



Inbetween Days

VIKKI WAKEFIELD

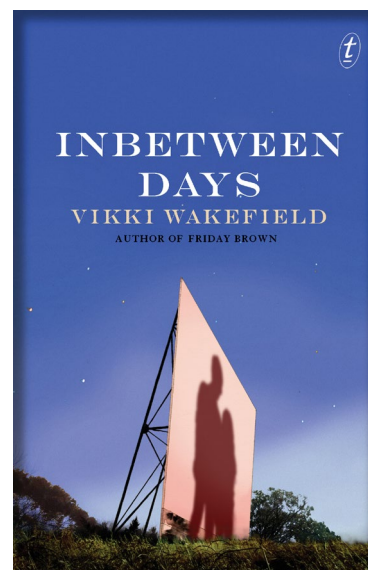
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TEXT'S TEACHING NOTES FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

- ▶ Text's teaching notes are designed for teachers to explore the novel in line with the *Australian Curriculum: English*.
- ▶ Questions are divided into stages: from pre-reading to post-reading and include suggested tasks for assessment.
- ▶ Refer to the legend below and the accompanying [Australian Curriculum: English Scope and Sequence reference chart](#) to decipher these codes.
- ▶ An ACARA coding system connects each task to the *Australian Curriculum: English*. It includes links to strands, modes, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

Strands	LA – Language LT – Literature LY – Literacy
Modes	W – Writing L – Listening R – Reading S – Speaking
General capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy Intercultural understanding Personal and social capability Information and communication technology Critical and creative thinking Numeracy Ethical behaviour
Cross-curriculum priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

SYNOPSIS

'I might have to stand completely still—with my eyes closed and fingers in my ears—and let the universe go on without me in order to not screw things up.' (p.61)

Jack is a seventeen year old girl tired of waiting—waiting for boys to appreciate her, for her family to understand one another, and for her life to begin. She has left school early and moved out of home, away from her emotionally distant parents and her mother's resentment about what could have been. Jack is living with her older sister, Trudy, who has returned from an overseas adventure claiming to have many of life's questions figured out. Jack must therefore learn to find the freedom and peace she craves on her own two feet. She forges newfound connections with people she had previously dismissed—eccentric classmates, a mysterious man seeking refuge in the forest, and an elderly demented neighbour. *Inbetween Days* is a coming-of-age story about the complexity of human relationships. When Jack discovers that love might be the biggest mystery of all, she realises just how many choices there are.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vikki Wakefield's first Young Adult novel, *All I Ever Wanted*, won the 2012 Adelaide Festival Literary Award for Young Adult Fiction, as did her second novel, *Friday Brown*, in 2014. *Friday Brown* was also an Honour Book, Children's Book Council of Australia, in 2013. Among other awards, it was shortlisted for the prestigious Prime Minister's Awards, in 2013. Vikki lives in the Adelaide foothills with her family.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Inbetween Days began with a drive-in scene and a voice in my head, but it also started with a brief obsession with Newton's Cradle, the Möbius strip, and a pendulum wave. I used these ideas to build the town of Mobius



(a place where people get stuck) and its history, the novel's structure (the pendulum wave), and the plot and character interaction (Newton's Cradle).

I took Jack back to 1994, before technology was such a big part of life, when it was possible to feel truly disconnected and alone. Her story is an exploration of love (in its many guises) and of the time between childhood and adulthood. Jack is sexually experienced but emotionally naive; she's caught between her mother and her sister, and she must choose between Jeremiah and Luke. Jack tries to reconcile her dreams and wishes with reality, and I used contrast—between life and death, youth and ageing, past and future, truth and lies, light and dark—to create a kind of limbo, not only for Jack, but for the other occupants of Mobius, too. There are many obvious (and subtle) displays of the inbetween theme throughout the novel. It's a story about love, choices, change and moving on.

Jack counts to give herself the sense of being in control. Clocks tick, time passes, money runs out—but change is inevitable. I chose to write in past tense to compare the childishness of Jack's immediate thoughts and actions with her more reflective narration of the story. As Jack loses the things she can quantify, she gains those that can't be measured; as she grows and changes, her past and future voices converge.

It was important to me to show that the adults in Jack's life are capable of making similar mistakes, and how some of the experiences that signpost the transition from childhood to adulthood are both universal and cyclical. Often, young people are in a hurry to grow up; the old dream of being young again. Growing up is made up of a million moments—not just one day, or one summer—and many of the choices Jack faces, I took from my own experiences during those days stuck inbetween.

