

B L O O M S B U R Y

Teacher's Guide *Hidden* by Marianne Curley

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DESCRIPTION:

Ebony has always known that she is different. Her violet eyes mark her out, and her protective parents have kept her in a gorgeous valley, home-schooled, safe from everything—almost as if she's being hidden. But she's changing: glowing, getting more and more beautiful, and stronger than anyone knows.

Ebony can't stay hidden for ever, and when she meets complicated, intense Jordan, something explodes inside her—something that can be seen from the heavens; something that changes everything. Ebony is a stolen angel, concealed on Earth. Now the heavens have found her, they want her back.

SYNOPSIS:

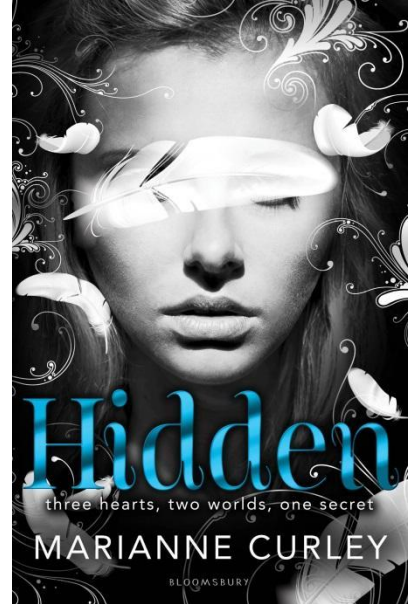
Hidden is the story of Ebony Hawkins, a sixteen year old girl who has always felt out of place in her hometown Cedar Oakes. She and her parents live on a farm, where she was home-schooled by her overprotective parents until last year. She now attends high school with her best friend and next door neighbour, Amber Lang.

While Ebony understands the reasons for her parents being too overprotective, she disobeys their wishes and sneaks out to a supervised dance for under-eighteens. This is where she meets Jordan, a troubled teenage boy who has been in and out of foster homes since the death of his mother when he was just nine years old.

After an intense first meeting, Ebony and Jordan go their separate ways, with both being determined to find each other again later. Unfortunately, they don't get the chance after Jordan gets into an altercation with a former friend and has to be rushed to hospital.

This is when Jordan meets Nathaneal an angel who has been searching for another angel named Ebrielle, since she was stolen away on the day of her birth. After agreeing to help Nathaneal, Jordan is released from hospital into his care.

Meanwhile Ebony has questioned her parents about her strange physical characteristics and discovers that she was adopted by her parents. She goes searching for the house of a man claiming to be her uncle and breaks in, where she finds mural on a ceiling that she recognises from her childhood. Afterwards, Ebony finds her own house on fire and her parents missing. Although no remains are found, her parents are assumed dead and she goes to stay with Amber and Amber's parents.



Once Jordan and Ebony are both back at school, Nathaneal encourages Jordan to seek out Ebrielle who they later realise is Ebony. Jordan introduces Nathaneal to Ebony and they immediately have a strong connection, although Nathaneal soon scares Ebony off by telling her that she is an angel and that she is to come away and live in Avena (a place where angels live) as soon as possible.

Everything soon comes to a head when the dark angel, prince Luca comes for Ebony. A battle between a group of angels led by Nathaneal and prince Luca's forces breaks out. Nathaneal and his company win the battle, but at a cost. Nathaneal has to display his previously hidden powers in order to be victorious and not all the angels are happy about this.

Finally it is revealed that Ebony is Nathaneal's long lost fiancée and they make arrangements to train Ebony until she can travel to Avena. Jordan is dismayed by the news of their engagement, as he believes that he is also in love with Ebony.

