

These notes are for:

- Secondary school
- Years 9-11

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Visual Art

Example of:

- Young adult fiction
- Multiple narratives
- Symbolism

National Curriculum Focus*:

English Content Descriptions include:

Year 9	Year 10
ACELA1553	ACELA1556
ACELA1770	ACELA1567
ACELA1556	ACELA1572
ACELT1771	ACELT1641
ACELT1635	ACELT1642
ACELT1636	ACELT1643
ACELT1637	ACELT1774
ACELT1638	ACELY1753
ACELY1745	ACELY1757
ACELY1747	

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.

Themes:

- Bereavement & grief
- Trauma
- Repression
- Abduction
- Healing
- Change
- Awakenings
- Emotional/ Psychological/ Imaginative journeys
- Identity
- Sibling relationships

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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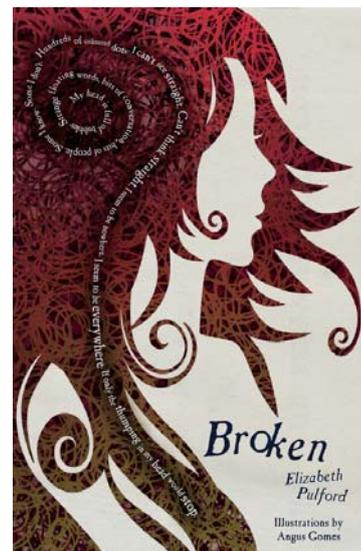
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Broken

Broken

Author: Elizabeth Pulford
Illustrator: Angus Gomes
ISBN: 9781921529887
ARRP: \$19.95
NZRRP: \$21.99
June 2012



Synopsis

A powerful and original novel which skilfully interweaves graphic elements with prose.

Zara is broken. She's in a coma, trapped in the world of her subconscious. A world of painful memories, distant voices and dark secrets. Secrets she has to unlock. Her life depends on it.

Author/Illustrator Information

Elizabeth Pulford was born in Hamilton, Canada, but was brought up in New Zealand from the age of two. She began writing in her early forties. Since then her publications have included junior fiction, young adult fiction, articles, poetry and short stories. Her previous titles with Walker Books are *Castlecliff & the Fossil Princess*, *Blackthorn*, *Blackthorn's Betrayal* and *Tussock*, which was a finalist in the New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards, Junior Fiction category, 2011.

For more information about the author, please visit her website:
<http://www.elizabethpulford.co.nz/>

Angus Gomes is a freelance illustrator based in Auckland, New Zealand. He was born in Bombay, India, and lived there until he was ten, before moving to New Zealand. He studied a Bachelor of Design for four years, majoring in Visual Communication, and immediately started work as a graphic designer after graduating. He has an interest in fashion illustration, people and animals. *Broken* is his first title with Walker Books.

How To Use These Notes

These notes provide a variety of discussion questions and activities that can be used with *Broken*. Please select according to the level, learning style and targeted outcomes of your students.

Elizabeth Pulford on Writing *Broken*

Broken started out as a totally different book. I wrote a version of the first two chapters several years ago. I knew I wanted the story to be about a girl looking for her brother in a comic. An adventure fantasy story, but for younger readers. Over time the chapters and the idea grew cobwebs and finally disappeared into its own web, until one day, while searching for another piece of writing, I came across it.

I began to work on the idea, but the story didn't feel right, it seemed too bland. I wanted something much more intense, something much more complicated. I sat at the computer day after day, fooling myself that I knew what I was doing, where the story was leading me, until finally one morning two important aspects arrived that changed the story forever. One was Trace and the other the realisation that Zara was in a coma.

Broken came to me in different bits and pieces, all I had to do was piece them together – at least that's what it felt like. Writing the story was at times exhilarating, other times full of despair (because of what felt like a lack of direction). In the end, I decided to trust the writing process and hope that it all would pull together.



Photographer: Liz Cadogan

Angus Gomes on Illustrating *Broken*

As a young boy growing up, I was surrounded by superheroes and villains. They are still around these days, just more grown-up versions with grown-up themes. So naturally I was very inclined to the prospect of working on *Broken*. I enjoyed *Broken* because it allowed me to realise the wonderful characters created by Elizabeth Pulford.

Adolescence is a difficult time in anyone's life. This book was challenging to illustrate as I really wanted to depict the strong themes and emotions of adolescence that run throughout the story. I derived my inspiration from Frank Miller's *Sin City* comics when illustrating the panels – particularly when I was working on the villain, Morven. *Broken* allowed me to explore my love of telling a story in pictures. I would like to think that the reader will see the way I have immersed myself in the story while depicting it and the way I have interpreted the narrative while staying faithful to it.



