptation to heal her friend. What is your personal definition of a true hero? Who is someone that inspires you? Turn to a partner and share.
13. How do the characters Alex and Ivette change/grow over the course of the novel? What do you think each learns by surviving this ordeal? Alex states that she doesn't need a 'supernatural power to be a better version of herself.' (p. 244) How can you be the very best version of yourself? Create an action plan.
14. At the end of the novel, Leeuie is offered an internship at the Melbourne Museum. If you could intern anywhere, where would it be and why? Write a personal essay.
15. Would you describe this novel as an adventure? Epic quest? Mystery? Fantasy? In pairs, brainstorm the traditional characteristics of each genre present in the story (e.g. 'the chosen one' trope, the epic battle of good vs. evil, navigating clues and 'red herrings' to solve a riddle, talking animals, etc.) Does the novel fit neatly into a single genre? In what ways are genre labels useful? In what ways are they limiting?
16. How are the themes of bravery, impulsiveness, friendship, teamwork, honesty, forgiveness, resilience and female strength portrayed in the book? What message/s do you personally take away from the

story? What did you enjoy most about the book and why? To whom would you recommend it? Write a review for your school website, newsletter or local library.

Creative writing

1. Narrative writing: Use an A3 narrative planning framework to map the different events in the book under the following headings: exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution.
 - a. Using the same framework, plan and draft your own unique narrative about a protagonist who has a mystery to solve in order to save the world! Who/what will be the destructive force they must battle? What setbacks will they encounter? Who will help them along the way? Aim to include some 'red herrings' (misleading clues) in your plot alongside some helpful hints and foreshadowing. Can you trick the reader and make the ending a surprise? Aim to include symbolism, figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification) and descriptions of setting that evoke an atmosphere of suspense, in the style of Kathryn Lefroy.
2. Resila can 'summon lightning storms and hurricanes ... possess animals, control humans.' (p. 13) Do you personally think she and her sister are frightening? What qualities do you think make for a satisfying villain? Who is your favourite villain of all time? Turn to a partner and share. When imagining an antagonist for your story, consider how they might embody the qualities you have identified.
3. Alex and Ivette are the only ones who can understand the alpacas. If you could have any magic power, what would it be and why? Write an imaginative short story in which you use this special power to save the world!
4. The Chodzanar warriors have taken the form of many different animals. If you could live as any animal, what would it be and why? Write an imaginative short story about being that animal for a day. Where would you go and what would you do? What challenges might you face? What would you miss most about being human?
5. Look closely at the endings of each chapter – what do you notice? What is a 'cliffhanger'? How do the cliffhangers below encourage the reader to want to continue with the story?
 - a. 'It's Kiala.' Leeuie swallowed. 'I think she's ... awake.' (p. 10)
 - b. 'Then, the lid of the metal box burst open. And all hell broke loose.' (p. 81)
6. What is a riddle? Were you able to solve the riddle on page seventy-one? Create your very own riddle for a partner to solve. Use the word association exercise Alex recommends on page seventy-one to help you.
7. Find examples of figurative language throughout the book. How do such literary devices enhance the imagery conjured for the reader? Identify the literary devices in the excerpts below:
 - a. 'Alex's panic was now white-hot and bright as a flare.' (p. 111)
 - a. 'A deafening growl of thunder echoed from somewhere high above the house.' (p. 151)
 - b. 'Rain shot from the sky like bullets.' (p. 154)
 - c. 'The wind buffeted the building and snuck in through cracks, whistling and gasping, as the rain drummed on the roof.' (p. 158)
8. How are descriptions of setting (weather and landscape) used to foreshadow events, evoke tension and create an atmosphere of suspense?
9. How does the author create vivid imagery that appeals to multiple senses in the following excerpt: 'Wind kicked the trees into a frenzy and rain started to pummel the earth. There was a flash as more lightening ripped across the sky. Sharp and brutal. Thunder followed, a deep, swollen growl.' (p. 151) Look closely at the sentence structure and punctuation – how does it create rhythm and add greater effect?

