



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



See You at Harry's

Author: Jo Knowles
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

Starting at a new school brings all the usual challenges - until the unthinkable happens, and Fern and her family must find a way to heal.

Twelve-year-old Fern feels invisible. Her dad is always busy planning how to increase traffic to the family business. Her mother is constantly going off to meditate. Her sister Sara, who's taking a "gap year" after high school, is too busy finding ways not to work; and her brother Holden is too focused on his new "friend" to pay attention to her. And then there's Charlie: three years old, a "surprise" baby, and the center of everyone's world.

If it wasn't for Ran, Fern's best and oldest friend, there would be nowhere to turn. Ran is always calm, always positive. His mantra "All will be well" is soothing in a way that nothing else seems to be. And when Ran says it, Fern can almost believe.

But when their lives are unexpectedly turned upside down by a death in the family, Fern feels more alone than ever, and responsible for the event that wrenches the family apart. All will not be well. Or at least, all will never be the same.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Jo Knowles is the author of the YA novels *Lessons from a Dead Girl* and *Jumping Off Swings*. The recipient of the 2005 PEN Literary Award, she lives in Vermont.

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Secondary years 7-9
- Ages 12+

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Novel
- Coming-of-age

Themes/Ideas:

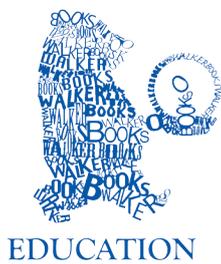
- Family life
- Grief
- Coming-of-age
- Loneliness
- Friendship

National Curriculum Focus:*

English content descriptions include:

| Year 7 | Year 8 | Year 9 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| ACELA1782 | ACELT1626 | ACELA1553 |
| ACELT1619 | ACELT1627 | ACELA1562 |
| ACELT1620 | ACELT1628 | ACELT1771 |
| ACELT1621 | ACELT1807 | ACELT1634 |
| ACELT1622 | ACELT1632 | ACELT1635 |
| ACELY1804 | ACELY1730 | ACELT1636 |
| ACELY1720 | ACELY1731 | ACELY1811 |
| ACELY1721 | ACELY1734 | ACELY1741 |
| ACELY1723 | ACELY1736 | ACELY1744 |
| ACELY1725 | | |

*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.

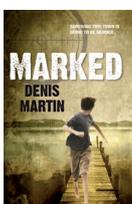


Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Discussion Questions and Activities

- What are the main themes explored in *See You at Harry's*? As a class, discuss what each theme means and then individually write a statement of belief about each.
- All the members of Fern's family are dealing with their own issues before Charlie's death. Discuss each character's issues and how Charlie's death affects them.
- Discuss how Fern's relationships change with key characters through the novel. (Fern's parents, Sara, Holden and Ran). What are the pivotal moments in the story that show a dramatic change in each relationship?
- Is Fern a reliable narrator? Is the reader getting the objective truth about the story? Why would the author choose first-person narrative from a potentially unreliable narrator rather than an objective third-person narrator? How would the book be different if it were narrated in the third-person?
- Evaluate anti-bullying policies at your school. Write a report addressing the following questions:
 - » What behaviours are defined as bullying?
 - » What strategies are in place for preventing bullying?
 - » What actions occur if bullying takes place?
 - » What role do the following groups/people play in addressing bullying at your school: the principal, teachers, the school counsellor, students, parents, others?
 - » In your opinion, is your school more concerned with punishing students who bully or educating students so that bullying doesn't occur? Explain your answer.
- Overall, how effectively do you feel your school deals with this issue? Provide evidence for your response.
- After writing your report, compose a formal letter to either the principal or your Student Representative Council member suggesting strategies for reducing bullying at your school.
- Create an advertisement or marketing tool to raise awareness of homophobia. This could be a television commercial, poster, website banner or any other text-type you feel would be effective for this purpose. Present your work to the class, explaining the persuasive techniques you have used to convey your message.
- Write a book report on *See You at Harry's* stating what you liked/disliked about the book, who you think would enjoy the book and mention any books that it is similar to. Use some quotes from the book to illustrate your statements. Create a class blog or Wiki to post your reviews and share them with other students. You can use this blog to post book reviews of any other book you read as a class or on your own. You can use Blogspot (<http://www.blogger.com>) or Wordpress (<http://wordpress.com/>) to create your class blog. Walker Books love reading book reviews, send your class book reviews to educationwba@walkerbooks.com.au.
- Write an essay arguing whether you believe 12 year-old Fern was too young to be left to care for 3 year-old Charlie alone. Use evidence from *See You at Harry's* and other texts to support your argument.
- Fern, Holden, Sara and Charlie are all named after characters from books. List the characters from *See You at Harry's* and the character from the book they are named after and discuss the similarities and differences the characters have.
- The Kübler-Ross model, commonly known as the five stages of grief, are the five stages that a person is dying or has experienced the death of a love one can go through. These stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The Kübler-Ross model states that not all of these stages will occur in every case and they are not always experienced chronologically. Does Fern go through these five stages? Identify key scenes in the book where Fern displays signs of experiences some or all of the five stages.

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