



Night Swimming

STEPH BOWE

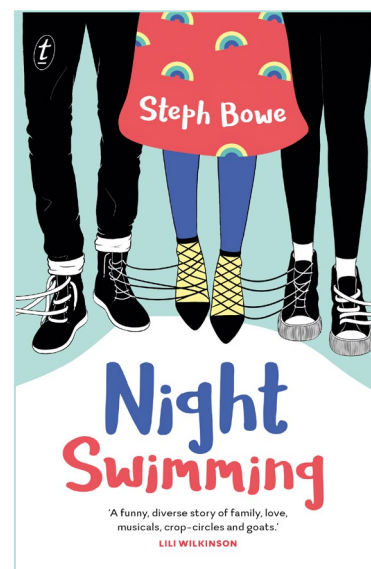
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CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.

SYNOPSIS

While most other people her age have left or are preparing to leave for the big city, Kirby is content to live her life in her small hometown. She and her best friend, musical-theatre-loving Clancy, are the only two 17 year olds in Alberton. While Clancy is counting the days until he can leave, Kirby likes the security of living in the home her grandfather built, with her mother and cousin and a menagerie of animals, including her pet goat Stanley. But as the seasons pass Kirby realises that she cannot stand in the path of change. Her father has suddenly reappeared in her life. And then there is Iris, beautiful Iris, the new face in town. *Night Swimming* explores what it means to take risks, accept the past and face the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steph Bowe was born in Melbourne and now lives in Queensland. *Night Swimming* is her third novel for Young Adults. Her other two novels are *Girl Saves Boy* and *All This Could End*. She is a Stella Prize Schools Ambassador for Queensland.

BEFORE READING

1. Write a personal piece about 'Home'. Describe your hometown. Explore the things you like or dislike about it. Is it somewhere you want to stay all of your life or would you prefer to leave? Explain why. Map out a web page or brochure that promotes the place you call 'home'.
2. What challenges do you think teenagers might face in small rural towns? What are the advantages? You can create a written response, or consider presenting this as a speech to local government to highlight the needs of young people in rural communities.
3. What are your goals in life? Where do you want to be in 10 years time? Write them down and then compare your goals with your friends. As a class, discuss whether it matters if you have different values and goals from your friends?

WHILE READING

1. Compare Kirby's dreams with other characters in the novel. Do one individual's dreams match those of the other people in their lives? What are Kirby's mother's dreams for her?
2. What does Alberton mean to each character? Make a list of words (5 for each) that reflect the views of Kirby, Clancy, Grandad, Iris, Kirby's father, Jack, her mother, Jess, and her cousin, Nathan.



- How does the community work together and demonstrate their support for each other? Consider moments of crisis, such as the flood.
- Sometimes Kirby corrects her grandfather when he forgets or makes a mistake, sometimes she does not correct him. Why do you think she does this?
- How is the birth of baby Cyril linked to Kirby's decision to 'go away' (p.311)

AFTER READING

CHARACTER

- Create an illustration showing your idea of what one of the characters in the novel might look like and label it. Include references to personality and find two quotes from the novel that best reflect the character.
- While the reader is aware of Kirby's feelings about girls, she does not tell her friends or family. Why do you think this is the case? How do others respond when they find out? Explain why they might react this way.
- Make a list of all of the characters who are connected to Alberton. Include those who have left, such as Kirby's father and grandmother. Divide them into groups for which you determine the headings. For example, groups might include 'those who want to leave' or 'new to Alberton/not born in Alberton'. Do some characters fit within more than one group? Justify your placement of characters to your peers.

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

- Why do you think the author has chosen to divide the novel by seasons? How do the events in each section reflect the season? Find examples from the book to support your ideas.
- The novel is told in the first person. Consider how Kirby's voice helps us to connect with her in the opening pages. What other advantages are there in using the first person?
- Kirby likes reading, Clancy likes theatre. Consider how their interests influence the way their language and how they express their thoughts. For example, Clancy uses movie and musical theatre references (e.g. p.11) Find other examples for both characters.

THEMES

Family and Friendship

- How does Kirby explain her relationship with her family? Why does she feel a particular connection with her grandfather?
- Consider what it was like for Iris arriving in town. Write about the opening night of the restaurant from Iris's point of view. Remember to consider what Kirby tells us about their first meeting and include these events through Iris's eyes.
- Kirby's first meeting with her father didn't go well. Why do they both find it difficult to connect? What changes this later in the novel?

HOME

- Imagine you are a local council member who is trying to encourage young people to stay in or return to the town. Write a report that presents the benefits for young people living there and offers some ideas that will help to bring them back. Consider including both written and visual information. You might also consider using graphs and statistics to support your ideas.
- Kirby eventually decides to spend time in the city to experience freedom before returning to her hometown. Imagine it is 12 months after the end of the novel and Kirby is writing home to her mother and grandfather. What does she have to say about her life in the city and her future intentions?
- After the house is washed away in the floods, the family decides to rebuild. Consider what would be important to retain from their previous home and what they could add to the new one that reflects their needs. You can write about the new design or create it in a drawing or model.

SELF DISCOVERY

- How does each season in the novel mark a change in Kirby's life? Create a timeline for events in her life, then highlight the ones that are most important in determining the person she becomes by the end of the novel.
- Clancy, Iris and Kirby are searching for who they are. What indications are there that they are either still searching for a sense of identity or that they are secure in who they are?
- The adults in the novel are dealing with decisions from the past that have shaped their lives. Choose two adult characters and write a paragraph on each that explores their past decisions and the consequences. How do they feel about the outcome and how has it changed their life?

RESPONDING

- Using your notes from Q.2 in While Reading, imagine that the local newspaper is running a feature on the town and has asked for submissions from locals about what their town means to them. Write an entry from two different characters. Aim to show how individuals might see the same place in a different light.
- 'In real life, there's no such thing as happily ever after, there's just life passing day by day.' P.53 Is Kirby's view of life the same at the end of the novel?
- Write a review of Clancy's production of 'Little Shop of Horrors'. Include references to all the major and minor players. Take some time to format your



review as it might appear in a newspaper or as an online review.

4. Sometimes people choose change and sometimes they are faced with it. Is this the case for the characters in *Night Swimming*? What do they learn from the changes?
5. What part do other characters play in Kirby's life and the person she becomes? Choose 4 characters to explore and give examples from the novel that demonstrate their importance.