

## Preloved

Author: Shirley Marr  
 ISBN: 9781742031903  
 Paperback  
 Imprint: Black Dog Books  
 April 2012  
 Price: AU\$18.95/NZ\$21.99  
 Ages: 13+

### Genre:

- YA fiction
- Paranormal romance

### Themes:

- Chinese folklore
- Self-esteem
- High-school life
- Adolescent subcultures
- Separation & divorce
- Eighties culture
- Ghosts
- Reincarnation

## “Preloved” - Synopsis

Amy has enough to deal with for one lifetime. A superstitious Chinese mother. A best friend whose mood changes as dramatically as her hair colour. A reputation for being strange. The last thing she needs is to be haunted by someone only she can see.

Logan is a ghost from the Eighties. He could be dangerous. He’s certainly annoying.

He might also be Amy’s dream boy.

## Shirley Marr on “Preloved”



“I come from a Chinese Immigrant family who arrived in Australia in the late Eighties. Despite not being able to speak any English, dramatic verbal storytelling has always been a strong trait down my mother’s side and I was determined that one day, I was going to become an author! I also knew that I would tell the story of ‘my people’, but I didn’t know what that meant exactly. Or how and when.

Having the opportunity to write a second novel, after cutting my teeth and honing my writing ability with my debut, has resulted in *Preloved*. A novel that is a ‘love letter’ to my mother, whose stories run deep within the underlying mythology of my story. It is also a tribute to young Asian-Australian women like myself. Young Adult fiction novels involving Asian protagonists are either historical, or critical of the family unit. I wanted to write something contemporary and fun, with my protagonist assuming the role of a ‘normal teenager’, while in the background, my culture plays a supporting role in a strong and positive light. With this, I hope that *Preloved* offers something different and heartening. I hope that my love and pride inspires a lot of important discussion.”

## About Shirley Marr

Shirley Marr wishes she were many things. Like the front woman of a hot band rocking an audience in an ultra-short mini, but unfortunately she’s tone deaf with appalling emo poetry skills. It’s a good thing then that writing is her biggest, maddest love. Shirley writes what she describes as tragedy-comedy-drama YA fiction with “Mad-Bad-Little-Miss-Lady-Macbeths”. She is the author of the YA novel *Fury*, released May 2010. Shirley is an accountant by day and a writer by night. She also has a website: [www.shirleymarr.com](http://www.shirleymarr.com)

## Discussion Questions

- The novel opens with a quote, “Once one believes in what one dreams of, one renders oneself vulnerable to the tricks of deities and ghosts.” How does this quote relate to the events and characters in the novel?
- Analyse the significance of the book’s title. Some ideas to consider include Amy’s relationships with Logan, her mother, Rebecca and Nancy; Mrs Lee’s shop; the birthmark on Amy’s arm and the theme of reincarnation.
- In discussing her motivation for writing *Preloved*, Shirley Marr observes, “Young Adult fiction novels involving Asian protagonists are either historical or critical of the family unit. I wanted to write something contemporary and fun, with my protagonist assuming the role of a ‘normal teenager’”. Do you agree with her observations about how Asian characters are typically presented in YA fiction? How is Amy different to these characters? Discuss other novels you have read which feature Asian protagonists.
- Do you find the novel’s depiction of high-school life and teenage subcultures convincing? To what extent does Amy’s experience of high-school match your own?
- Discuss the different pieces of advice Amy’s mother gives to her throughout the novel, in particular, her advice about ghosts. Do you think Mrs Lee is presented as a comical, superstitious character or as perceptive and wise? Why?
- In chapter 7 Nancy observes, “I think that’s why people cling to the idea of reincarnation ... the idea that if you stuff up in this lifetime, you can redo it all again. Or if a love story doesn’t quite turn out the way you want in this life, you can hope for another chance in the next.” What are your opinions on reincarnation? Do you believe in it? Why or why not? How do you account for the prevalence of this belief?
- Make a list of Eighties slang terms which Logan uses in the book. Do you think this is how people actually spoke when Logan was alive or could the author be exaggerating for some reason? If you were attempting to teach Logan contemporary idiom, what are some of the words or phrases you would introduce to him?

