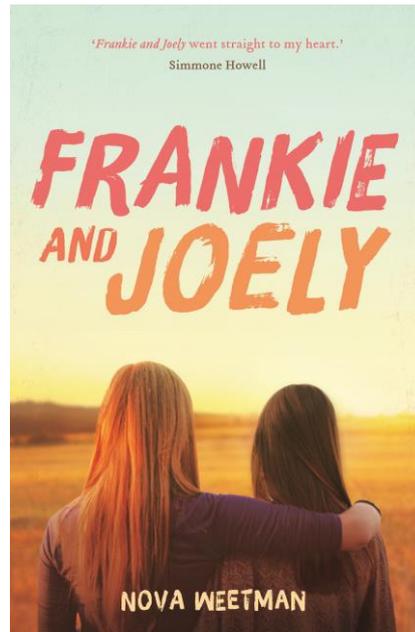


UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

# FRANKIE AND JOELY

## Nova Weetman



### Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian  
in context with the Australian curriculum  
(English)

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**SYNOPSIS**

Frankie and Joely are best friends. Excited to be leaving the city behind for a week in the country, cracks soon begin to appear in their unlikely bond. What will Joely's cousins make of city girl Frankie, with her pierced nose and short skirts? Will this time together end up pulling them apart?

In a story about relationships, honesty and acceptance, the girls learn that genuine friendship is far more important than fleeting romances and misunderstandings. *Frankie and Joely* tests the boundaries of courage, trust and forgiveness.

**THEMES**

Relationships:

- Frankie and Joely share a sincere and genuine bond, although this is tested in the novel.
- Joely and Frankie both have strained relationships with their mothers.
- The girls seek love and acceptance from one another.
- Frankie realises that nothing is worth jeopardising her friendship with Joely.
- Joely has a close relationship with her aunt, uncle and cousins.
- Rory treats the girls with disrespect and callousness.

Belonging:

- Frankie craves a sense of belonging and eventually finds this in the country.
- Joely often feels a stronger sense of belonging in her aunt's home than in her own home back in the city.
- Frankie and Joely accept each other without exception.

Honesty:

- It takes much courage for Joely to finally be honest with Frankie and voice her opinions.

Self-esteem:

- Joely is uncertain about herself; she lacks self-esteem and seems to exist in Frankie's shadow.

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**WRITING STYLE**

*Frankie and Joely* is written in third person, present tense. The narrative shares both Frankie's and Joely's perspectives, giving the reader insight into and empathy for each of the girls. It is suitable for a young adult audience.

**STUDY NOTES**

- The opening chapters of *Frankie and Joely* describe the nature of the girls and their friendship. After reading the first few chapters, create a character portrait of each girl. Include personality traits, physical characteristics and attitudes. Add to this portrait as you read the novel.
- Throughout the text, Frankie struggles with the relationship she has with her mother. How does this contribute to her friendship with Joely? How would Frankie be different if she had a better relationship with her mother?
- How are Frankie and Joely similar to one another? How are they different? Discuss why the girls are friends given their different backgrounds and circumstances.
- Frankie seems to go out of her way to be seen as the 'wild one'. What does she do to create this persona? Why does she do this?
- What things annoy Joely about Frankie and vice versa? Do they annoy you too? Why?
- Why does Joely say that their friendship 'crossed into something else, something special' when Frankie shortened her name to Joel (p6)?
- What doubts does Joely have about bringing Frankie to Payne? What problems does she envisage? Which, if any of these, eventuate?
- Why does Joely get annoyed that Frankie reads so much? Why do you think Frankie re-reads the same novel over and over again?
- Why does Frankie love op-shopping so much? Discuss the symbolism behind Frankie's second-hand and free items.
- Why are the girls always referred to as 'Frankie and Joely' but never 'Joely and Frankie'? What is the author suggesting about the nature of the girls and their friendship?
- Why do you think Joely texts herself while on the train to Payne? What does this tell us about her lack of confidence?
- How is 'City Joely' different from 'Country Joely'? Which do you prefer? Which do you think Frankie prefers? Which does Joely prefer? Give reasons for your responses.