BEFORE READING

- Examine the front cover of the text. Have students share their impressions of the title and graphics, as well as their assumptions about what they think the novel will be about. (ACELY1745) 📖 ⚙️ R L S LY
- Create a list of synonyms for 'inbetween.' Then discuss what is suggested by this term and have students create a list of connotations (consider both positive and negative implications of being 'inbetween'). (ACELA1571) 📖 ⚙️ W L S LA
- Imagine that it is fifty years into the future and you are an older man or woman. Write a letter to yourself as a teenager detailing the key events in your life, how you have grown and changed, and what advice you would give to your younger self. (ACELT1644) 📖 🧑 ⚙️ W LY
- Record a favourite childhood memory when you experienced a feeling of freedom, safety or pure happiness. Use a range of literary techniques (such as imagery, alliteration, personification, metaphor) to create a sense of atmosphere and to bring this moment in time to life for your reader. (ACELT1815) 📖 ⚙️ W LY
- Discuss a time when you felt impatient for something to happen or change. Why is it important to be present in the moment? Why is it challenging? (ACELY1811) 🧑 ⚙️ L S LY
- What does it mean to lead a successful life? Hold a class debate on the topic 'Life experience is more important than education.' Have students argue each side of the topic. (ACELY1813) 🧑 ⚙️ ⚖️ L S LY
- Many of the teenagers in the novel engage in risk-taking behaviour. Research the issue of underage drinking in Australia and consider the effects of youth alcoholism and the challenges it poses for society today. Present your findings to the class in the form of a poster, newspaper article, or short role-play. (ACELY1756) ⚙️ 📰 ⚖️ R W S LY
- 'Remember that everyone you meet is afraid of something, loves something and has lost something.' (H. Jackson Brown, Jr.) With a partner, discuss why this is important to remember and share examples from your own lives that illustrate this quote. (ACELT1635) 🧑 🌐 ⚖️ L S LT

WHILE READING

- Make a list of things that Jack counts. Why do you think she consistently feels the need to do so? (ACELT1771) 📖 ⚙️ R W LT
- What does the bottle tree on page 66 represent? If Jack were to place a note in a bottle at this point in the novel, what would it say? (ACELT1815) 📖 ⚙️ R LY
- Reread pages 124-127. Why does Jack visit Pope in the forest? What effect does this place have on the town of Mobius? (ACELT1771) 📖 🧑 ⚙️ R LT
- The photographs in Ma's hallway gradually disappear. What does Jack think this means? (ACELT1641) 📖 ⚙️ R LT
- Jack often sits on the tyre swing in her yard but resists setting foot inside her childhood home. Who do you feel the most paths for in Jack's family and why? (ACELT1640) ⚙️ ⚖️ R L S LT
- 'I wondered how we could fit in so many ways, but not the one that counted.' (p.182) What does Jack realise about her relationship with Luke? What is she seeking in a relationship? (ACELT1635) 🧑 ⚙️ R LT
- 'Hearing her admit it never happened was like seeing the dust rubbed off a butterfly's wings and watching it flap on the ground. The magic was gone.' (p.265) Why is Jack so angry to learn that her sister never left Mobius? (ACELT1640) 📖 ⚙️ R LT
- Why didn't Trudy tell Jack the truth about her whereabouts? (ACELT1771) 📖 ⚙️ ⚖️ R L S LT
- Jack and Astrid's friendship is anything but smooth. Why do they have such a turbulent relationship? Who do you feel is to blame? (ACELT1640) 📖 🧑 ⚖️ R L S LT
- How does the arrival of Jeremiah, the boy next door, help Jack to grow and change her perspective on life, love and family? (ACELT1771) ⚙️ 🧑 R LT



11. 'I just couldn't warm to a kid who licked things.' (p.29) What is Jack's first impression of Jeremiah? How does her attitude towards him change? Does Jeremiah remind you of any characters in other texts you have read? (ACELY1753) **R L S LY**
12. What challenges does Jeremiah face growing up? How are his experiences as a teenager similar to Jack's? How are they different? (ACELT1640) **R L S LT**
13. Jack regards the watch Meredith Jolley gives her as 'a miniature anchor.' (p.252) What does she mean by this statement? (ACELT1771) **R LT**
14. As you read the novel create a map of Mobius that details the different settings in the text, both natural and man-made (the roadhouse, the hairdresser's, the forest, Mosley's Dam, Mercy loop, Pryor ridge, Main Street, the drive-in theatre, the way to Burt etc). Choose one of these locations and explain its role in the novel. What would be gained from restoring some of these places? (ACELY1746) **R W LY**
15. Why did Jack travel to Fowler's Bay? What was she searching for? What did she find there? (ACELT1635) **R LT**
16. How is the beached whale used as a metaphor in the text? What other symbols can you identify in the novel and what might they represent? (ACELT1637) **R LT**