In the Classroom

Language Style and Structure

- Why do you think Elizabeth Pulford has decided to write her novel in the first person? Consider how it allows the reader to share the protagonist's experiences more intensely. Do you think it would have been possible for this novel to have been written in the third person? Explain your answer.
- How would your experience of the novel have been different if the newspaper reports had not been included at the beginning and end of the text? Think particularly about the way they allow the author to transcend the limitations of first person narrative voice, giving the reader information not known or disclosed by the narrator.
- Analyse the way Elizabeth Pulford uses language to create atmosphere and immerse the reader in Zara's world. Some techniques to consider include:
 - Visual imagery: "Taut skin over lean cheekbones like Dad, sandy-coloured hair, a thin nose and a wide generous mouth." (82-3)
 - Aural imagery: "My cry echoes in my ears." (11)
 - Tactile imagery: "I feel a jolt of electric blue rush through me. My eyes judder in shock. My body shakes." (23)
 - Similes: "It feels as if I've slipped down between the black and white lines of one of my sketches; that I'm a small insignificant mark on the page." (12)
 - Metaphors: "Aunt Chloe's words are blue and watery" (14)
 - Alliteration: "silence slithers" (88)
 - Assonance: "hidden bit inside" (227)
 - Symbolism/Motifs: "The shells change into fragments of glass" (227)
 - Short sentences: "It's important. / I know that much. / Of course. / The eraser. / I lost it." (191)
 - Colloquialisms: "I am totally freaked out over this pop thing." (221)



- How does the opening line of the novel, “My head is full of bubbles”, use word play to slyly foreshadow the graphic novel elements of the text? Compare this with the closing lines on page 243. What extra significance might these lines have in the context of Zara’s psychological journey into the world of the comics?
 - Explore how the idea of brokenness underpins the novel on both a literal and symbolic level. How is this idea further reflected in the fragmented structure of the text?
 - Make a table listing recurring symbols or motifs in one column and what they represent in the other. Some motifs to include could be broken glass, shells, the blue door, water and ink/pens.
 - “If Jem is in the comic, says my logical mind, then that’s where you’ll find him.” (23) Zara makes the decision to draw herself into the comic. Does her decision seem psychologically plausible to you or does the book take on an element of fantasy or magical realism at this point? Discuss your answers as a class.
 - How do the graphic elements of the novel help unite the two main plot strands: Zara’s subconscious imaginative journey to find Jem and her repressed memories of her kidnapping? Are there any other elements that make up the composition of the text? For example, fragments of dialogue that Zara overhears while in her coma and Zara’s memories of the recent past.
 - Examine the way the narrative seamlessly shifts between the different plots strands, looking particularly at images or words which create segues. For instance, the word “lush” on page 33 is used to describe the chair Morvern offers Zara, alluding to her past experiences with her psychiatrist and creating a transition to a memory of going shopping with Trace in a store called “Lush”. Similarly, the seagulls which Zara sees at the beach on page 74 presage the reappearance of Winged Eagle in the comic book world.
 - How effective do you think this interwoven multiple narrative structure is in conveying the inner workings of Zara’s “broken” psyche? Explain your answer.
 - Write an essay in response to the following question: “In *Broken*, language, structural and visual techniques combine to create a unique narrative voice which is at once fractured and unified. Discuss with close reference to the text.”
 - Create your own visual representation to convey your understanding of how the novel is structured. For instance, you could represent the different plot strands in a diagram with intertwining colours or create a collage of symbols. Explain your representation to the class.
- Character**
- How has Zara’s childhood ordeal shaped her development as an individual? Consider her personality, her coping mechanisms and her relationships with others. For example, on page 119 she reflects on her relationship with Paul: “Then I went and did that utterly stupid thing ... It was probably because we were getting too close. It’s never been my thing to get that close to anyone.”
 - Analyse the symbolism of the characters from the Hoodman comics. Why do you think these characters feature so prominently in Zara’s interior journey? Who do you think each character symbolises? Might they be real people from Zara’s life, different parts of her psyche or both? Do they consistently represent the one person from her life, or does their meaning shift throughout the story? For instance, Morvern seems to represent Zara’s psychiatrist Dr Beardsley and her kidnapper at different points in the text. Think particularly about Hoodman, the masked hero of the comics who Zara believes holds the key to Jem’s whereabouts. Could he represent Zara herself?
 - “I feel like the past is starting to leak out. But I won’t let it. Mum and Dad don’t need to know. Not after all these years.” (12) Zara confides in Jem as a way of coping with her abduction as a child, and when Jem dies (although Zara won’t acknowledge this on a conscious level), memories of her ordeal start to surface. Discuss the way Zara’s memories are interwoven throughout the text. How does this structure help both develop suspense for the reader and portray the complex workings of Zara’s mind as she struggles to cope with two very traumatic events?
 - “I’m stuck in a corridor without any end. Stuck in a small locked cupboard.” (98) How is Zara’s current situation, with her trapped in a comatose state, similar to her kidnapping? In what other ways is Zara imprisoned?
 - “I listen to Trace. Listen to her happiness. Bubbling and burbling like a brew. ... It’s always been held back, hidden beneath the Goth mask.” (223) Discuss the role Trace plays in the novel, not only as a friend to Zara, but as a character whose humorous accounts of ordinary high school life offer a welcome juxtaposition to Zara’s dark and often surreal inner journey. How does Trace’s development over the course of the novel parallel Zara’s healing process? How is this change reflected in Trace’s physical appearance?
- Visual Literacy**
- Analyse the visual techniques the designer has used on the front cover. Some aspects to consider could include salience (what is most prominent), composition (what is put where), font, lines/vectors, colour, juxtaposition/contrast, borders/framing devices and symbolism. Make sure you both describe how the technique has been used and explain the effect this has on the viewer.