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- What role does Rory play in the text?
- Frankie comments that she often feels like an interloper, always on the fringes (p33). Why does she feel this way?
- Why does Joely find it so difficult to speak her mind and share things? Why hasn't she told Frankie about her baby step-brother or Rory?
- Why is Joely so upset about Bluey dying and the kangaroo being killed? What do the recurring references to the kangaroo symbolise about Joely and her feelings throughout the text?
- What does Frankie mean when she says she 'wants the chance to do things the wrong way' (p103)?
- Why does Frankie enjoy Jasper the cat's company so much? What do they have in common?
- Joely is very self-conscious about her appearance, in particular her freckles. This is exacerbated by the fact she sees Frankie as so flawless. How does Frankie react when she discovers this about Joely? Discuss the tender ways in which Frankie helps Joely to overcome these feelings.
- Discuss the significance of Ged buying a bike for Frankie. Why is Frankie so determined to learn how to ride it and show Ged what a generous act this was?
- What do you think is Jill's opinion of Frankie? How does it change throughout the text?
- How have both girls grown and changed throughout the narrative? Give examples from the text to support your response.
- Describe the relationship between Thommo and Mack. Do you think this will change as they get older? Discuss.
- If you were Frankie, what would you say to Joely after returning from the train station?
- Nova Weetman uses figurative language throughout the text. Discuss how this contributes to the narrative. Examples include:
  - It's just a cracked circle with a tiny puddle of water dotting the centre. (p17)
  - Frankie swallows, feeling the sting of the hot air drag down her throat. (p19)
  - She feels her city skin shedding. (p20)
  - The town is even smaller than Frankie expected. It's really just a line, a punctuation of shops among dry paddocks and slow cattle. (p23)

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- She is as free as a cow standing in a field. (p37)
- He's so brown he looks like someone has painted him with the sun. (p69)
- The two girls ... peel themselves off the fading vinyl. (p70)
- Scarlet light floods the sky. (p97)
- Her skin's like poetry. Joely's is like a dot-to-dot picture in an activity book. (p108)
- The flies are so thick it's like she's wearing a coat of them. (p113)
- Nova Weetman describes the heat of the country summer very explicitly. Re-read some of these passages, taking note of the language features that help these make these descriptions so vivid. Try writing your own descriptive passage about a summer you remember.
- Select a scene from the text to dramatise and perform to your peers.
- Write a reflection about the importance of friendship in your own life.
- Map the structure of *Frankie and Joely* on a story graph. Analyse the way in which the author increases tension as the text progresses.
- By taking Frankie away from the city, the author has made her a 'fish out of water'. Discuss how this is an effective way to create tension. Why is this essential in narratives?
- Create a visual representation of the relationship Frankie shares with Joely. Include examples from the text to support your ideas.
- In what ways is the plot of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* like the plot of *Frankie and Joely*? Draw comparisons and discuss.

**AUTHOR MOTIVATION**

My female friendships are really important to me, but they are also sometimes tricky and complicated things. And they always have been. Ever since I was young enough to understand that certain games were being played, rules were being made, and a whole unspoken language existed, my friendships with women have been interesting to say the least. After watching how my daughter deals with her friendships, in a much more upfront and transparent way than I ever have, I decided to investigate what it is between two best friends who love each other deeply. It is perhaps the thing that intrigues me most – the notion that you can love someone deeply while being very aware that you're hurting them, because of jealousy, rivalry or just plain old competition.

*Frankie and Joely* is a book I wrote to examine all of these things. In a way it could be told with two female characters of any age, except that I wanted this

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story to be about first loves. What is it that makes Joely willing to give up the love for her friend because of a boy she barely knows? What is that makes Frankie prepared to give up everything for the love of Joely? And how do we come to hurt the people we love the most?

What I discovered while writing this book was that I'd created two teenage girl characters that were the two halves of me. One who was clingy, needy and defined herself by her best friend, but who would desert her best friend too. And the other who was loyal and loving and lost. I think through writing this book which is a really close observation of female friendship, I learned a lot about how I relate to my friends back then and now.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Nova Weetman's prose has appeared in various literary magazines including *Kill Your Darlings*, *Island*, *Tirra Lirra*, *Wet Ink*, *Mslexia* and *Overland*. She has written for TV shows as *Neighbours*, *H2O*, *Pixel Pinkie* and *Buzz Bumble*, and wrote a short animated film for the Planetarium. She also wrote the short films *Ripples* and *Mr Wasinski's Song*, for which she received an AWGIE nomination for best short screenplay and the Melbourne International Film Festival Award for Best Short Film. Both films screened internationally.

She has also won the HarperCollins Fellowship and the FAW Award for Best Unpublished Manuscript. She has also published two middle fiction novels through Hardie Grant. Nova lives with her playwright partner and their two children in Melbourne. *Frankie and Joely* is her second novel for young adults. Her first, *The Haunting of Lily Frost*, was shortlisted for the 2014 Aurealis Awards for Best Young Adult Novel.

Visit her online at [www.novaweedman.com.au](http://www.novaweedman.com.au)