AFTER READING

CHARACTER

1. The teenagers in Mobius live in a time before social media has infiltrated their world. Imagine that Jack, Trudy, Mads, Astrid, Jeremiah or Roly have a Facebook account and consider the image that they would want to project of their lives. Create a profile page for one of these characters, including information on their characteristics, interests, relationship status, employment, friends, key events and an image or quote to capture their personality. (ACELT1815) **R W LY**
2. Create a table or venn diagram to compare and contrast Jack and Trudy's characters. In what ways are these two sisters similar? How do they differ? (ACELY1754) **R W LY**
3. 'Dad was always there but not quite present.' (p.9) What is the role of Jack's father in the novel? (ACELT1771) **R LT**
4. 'Wrong Turn Astrid' faces many of her own challenges in the novel (p.26). How is the reader positioned to feel about her character? Do you feel frustration, empathy, etc? (ACELT1640) **R L S LT**
5. 'Drool strung from his chin. His body stiffened and he sniffed the air like a dog.' (p.117) What literary techniques are used to describe Mr Broadbent? What role does his character play in the novel? (ACELA1553) **R LA**
6. 'You can't teach him new tricks and he has nothing to show you.' (p.233) In what ways is Alby wrong about his father? (ACELT1642) **R LT**

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

1. What is the meaning of the title? Make a list of examples when characters feel stuck in the past or are waiting for the future. Although transitional moments can be frustrating, are there any benefits to being between jobs, relationships, or phases of life? (ACELT1635) **R W LT**
2. How is contrast used in the novel to illustrate Jack's feeling of being stuck in-between? (Consider the role of life and death, youth and ageing, past and future, truth and lies). (ACELT1774) **R W LT**
3. Vikki Wakefield uses italics to indicate Jack's reflections and thoughts. Find examples of this and consider the role of this internal dialogue in shaping the reader's understanding of the protagonist. (ACELT1643) **R LT**
4. How does Wakefield use language to capture the essence of the teenagers in the novel? How does the language of the teenagers differ from that of the adults in the text? (ACELA1553) **R LA**
5. Wakefield uses vivid language and a range of literary techniques to describe the various settings of the novel. Adopting her style, create a piece of descriptive writing in which you bring a particular environment to life (perhaps a location at your school). Use interesting vocabulary and vary your sentences lengths to create a sense of atmosphere. (ACELT1815) **R W LY**
6. Discuss students' reactions to the final chapter of the novel. Why did the author choose to include an open ending to the novel? (ACELT1641) **R L S LT**
7. What makes this text Australian? Are there particular character traits or events in the novel that are representative of Australians and their experiences growing up? Would the text differ if it were set in another country, and if so, how? (ACELT1633) **R LT**
8. In what ways is *Inbetween Days* a coming-of-age novel? Make a list of the major events or rites of passage that shape Jack's teenage years.
9. Mobius is a place where people get stuck. How does the idea of the Möbius strip relate to the structure of the book? Draw a Möbius strip and then plot the shape of the novel in a way that connects with this diagram. (ACELT1772) **R LT**

THEMES

Growing up and Change

1. 'I was in a hurry to grow up, yearning for things I didn't understand. I craved epic love and my name



in lights. I was tired of waiting.’ (p.10) Why is Jack in such a rush to grow up? (ACELT1635) 📖 ⚙️ RLT

2. What prevents some of the characters in the novel from moving forward in their lives? (ACELT1640) 📖 ⚙️ RLSLT
3. Where does the reader see moments of maturity in Jack? Make a list of examples from the novel and include supporting quotations where possible. (ACELT1771) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 R WLT
4. What does Jack come to understand about herself by the end of the novel? What does she learn about her family? (ACELT1640) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 RLSLT

