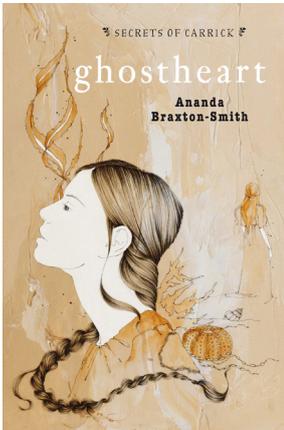


# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## Secrets of Carrick: Ghostheart

Author: Ananda Braxton-Smith

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

Walker Books Australia  
Locked Bag 22  
Newtown, N.S.W., 2042

Ph +61 2 9517 9577  
Fax +61 2 9517 9997

These notes were created by Steve Spargo.  
For enquiries please contact:  
educationwba@walkerbooks.com.au

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## Outline:

In Carrick things are changing and Mally needs to change too. Her brothers and sisters are fearless, light as scuds, quick as hoppers. Not Mally. She knows too many secrets. Mally is frightened – frozen at the edge of the shore. Out of nowhere comes Dolyn Craig – a sneak and a bully. But that's not the worst of it. He wants something from Mally. But what?

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Ananda Braxton-Smith is a journalist and children's writer who is passionate about communicating history to young people in new and innovative ways.

## 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.

<p><b>These notes are for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary years 8+</li> <li>• Ages 13+</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Learning Areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> </ul>	<p><b>Example of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Novel</li> <li>• Magical-realism</li> </ul>	<p><b>Themes/ Ideas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Stories</li> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Change</li> </ul>
<p><b>National Curriculum Focus:*</b></p> <p>English content descriptions include:</p>			
<p>Year 8</p> <p>ACELA1541 ACELT1767</p> <p>ACELA1547 ACELT1632</p> <p>ACELT1626 ACELY1729</p> <p>ACELT1627 ACELY1730</p> <p>ACELT1628 ACELY1808</p> <p>ACELT1807 ACELY1733</p> <p>ACELT1630</p>	<p>Year 9</p> <p>ACELA1551 ACELT1771</p> <p>ACELA1552 ACELT1634</p> <p>ACELA1553 ACELT1772</p> <p>ACELA1557 ACELY1743</p> <p>ACELA1560 ACELY1746</p> <p>ACELA1561</p> <p>ACELT1633</p>	<p>Year 10</p> <p>ACELA1563 ACELT1643</p> <p>ACELA1564 ACELT1814</p> <p>ACELA1568 ACELT1815</p> <p>ACELA1571 ACELT1644</p> <p>ACELT1640 ACELY1749</p> <p>ACELT1641</p> <p>ACELT1812</p>	<p>*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.</p>

## Ananda Braxton-Smith on *Ghostheart*



### The Devil & Dolyn Craig

After a good friend had finished reading *Tantony*, he said to me, “Ooh Nan, I hate that Dolyn Craig - is he going to be in the next one?”

He wanted Dolyn to get his comeuppance, see? To be punished. For poor mad Boson Quirk to be avenged. It’s a beautiful moment when a character you’ve written has affect in the real world and I was glad the bully Dolyn had been so awful as to inspire a revenge-fantasy in my friend.

But then I started thinking.

About Dolyn Craig. About what made him do it; what he was thinking.

I thought first about the glory-violence in the world: our heroes who kill ... and kill ... and kill. How we think a level of violence in boys is “natural” and distrust boys who are not like that. I thought how those heroes of ours end up being a bit indistinguishable from the villains, really.

How even something as simple as cooking dinner is turned into war on television. How violence is entertainment to us.

I thought about wars: political, holy, racial, territorial, and so forth. How old men have always sent young men to do the actual fighting. How they’ve always managed to do that with a collection of outright lies, moral spin, and the manipulation of the youthful desire to be like everybody else.

Then I thought about young people’s desire to belong, which is everybody’s need to belong, and how a person can be trained to do just about anything on the promise of such belonging. About girls and boys badly wanting to be “real women” and “real men”, without any knowledge of what this might mean — those terms being largely

cultural, and horribly confused and self-serving.

And I thought about adult complicity in all of this.

Well, then I started feeling sorry for Dolyn Craig, didn’t I? And I wanted to redeem rather than punish him. Poor boy.

That was the very first thing.

### Outsider/insider voices

*Merrow* and *Tantony* dealt with two outsiders: *Merrow*’s Neen lives on the remote northern coast of Carrick, and *Tantony*’s Fermion lives up the moaney - the bog high in the uplands. I felt comfortable with their voices, partly because I am an outsider myself and could have a lovely time moaning about “insiders” and flexing my strangeness.

For the third book, though, I wanted to try writing an insider voice. Mally in *Ghostheart* lives right smack in the middle of the main settlement, Market-Shipton. She wants to do the right thing. She wants to be regular and normal; just to be like everybody else. That’s her base of desire, and what the conflict in the story rests upon.

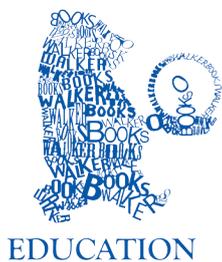
In the end, though, she finds that people are simultaneously like — and not alike. Everybody is an insider and an outsider at the same time. So maybe my experiment with that voice wasn’t entirely successful. Maybe I’m just a hopeless outsider. Or maybe it’s just true that nobody is this thing we talk about like we know what it means: the thing called Normal!