- Imagine that the publishers were unhappy with the title of the book and had asked you to come up with an alternative. What would you choose? Use a design program such as Publisher or InDesign to create a new cover for the book featuring this title. Consider how you can use visual techniques such as font, colour, composition, framing and symbolism to communicate the key themes of the book. Present your work to the class, explaining your ideas.
- How would you describe Angus Gomes's illustrative style? Is this style appropriate for the book in your opinion? Explain your answer.
- Choose one frame or series of frames and analyse the visual techniques Gomes has used. For instance, line, texture, composition, facial expression and positioning. Think particularly about the effect of these techniques. The illustrations on pages 78 or 89 could be good options to look at.
- Discuss the way that font has been used to distinguish between the different parts of the text. Why do you think each particular font has been chosen?
- Read and write a review of a graphic novel.

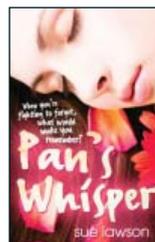
Creative Writing

- Write a newspaper article the day after Zara's kidnapping. Remember to include a sensational headline, put the most important information first and use language that is a combination of persuasive and informative. You may like to use the articles at the front and back of the book as a model.
- In the character of a hospital counsellor, write a progress report on Zara after she wakes from the coma. You may like to include an overview of her case, information about treatment and recommendations for the future. Remember to use conventional report structure (headings, subheadings, etc.) and to write in a formal register, using professional jargon as appropriate.
- Rewrite an episode from the book from another character's perspective. For instance, Zara's abduction from her kidnapper's perspective or one of Trace's visits to the hospital from her point of view.
- "I know it's to do with Jem. I haven't said anything about him. I can't. It feels too raw. Like a knife has slashed him out of my life and the hole is still wide open, gaping, bleeding." (239) Write a feature article for a teen magazine about coping with grief. Include facts and statistics, case studies, quotes from experts, images and diagrams, etc. You may like to interview Zara or include sections of her story as a case study.
- Compose a journal entry as Zara a year after the end of the book. Some ideas to consider include: Is she still grieving for Jem? Has she recovered from her injuries and has her life changed in any way because of them? How have her relationships with others altered as a result of her finally sharing her memories of her ordeal? How has the (probable) identification of her kidnapper affected her? Is she pursuing her art in any way?
- Write a short story using a multiple narrative structure. After you have written a draft of your story, go back and edit your work. As well as checking the accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar, try to replace any weak words with stronger ones and vary your sentence structure to increase dramatic impact. You may like to also try to incorporate some of the language techniques Elizabeth Pulford uses in the novel. After you have finished, type your work up on a computer, using different fonts to demarcate the separate narrative strands.

Research

- Research Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on the internet. Some questions to consider include:
 - What is PTSD?
 - What are some of the things that can cause it?
 - What are the symptoms?
 - How is it treated? (Consider the treatment of children and adults separately.)
 - What support services are available for PTSD?
 - How does it relate to Zara's experiences in the text?
- Alternative research task (more challenging): Robin Skynner, one of the founders of family therapy, writes, "keeping part of ourselves out of our awareness is a very active process ... a deliberate hiding of some feeling from our family." Research psychological repression on the internet. The following questions may be useful as a guide:
 - What is psychological repression?
 - How does it relate to psychoanalytical theory?
 - Why does it occur?
 - Who first identified this phenomenon?
 - What other theorists have played a role in the study of repression?
 - How is it usually treated?
 - How does it help to explain Zara's behaviour in the text?

Other YA Novels You May Enjoy



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by Sue Lawson
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The Sky is Everywhere
by Jandy Nelson
9781406326307



Six
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