REVIEW QUOTES

'There are quite a few characters but they all bring something to the storyline and help speed the pace and plot. There is a real sense of mystery particularly Jordan's past and then both of their futures, it makes you want to read more just so you can find out more...'
— **Beckys Barmy Book Blog**

'I love when the girl is the hero, the person who has to save people and the person who everyone relies on and respects. This book screams it at you. Cool angels, bad ass cars, money, powers and good-looking angel princes.'
— **Dark-Readers.com**

'Hidden is a refreshing take on the angel theme, filled with likeable characters and a well thought out world.'
— **vegan ya nerds blog**

'Curley has a different spin on angels and where they come from and has created an interesting world I want to know more about.'
— **rlsharpe**

'Ebony is refreshingly intelligent and independent – she thinks her decisions through, is careful and never idiotically blunders her way into dangerous situations, and always has the welfare of those around her foremost in her mind. She is careful and initially distrusting of the strangers that claim they can help her, which I found more realistic than the blind faith some other YA heroines have...'
— **Spec on spec fic**

'Hidden is an amazing story of self-discovery and destiny. It's also about growing up while trying to live an average life until you realise you're destined for so much more. The mystery at the centre of Ebony's life was intriguing, the suspense gripping, and the turn of events that lead her down an action-packed path had me hooked!'
— **Yolanda Sfetsos**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Marianne Curley is an Australian Young Adult Paranormal Fiction writer, whose debut novel, *Old Magic*, established her place as an exciting and original voice in the world of children's literature. She then went on to publish the Guardians of Time trilogy which enjoyed phenomenal success around the world. Marianne disappeared from the publishing world for seven years, before making a comeback with her new Avena series starting with *Hidden*.

Marianne's inspiration for the Avena series and the reason for her seven year absence from writing was her diagnosis with Myelofibrosis, another name for bone marrow cancer. She was given a 30-35% chance of surviving. After finding a perfect stem cell match in one of her three siblings, Marianne started intense chemotherapy, and started the transfusion. On the morning of the 28th day, with only a few hours of transfused blood left in her system, the graft took hold and she began to produce her own blood again.

Over time, Marianne began to recover, however it took another two years or so for her to be able to start writing again. While she continued to improve, she kept herself busy with other projects, but her mind was never far away from writing. Now cancer free, she began to write the story of *Hidden* – to create the worlds and characters that her mind began during her life-threatening experience.

Find out more at: <http://www.mariannecurley.com/>

NARRATIVE

- *Hidden* follows the story of Ebony Hawkins, a sixteen year old girl who, when strange things start happening to her, discovers that she is adopted and that she may not even be human.
- The novel alternates between the characters Ebony and Jordan who voice each chapter from different perspectives.
- Ultimately, it is the story of a young girl who is on a journey to find out her true identity and where she belongs.

CHARACTERS

- Ebony (Ebrielle); Ebony's Parents; Ebony's friend, Amber; Amber's parents; Jordan; Jordan's friends, Daniel and Sophie; Adam; Nathaneal; Prince Luca; Xavier; and a small group of angels who accompany Nathaneal.

MAIN THEMES

- **Belonging / Into the World**

Hidden is a tale about a girl (Ebony) who is on a journey of self-discovery, to learn the truth about her family and to find out where she ultimately belongs. It also follows the story of a teenage orphaned boy (Jordan) who is caught up in the fight between light and dark, the outcome of which will shape his future.

Quotes:

- “Do you ever stare at your reflection and wonder who that person is looking back at you? For as long as I can remember I’ve felt different, at odds with myself.” (p. 1)
- “I’ve never had any major dramas in my life, so why do I feel this deep discontentment? It’s only when I’m out riding, sprinting across the plains beneath the cliffs of Mount Bungarra with the wind in my face, that I really feel like me.” (p. 1)
- “Every time I want to know something about my relatives or our family’s history, which is admittedly becoming more often, she starts an argument – on purpose. She accuses me of being on a search to find myself – as if it’s a bad thing. I know she’s worried I’ll leave the valley some day. Almost everyone does eventually.” (p. 5)
- “I need to uncover the real Ebony Hawkins, the girl suffocating inside me. It’s become crucial lately, for reasons hard to explain, except that . . . I’m developing in ways I don’t understand and can’t find in any biology books.” (p. 6)
- “Adam had an irritation in his life in the form of his little brother, Seth. I didn’t mind Seth tagging along half as much as Adam did. I used to pretend they were my real brothers. I think I knew this was the closest I would come to a family of my own. Adam never understood, back then, that having a brother made the difference between being a family and being alone.” (p. 11)

