

The Other Ones

AUTHOR
FRAN HART

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Secondary



SYNOPSIS

Sal hates standing out. But he lives in a haunted house—and everybody knows it.

His oldest friend, Dirk, tries to help . . . but he wants to stay popular, and Sal isn't helping.

Elsie was popular—until recently. Now she's on the outcast's table too . . . and she doesn't want to talk about it.

Then there's the new boy, Pax, who won't leave Sal alone. His idea of a good time is hanging out in graveyards. And, for some reason, Sal just can't stay away.

Meet The Other Ones. Can they banish their ghosts together?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fran is a graphic designer from West Yorkshire, who loves bringing new ideas to life in her writing. After studying English Literature for a year at university, she changed disciplines and went on to graduate with a BA in Graphic Design. She remains a self-confessed bookworm and, as a child, was regularly told off for reading under the table during maths lessons.

When she's not reading or writing, Fran loves drinking coffee, travelling and spoiling her house rabbit, Buffy. *The Other Ones* is her first novel, written for NaNoWriMo in November 2019, and edited ever since.

THEMES

- Friendship and romance
- LGBTQIA+ stories
- Bullying/violence
- Grief/overcoming death
- Overcoming fear/courage/standing up for oneself
- The supernatural
- Difficult family situations
- Understanding yourself and trying to fit in

STUDY NOTES

- In *The Other Ones*, Asha disguises the absence of their mother by claiming that their house is haunted in newspaper articles she writes. As a class, discuss how you might write an engaging article about a haunting in your neighbourhood. How would you describe the building? What sort of occurrences might have happened?
 - Then, separate into small groups. Each group should draw and design their own newspaper article on a sheet of A3 paper, including pictures, quotes, dates and snappy headlines, in an effort to try and tell the story of a local haunting. Each person in the group should be assigned a different part of the article to be responsible for eg. quotes, headlines etc. Present your newspaper article to the class.
- Sal and Pax are very different characters in *The Other Ones*, despite eventually becoming great friends; Sal is an introvert just trying to fit in, whereas Pax unashamedly goes against the status quo. In pairs, draw a spider diagram of your opposite, including their likes, dislikes, appearance, strengths and other personal attributes that would come in handy when describing a character in a novel. Then, individually write a paragraph about that person in as much engaging description as you can. Don't just think about them as an individual—what separates them from everyone else in the class? Think about how you would make a character special in a novel, and how you can make that come across in your description of your partner.
- Sal and Pax have a complicated relationship at the beginning of the story, which changes and develops as the book progresses. At one point, Pax is bullied for seemingly wearing a dress to school, an unconventional action that saw him become the target for acts of violence. As a result, Sal physically intervenes, punching the bully in order to prevent any further harm. In pairs, discuss how you would react differently than Sal towards the bully. What would you have said? What facial expressions would you have used? Do you think this was the right thing to do? How should you really treat people who are different to you? Play act this out with your partner to see all of the different ways this can be done. Then, rewrite this section of the book and consider all the different ways Sal could have behaved.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think *The Other Ones* says about family and how different families may look, particularly in relation to Sal, Asha and their mother's relationship?
- Do you think this is really a ghost story—or are the ghosts just a metaphor for something else? If so, what?
- What do you think happens after the story has ended? Do you feel there's room for a sequel? If so, what would you like to happen?
- Which of the four friends do you think you are most similar to? Why?
- All Sal wants to do is fit in—how does this make you feel? Do you think this is right?
- What was the biggest surprise for you in the story?
- Asha initially disapproves of Sal and Pax's friendship—why do you think this is?
- *The Other Ones* includes representation of a LGBTQIA+ relationship—why do you think this is important?
- What do you think we can learn from this story about grief and dealing with bereavement?