History and geography

1. Dr Juniper is the world's foremost expert on ancient civilisations. What is 'anthropology' the study of? What are the four branches? (cultural, linguistic, biological and archaeological) (Hint: useful link amnh.org/explore/ology/anthropology/what-is-anthropology)
2. Why does Alex have to wear white cotton gloves when handling the oroto? What is artefact restoration and preservation? Dr Juniper references 'carbon dating', 'tephrochronology' and 'magnetostratigraphy' in determining its age. What do each of these techniques involve?
3. Visit your local or state museum. What is your favourite exhibit and why? Write a review for your local newspaper or school newsletter.

4. What is the Rosetta Stone and how was it originally used to translate Egyptian hieroglyphics? (p. 63)
Can you create your very own alphabet using symbols to represent each of the twenty-six letters?
Can you write a message in this script for a partner to decode?
5. The Chodzanar warriors originate from South America. Locate this continent on a map of the globe.
How many different countries comprise South America? Divide students into groups of four and assign them a country to research using the following subheadings (ensuring to include a reference list):
 - a. Flag
 - b. Population
 - c. Language/s
 - d. Government
 - e. Capital city
 - f. Climate
 - g. Clothing
 - h. Food
 - i. Transport
 - j. Famous landmarks and natural wonders
 - k. Architecture
 - l. Religion/s
 - m. Holidays
 - n. Sport and recreation
 - o. Music
 - p. Art and culture

Invite students to create a video (using Moviemaker) or PowerPoint presentation to share with the class about their respective country. Where would students most like to visit and why?

6. In groups of four, invite students to research an ancient civilisation of their choice using the following subheadings and create a report or PowerPoint presentation (ensure to include a reference list):
 - a. Geography and climate
 - b. Historical timeline
 - c. Population
 - d. Medicine and life expectancy
 - e. Significant people and events
 - f. Architecture
 - g. Language/s and literature
 - h. Inventions and technology
 - i. Transport
 - j. Art and culture
 - k. Education
 - l. Agriculture
 - m. Food
 - n. Sport and recreation
 - o. Daily life
 - p. Religion

Students may like to choose from one of the following:

- a. The Indigenous Australian custodians of your local area
- b. The Mesopotamian Civilisation
- c. The Incan Civilisation
- d. The Aztec Civilisation
- e. The Roman Empire
- f. The Persian Empire
- g. The Ancient Greeks
- h. The Ancient Chinese Dynasties
- i. The Mayan Civilisation
- q. The Ancient Egyptian Civilisation

7. Compare and contrast daily life in your local area presently to one hundred years ago and one thousand years ago. How has society and culture changed over time? What do you enjoy the most about studying ancient history?

Biological sciences

1. Alex and her friends have frightening encounters with numerous 'zombie animals' in Melbourne Museum. What is the practice of 'taxidermy' and how is it performed?
2. When/how did alpacas first arrive in Australia? Create a fact sheet, PowerPoint or poster that provides the following information about this interesting species: physical characteristics, habitat, diet, life cycle, interesting facts, labelled diagram, conservation status.
3. What do you call a male alpaca? (a macho) A female alpaca? (a hembra) A baby alpaca? (a cria) Visit the following link to read ten interesting facts about alpacas!
fremantlepress.com.au/2019/05/20/fremantle-presss-weird-and-wonderful-alpaca-facts-to-help-your-students-create-their-own-adventure-stories/

Visual art

1. The amarylsa is an important recurring symbol in the book – what is the difference between a symbol and an ordinary image? What symbols are common in your community? Can you design your own symbol and invite a partner to interpret its meaning?
2. Illustrate your favourite scene from the story using any medium of your choice (e.g. watercolour paints, acrylic paint, oil pastels, pencils, collage, mixed media, ink, etc.) Display around the classroom.
3. Make an alpaca sock puppet! Use a woolly sock, felt, buttons, wool, string and other recyclable materials.