### Young friendship

The last thread of the story is friendship — particularly adolescent best-friendship. Such friendships between young people (younger than you’d think: about seven onward) have a passionate and exclusive nature. They carry dreams for the adult future, and can also be nightmares. They are wonderful and terrible, and they are never quite as intense again.

Until you fall in love, that is.

I have a very old friend, with whom I shared such a friendship. We met when we were five and seven, and we are still close in the way you can only be in such a lasting relationship. My memories of us are rich and deep, and they have never faded. We are really BFFs! I wanted to capture some of that, as my own little love letter to a friend, and to friendship. To that boundless sharing of a world view.



# Walker Books Classroom Ideas

## Discussion Questions and Activities

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? After reading the novel, return to your answer and compare your first impression with your impression after finishing the book.

All stories are built on problems or conflicts. What are the problems or conflicts in this story? How are they resolved?

In small groups, decide on five important turning points in the story. Find a key quote to support each of your examples. Share them with the rest of the class.

The following ideas or issues are raised in the story. Find a quote to go along with each:

- Identity
- Family
- Change
- Belief
- Perception
- Gender

What time and location do you think the setting of *Ghostheart* is based on? Use evidence from the story to support your claim.

Historical research can be used to write non-fiction works and give a sound basis for a fictional story with a historical setting. Even though *Ghostheart* is set in a fictional location, the author has used social behaviours and living arrangements from the Middle Ages as a basis. Research medieval living arrangements and buildings and draw comparisons to the text. For example, research monasteries and market towns from the Middle Ages.

Write a character study on each of the following characters. Include a description of their appearance and how they change through the novel. Write a list of words to describe these characters, then share and discuss your list with a small group of classmates.

- Mally Crowal
- Breesh Dunnal
- Shenn Cooley
- Dolyn Craig
- Elley Craig

*Ghostheart* is written in the first-person, so the reader sees the story unfold from Mally's point of view (POV). What are the characteristics, benefits and drawbacks of writing in this style? Also list the same for second-person and third-person narratives. Rewrite a key scene from the book in the third person. How does it change the story? Which style of writing do you prefer? Why?

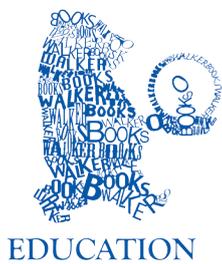
What is magical-realism and what is fantasy? Compare the two genres. What category does *Ghostheart* fit into? Can stories fit into more than one genre?

Make a list of words and phrases that are used in *Ghostheart* that you are unfamiliar with. Use the glossary to discover the meanings of these words. Also make a list of words or phrases that you and your peers use that might be unfamiliar to a person outside of your peer group. Why do you think groups of people alter words or create new words over time?

What is a scaan? What supernatural occurrence is it similar to? Compare scaans to similar creatures in other books or movies, how has the author interpreted this creature into something unique?

Fear is a major theme in *Ghostheart*. Discuss how fear affects Mally, Dolyn and Elley. Write a poem or a short story about the nature of fear and how it can affect people in different ways.

Mally has been told a number of cautionary tales by her mother that have rendered her anxious and afraid of the world. What is the purpose of cautionary tales and what is the danger of telling



# Walker Books Classroom Ideas

them to young children?

What is the significance of what Mally sees in the scaaney pool?

Mally and Breesh Dunal have created a ritual of looking into the scaaney pool. What does this ritual involve? What is the purpose of their ritual? Is it reminiscent of other rituals?

Shenn Cooley tells Mally the tragic love story of Brother Collect and Pond-Averick. Why does he tell Mally this story? What are common occurrences in tragedies?

After Dolyn accuses Mally of “talking to them who aren’t there” (page 145) the reader discovers that Breesh Dunal is not a real person, but a figment of Mally’s imagination. Do you think Mally realised Breesh wasn’t real before this point? How does the realisation that Breesh is part of Mally change your interpretation of their interactions earlier in the book?

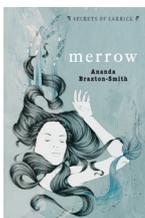
When Mally and Dolyn are arguing in Chapter 15, the most hurtful insults they can muster are Mally accusing Dolyn of crying and Dolyn calling Mally a witch. Why do you think these accusations are insults?

The bonds of family is a key theme in *Ghostheart*. How does family affect Mally (stories told by her mother) and Dolyn (abandoned as a child by his mother)? How could these characters have grown up differently if their parents had not behaved like this?

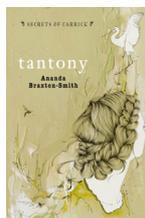
“Out here everybody looked to be two people, at least. Even me.” (page 194)  
Discuss this statement and why it is significant at this point in the story. Do you think this statement applies to most people? Why?

Secrets of Carrick is not a sequential series, i.e. they can be viewed as a collection of stories that share certain links but do not have to be read in order. What are the links between *Ghostheart* and the other books in the series (*Merrow* and *Tantony*)?

## The Secrets of Carrick



**Merrow**  
Ananda Braxton-Smith  
9781742031361  
AU\$18.95/NZ\$21.99  
[Classroom ideas available](#)

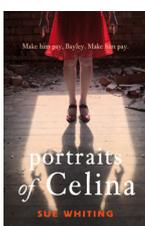


**Tantony**  
Ananda Braxton-Smith  
9781742031668  
AU\$18.95/NZ\$21.99



**Ghostheart**  
Ananda Braxton-Smith  
9781742032184  
AU\$18.95/NZ\$21.99

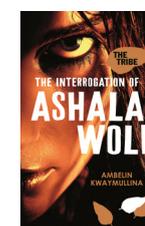
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