- **Death/Loss & Afterlife:**

As you may imagine in a novel about angels, there are a lot of references to the afterlife (heaven, hell, etc.) However the main protagonists have both lost or lose their parents and therefore there are major themes of grief and grieving.

Quotes:

- “Deep inside I know I’m a hair’s breadth away from spinning out of control. When Mum died, I thought I would too. I wanted to. What does a nine-year-old do for the rest of his life without his mum? Call me morbid, a pessimist, whatever you want, but the sense of death still simmers beneath the surface, rising up on days like today.” (p. 10)
- “Death is final; the returning of one’s body to the earth so the atoms that make us can be recycled back into the universe to start again. It’s simple and beautiful, but I can’t consider that concept for Mum and Dad. How can it be possible for two people to be here one moment and gone the next?” (p.120)

Other themes within the text include:

- Angels
- Unrequited Love
- Destiny and Fate vs. Free Will
- Good vs. Evil

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

- Before reading *Hidden*, brainstorm the concepts of heaven and hell and discuss what students believe a stereotypical angel or demon is or how they would look or behave like.
- Do a quick analysis of the front cover and explain the use of symbols, icons and myth in still images. Discuss the symbolism of the use of white and black (light and dark) elements, the symbolism and use of white feathers and significance of the person's eyes being covered.
- Personal identity and self-discovery are strong themes in *Hidden*. Have your students discuss the notion of having multiple identities depending on the context, time, place, friends or family.

For example:

- Do you act the same way around your parents as you do when you're with your friends or with a teacher?
- Do you act the same as you did when you were five or ten years younger?
- How is your identity shaped by these things?

ACTIVITIES

- **Dual Narratives:**

Hidden is written as a dual narrative as the book alternates between the perspectives of the two main characters Ebony and Jordan. These create distinctive 'voices' are used throughout the novel to evoke particular emotional responses and also contribute to the development of the roles and relationships of the characters in the text.

- **Creative Writing:**

Write a short scene set around an everyday activity where you interact with other people, such as going to the shops or arriving at school in the morning, etc. Now write the same scene from the point of view of another person in that same scene.

Make sure you think about the role each of your characters plays in the scene as well as their relationships with the other characters. Consider how you can use the different characters to make your audience experience different emotions from the same scene.

- **Classroom Discussion:**

We get an inside look into the emotions of Ebony and Jordan because the chapters are written from their perspectives. During reading, start a discussion about the emotions of other characters in the chapters and how certain events may be affecting them. There are many chapters to work with, for example you could consider chapters: 14 - Jordan wakes up after his emergency surgery; 16 - Amber discovers Ebony's house is on fire; 21 - Ebony is staying with Amber and her parents when the detectives come to interview Ebony about the fire.

- Newspaper article:
Select an event from the book, such as Jordan’s stabbing or Ebony’s house fire and report it as a newspaper article from the local newspaper. Consider the ‘voice’ and tone you will need to use throughout the piece. Also think about the purpose of the article, the intended audience and what message you are trying to convey.
- **Setting:**
The valley setting for *Hidden* is inspired by the Hinterland/rainforest region where Marianne Curley lives. Marianne uses the symbology and mythology of angels and descriptive writing to create a wonderful picture of the different worlds in *Hidden*.
 - Creative Writing:
Have a think about the area you live in (or have lived in), be it city, rural, suburban, coastal, etc. and consider how it may be different from other places in the world. Write a detailed description of the setting and then swap your writing with a fellow student. Discuss what is different or similar about your descriptions and why
 - Classroom Discussion:
Discuss the use of symbols, icons and myth used in *Hidden* and how these add meaning to the text.