Love

1. What are the different kinds of love demonstrated in the novel? Are any of these stronger than others? (ACELT1771) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 RLT
2. ‘I loved Ma. She made me feel like all my edges were tucked in, but she had a hundred ways to make a person feel shame.’ (p.9) Why is the love between mother and child so challenging for the characters in the novel? (ACELT1812) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 RLT
3. ‘I just feels like we can’t all be winning at the same time. My sister is happy—and I hate it.’ (p.145) Explain Jack’s sentiments in this quote. (ACELT1643) 📖 ⚙️ ⚖️ RLT
4. ‘If being in love meant being obsessed and irresponsible and desperate and ridiculous all at the same time, then it was love.’ (p.33) Do you think Jack is in love with Luke? (ACELT1771) ⚙️ 👤 RLT
5. Compare and contrast Jack’s relationships with Luke on the one hand and Jeremiah on the other. (ACELY1754) ⚙️ R WLY
6. ‘Jeremiah didn’t know how to protect his heart and he handed it to me daily.’ (pp.222-223) Jack might be more experienced with relationships, but what does Jeremiah teach her about love? (ACELT1635) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 RLT

Perspective and Choice

1. What does ‘perspective’ mean? What are the different factors that influence a person’s perspective or worldview? (ACELY1742) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 LSLY
2. Choose one moment from the novel and consider how two different characters experienced the same event (e.g. an argument, a break-up, a new understanding). How do the two accounts differ? What shaped their perspective of the experience? (ACELT1642) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 R WLT
3. At the end of the novel, do you feel that Trudy and Jack should stay in Mobius. Why or why not? (ACELT1640) ⚙️ ⚖️ LSLT
4. ‘People only disappear in Mobius if they want to.’ (p.306) To what extent do you agree with this statement? Use characters from the text as evidence in your response. (ACELT1771) 📖 ⚙️ R WLT

Resentment and Loss

1. What characters hold grudges towards others? How do these feelings of resentment further alienate or entrap them? (ACELT1771) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 RLT
2. Do any of the characters have regrets, and if so, what are they? (ACELT1771) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 RLT
3. When Jack visits Moseley’s Dam with Luke she notices, ‘an opalescent layer of scum swirled on the surface—proof that something foul could still make a rainbow.’ (p.21) How are imagery and metaphor used here to suggest a realisation in Jack? (ACELA1552) 📖 ⚙️ RLA
4. How might the settings of Moseley’s Dam and the Forest serve as symbols of loss? (ACELT1637) 📖 ⚙️ RLT










Hope and forgiveness

1. How can small acts of kindness or compassion enhance one’s life? Reflect on examples from the novel as well as your own life. (ACELT1635) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 RLSLT
2. ‘We’re kinder to strangers and people we don’t live with.’ (p.8) How does the novel explore this idea? (ACELT1812) 📖 ⚙️ ⚖️ RLT
3. As Jack rummages through the contents of her family’s shed she finds Trudy’s doll’s toilet. ‘It was faded and crumbly but still there.’ What is the significance of this quote? (p.151) (ACELT1774) 📖 ⚙️ RLT
4. How is forgiveness powerful? Think about the effect it can have on others, as well as oneself, using examples from the novel. (ACELT1635) 👤 ⚖️ ⚙️ RLSLT
5. ‘I’m not gunning for happy. I’ll settle for peace.’ (p.144) Why does Pope seek refuge in the woods? What role does he play in Jack’s life? (ACELT1771) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 RLT

AFTER READING

1. It is not only the teenagers in the novel who learn from mistakes and grow but the adults also. What does *Inbetween Days* suggest about the perpetual notion of growing up? (ACELT1635) 📖 ⚙️ R WLT
2. Write a letter or diary entry from Ma’s perspective after Jack leaves home. Include reflections on her thoughts and feelings and consider the tone and writing style of the character. (ACELT1815) 📖 ⚙️ 👤 R WLY
3. Change is inevitable. It is learning to let go and embrace change that is the real battle in life. Discuss in relation to *Inbetween Days*. (ACELT1771) 📖 ⚙️ R WLT
4. ‘I could always look after myself physically—it was the emotional stuff that found a way through.’ (p.239) Why is it so hard for the characters in the novel to sustain stable relationships? (ACELT1771) 📖 👤 ⚖️ ⚙️ R WLT



5. Write an additional chapter for the novel after Jack is reunited with Jeremiah. Consider the lessons she has learnt and how her feelings about her future, as well as herself, might have changed. (ACELT1644)
   R W LY
6. 'If I don't go back it's pretty hard to go forward.' (p.241) To what extent does this statement apply to the characters in the novel? (ACELT1771)   R W LT
7. Mobius shows us what can become of a world without connection, tenderness and hope. Discuss. (ACELT1771)   R W LT
8. 'The future was always out of reach and the present was gone in a blink. Maybe the best part was the waiting.' (p.321) Despite the heartache experienced, what does Jack gain from her days living 'inbetween?' (ACELT1771)   R W LT