

# Indigo in the Storm

AUTHOR  
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary



## SYNOPSIS

*We are the storm and the stillness.*

Indigo Michael isn't like other kids. And her mum isn't like other mums. Life for people like them isn't meant to have meaning—it's just something to survive in whatever way you can.

When her mum abandons her, Aster's Aunt Noni becomes her foster parent. Suddenly Indigo has a new 'family'—one she didn't ask for and isn't even sure she wants.

Then she meets Liam. He graffiti's revolutionary words across the world, words that make Indigo want to run towards something, build something, be something. For the first time in a long time, Indigo feels she has made a genuine friend, which makes it even harder when that friendship is betrayed . . .

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate Gordon grew up in a very booky house, in a small town by the sea in Tasmania. She also spent much of her time dreaming about being a writer, and spent many a lunch hour walking around the playground reciting poetry. The other children thought she was a little bit odd. After studying performing arts and realising she was a terrible actor, Kate decided to give in to genetics and study to be a librarian herself. She never stopped writing and in 2009 won a Varuna fellowship.

Kate's first book, *Three Things About Daisy Blue*, a Young Adult novel about travel, love, self-acceptance and letting go, was published by Allen and Unwin in 2010. Her second book, *Thyla*, was published by Random House Australia in April 2011 and her third book, *Vulpi*, the sequel to *Thyla*, was published in April 2012. She published another YA novel, *Writing Clementine*, in 2014 with Allen and Unwin.

Her recent publications include the CBCA Notable YA novel *Girl Running, Boy Falling* (Rhiza Edge), the Juno Jones, Word Ninja series (Yellow Brick Books), *The Heartsong of Wonder Quinn* (UQP) and a picture book called *Bird on a Wire* (Hardie Grant).

In 2021, Gordon won the prestigious Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards in the Younger Readers category for her novel *Aster's Good, Right Things*. In 2022, she wrote *Xavier in the Meantime*, a companion novel to *Aster*.

Kate lives in Hobart, in a mint-green cottage, with her husband, her very strange cat and a wonderful little girl who goes by the name of Tiger. Kate dreams that one day she and her little family will live in another cottage, by the beach, with

goats and chickens. In the meantime, she fills her house with books, perfects her gluten-free baking techniques, has marvellous adventures with Tiger, and she writes.

## THEMES

- Mental health
- Emotional Regulation
- Labelling
- Abandonment
- Family
- Parental Separation
- Fostering
- Friendship
- Identity
- Childhood/childishness
- Growth/change
- Resilience
- Changing the World

## STUDY NOTES

- Break into small groups and choose a theme from the list above. Choose some examples from the text that show how this theme is explored and present as a Powerpoint or Prezi.
- Before you start reading, examine the cover of the novel. What do you think the cover and the title suggest the book will be about?
- After you have read the novel, design your own cover. Write a short paragraph about your design choices.
- *Indigo in the Storm* is a companion novel to *Aster's Good, Right Things* and *Xavier in the Meantime*. Companion novels are independent stories written by the same author that use the characters and setting from an existing work. Discuss why the author may have chosen to write this story as a companion novel, rather than a sequel to *Aster's Good, Right Things*.
  - Research the companion novel form and compile a list of other examples.
- Indigo refers to her strong, turbulent emotions as her 'storm', while Aster refers to her anxiety as 'noise' and Xavier refers to his depression as 'the black dog.' Why do the characters use these metaphors to talk about mental illness?
  - Brainstorm metaphors for mental illness individually. As a class, discuss why we use metaphorical language to talk about mental illness, and whether there is still a stigma around discussing mental health.
- Liam is passionate about the environment, and he uses his art to raise attention for issues he is passionate about, in order to try and make a difference in the world. Pick an issue you feel passionate about (for example: the environment, technology, human rights) and create a poster with your idea about how to make a difference.
- In *Aster's Good, Right Things*, each chapter begins with with one of Aster's 'good, right things', while in *Xavier in the Meantime*, each chapter starts with one of Xavier's 'daily affirmations'. However, the chapters in *Indigo in the Storm* do not start with any sort of framing device. Discuss why you think the author chose to omit such framing devices from this book. What sort of effect do you think including a similar framing device would have had on this story, and on Indigo's character?
  - Brainstorm some ideas for framing devices similar to Aster's 'things' and Xavier's 'affirmations' that would suit Indigo's character and story.
- At times Indigo's emotions build and build until the storm explodes and she needs help to get through the overwhelm. Have you ever felt like your emotions are too much for you to cope with? Can you identify the types of support that helps Indigo throughout the novel?
  - Discuss strategies you can use when you're finding it hard to deal with big emotions.
  - Create a map of your support network. This might include friends, family, teachers, mental health professionals, youth group leaders, etc.

- At the beginning of the story, Indigo is hoping her mum will come back and blames herself for her mum's absence. By the end of the story, however, Indigo begins to understand that isn't going to happen. She also realises that she isn't to blame for her mother's choices. Identify passages/moments from the start and end of the novel that contrast the way she views her mother's absence towards the beginning and end of the story.
- Indigo often struggles to believe that anyone would want to be friends with her, or that people genuinely care. Towards the end of the novel, it becomes clear that she has a very strong and supportive group of friends and 'family'. Identify three reasons Indigo didn't trust in people's care for her, and three reasons why that changed.
- Invite students to write a character profile for the character of their choice. The profile could include details about the character's appearance, their thoughts, their feelings and even a drawing of what they imagine the character to look like.
- Create a character tree or map, on poster board, to show how each character relates to one another.