## Discussion Questions cont.

- When hearing Logan's reminiscences of Eighties life, Amy reflects, "Awww, you come from such an innocent time" (122). Prior to reading the novel, how did you view the Eighties as a decade? What would you say its defining features were? Think about politics, fashion, popular culture, idiom, etc. Have your ideas changed after reading the novel? What do you now see as the main differences between the Eighties and today?
- In your opinion, does Logan act as a fully-developed, individualised character in the novel, or is he instead an embodiment of Eighties culture, representing all the things that Amy likes about this period?
- "I thought about Rebecca, and how a friend didn't need to be a perfect match in order to be an important part of my life." How do you view the relationship between Amy and Rebecca? What is it founded on? Can you think of similar relationships in your own life? In your opinion, is their friendship likely to be as enduring as the reignited friendship between Nancy and Amy? Explain your answer.

- How does Amy's relationship with her father change over the course of the novel? Why do you think this change occurs?
- "It had taken someone who wasn't alive to recognise that I wasn't either." (164) In your opinion, was Logan's influence on Amy primarily positive or negative? Did he help her to discover necessary truths about herself or rather complicate her life and get her in trouble?
- Amy eventually agrees to go to the movie marathon with Michael on the understanding that they will go "as friends" (269). How do you think their relationship will develop? Think particularly about Amy's initially platonic relationship with Logan and his eventual admission, "If I were Andy from *Pretty in Pink* ... I would have without a doubt chosen Duckie, my best friend who always loved me".
- At the end of the novel, Amy says, "I was a ghost, but now I was real." (268) What does she mean by this? How does this metaphor relate to her former view of herself as Rebecca's "sidekick", rather than as the hero of her own movie?

## Want to learn more about the **EIGHTIES**?

Visit these websites:

- "The Eighties are Back" Powerhouse Museum Exhibition: [www.powerhousemuseum.com/the80sareback/](http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/the80sareback/)
- The Eighties Club: <http://eightiesclub.tripod.com/id406.htm>

Watch these movies:

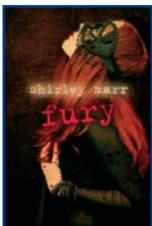
- The Dark Crystal* (Jim Henson, 1982)
- The Neverending Story* (Wolfgang Peterson, 1984)
- The Breakfast Club* (John Hughes, 1985)
- Labyrinth* (Jim Henson, 1986)
- Pretty in Pink* (Howard Deutch, 1986)

## Learn more about ghosts in Chinese folklore

Visit these websites:

- Cultural China: <http://traditions.cultural-china.com/features/ghost/index.html>
- Chinatown Connections: <http://www.chinatownconnection.com/chinese-superstitions.htm>

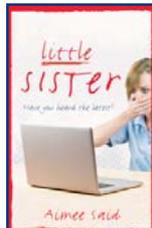
## If you enjoyed *Preloved*, you'll love these other great YA novels ...



### **Fury**

By: Shirley Marr  
ISBN: 9781742031323  
RRP: AU\$18.99/NZ \$21.99

Eliza Boans has everything. A big house. A great education. A bright future. So why is she sitting in a police station confessing to murder?



### **Little Sister**

By: Aimee Said  
ISBN: 9781921529214  
RRP: AU\$16.95/NZ \$19.99

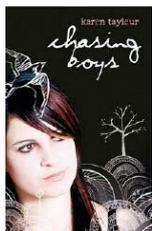
Al is tired of living in the shadow of her perfect older sister, Larrie. But when rumours about Larrie start to circulate at school, Al finds herself in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons.



### **Pan's Whisper**

By: Sue Lawson  
ISBN: 9781742032061  
RRP: AU\$18.95/NZ\$21.99

Ordered into foster care, Pan is full of anger at her mother and older sister. She is certain that she knows the truth of her past – until she meets Hunter, who may be the key to unlocking her memories.



### **Chasing Boys**

By: Karen Tayleur  
ISBN: 9781921167607  
RRP: AU\$16.99/NZ\$18.99

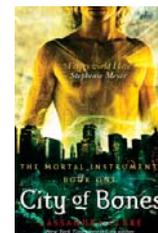
When Ariel Marini started school, her mum's advice was, "Mind your manners, listen to your teacher and don't chase boys". And then life got complicated.



### **Shadows on the Moon**

By: Zoe Marriott  
ISBN: 9781406318159  
RRP: AU\$16.95/NZ\$18.99

A powerful tale of magic, love and revenge with a strong female lead set in fairy-tale Japan. Cinderella meets *Memoirs of a Geisha*.



### **Mortal Instruments I:**

#### **City of Bones**

By: Cassandra Clare  
ISBN: 9781406307627  
RRP: AU\$19.95/NZ\$22.99

A witty, action-packed urban fantasy of vampires, warlocks and shapeshifters that fans of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* will adore.

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