Consider this excerpt describing Avena, the angels home world:

Nathaneal swings around in front of me opening his arm in a wide arc. ‘I’ll have to show you something,’ he says, ‘to make this more real for you.’ Before my eyes an image appears of a world with a shimmering pink-blue ocean under a lilac sky that sparkles so brightly I wince until my eyes adjust. He pulls at the image with his hand and it zooms in to reveal a breathtaking landscape of purple and blue mountain ranges. I see cliffs thousands of metres deep as if I’m flying closely over them, and waterfalls or staggering proportions tumbling into fast-flowing rivers. We follow one through a forest of horizontal trees with iridescent crimson leaves, and on into a vast plain covered in shades of purple and blue grass, where herds of animals I’ve never seen the likes of graze together. Suddenly, I’m back standing between the angels and pointing at the image, speechless. ‘Yes,’ Nathaneal says. ‘Avena.’

Have a think about what you could add to this description. Are there any relevant thematic or other textual connections with other texts that you could use to describe Avena. How would you describe your hometown?

- **Short Story Opening:**
‘I always knew I was different, but I didn’t know how different until...’
- **Alternate Endings:**
Write an alternate ending to *Hidden*. Write an ending to the series. Compare with classmates, how different are they?

- **Poetry:**

Write a poem inspired by one of the following topics:

- Angels
- First Love
- Being Different
- Friendship
- Horses
- Fast cars

- **Classroom Discussion:**

With your class discuss the concept of Gurus and Charlatans - *How do you tell a wise guru from someone who is just pretending to be one?* What advice is given to Ebony and Jordan throughout the novel? Who is giving this advice and what are their motivations?

Ask your students about the advice that Nathaneal gives to Jordan. Is he giving advice that is in Jordan's best interests or his own? Does the fact that he hides Ebony's true identity (that she is Nathanael's betrothed) from Jordan change your students' responses?

You could also discuss the interactions between the main characters and Adam Skinner, Prince Luca and Zavier. Do they have hidden motives? What are their intentions? How are they trying to influence the decisions Ebony and Jordan make?

You may also like to discuss the use of language by the different characters and how this can be used to empower or disempower people, particularly to influence others.

- **Digital Literacy Activity:**

Watch the trailer for Hidden at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozmS0APZxP0>

The purpose of a trailer is to give the audience an idea of what the book is about, without giving the plot away and try to grab the audience's attention, keep their interest and leave them wanting to find out more.

- Design a trailer for your favourite book in the form of a storyboard. Remember the purpose of a trailer, don't give away the whole story, maybe use a cliff-hanger to keep the audience interested and wanting more.
- Discuss the use of symbols in the trailer, for example: the Sun, white dress, setting amongst the trees and grass, clouds and lightning.

- **Art Activity:**

The angel wings described in Hidden are a variety of colours and sizes. Design your own pair of angel wings, using paint/collage/feathers etc.

OR

Chose a scene from Hidden and create a graphic novel storyboard. Either give students a limit to how many pages or frames they can use for their storyboard, or have no limit at all. Remind your students that unlike a novel, a storyboard should summarise the main points and let the artwork tell the audiences about the setting, etc.

BEYOND THE BOOK / LEARN MORE

If you'd like to know more about *Hidden* or its author Marianne Curley please check out her website <http://www.mariannecurley.com/> or her blog <http://oldmagicmountain.tumblr.com/>

Facebook: HiddenNovels

Watch the book trailer for Hidden: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozmSOAPZxP0>

FURTHER READING

- Sequel to Hidden, the second book in the Avena series, Broken, to be published March 2014
- Other Books by Marianne Curley: Old Magic, Guardians of Time Trilogy (Named, Dark, Key)
- Other young adult fantasy include: Hush, Hush by Becca Fitzpatrick, Angel series by L.A. Weatherly , City of Bones by Cassandra Clare