

Meet Me at the Moon Tree

AUTHOR
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

For Carina Sugden, there is nothing more special than a moon tree—a tree grown from the seeds taken on the 1971 Apollo mission into space. Her father taught her everything she knows about them. But he passed away before they found one together.

When Mum relocates the family to a small town in the Otway Ranges, Carina becomes determined to find a moon tree on her own. Like a scientist, she methodically searches the forest behind her new house. But after a mysterious encounter with a black cockatoo, Carina realises there's magic in this forest. And if magic really exists, anything is possible, like seeing her dad one last time . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shivaun Plozza is the award-winning author of *Frankie*, *Tin Heart*, *The Boy, the Wolf, and the Stars* and *A Reluctant Witch's Guide to Magic*. Her writing has been shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year, YALSA's Top Ten Best Young Adult Books of the Year, and the Gold Inky. She won the Davitt Award for Best Young Adult Crime Novel in 2017. She lives in Geelong with her cat, Fenchurch.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF NOTES

Christina Wheeler, is a practising teacher librarian with a background in the Australian curriculum (English).

THEMES

- Love
- Grief
- Acceptance
- Hope
- Courage
- Science
- Trees
- Magic

STUDY NOTES

- In your own words, explain what moon trees are. Why does Carina describe them as ‘magical trees’ (p 2)? How are they magical in *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*?
- Using evidence from the text, describe the relationship between Carina and her dad. Who in your life do you share a close relationship with? What is special about your bond?
- Carina and her dad are both described as having their heads ‘in the clouds’ (p 2). What does this mean? Why is there ‘nothing wrong with that’ (p 2)?
- Why is Carina so determined to find a moon tree? What is she really looking for?
- Why do you think Carina’s mum is so keen to move to the country? Why does she spend all of her time renovating the house?
- Describe the relationship between Carina and her brother, Jack. How does this change from the beginning to the end of the text?
- How are memories like seeds (see p 6)? Discuss the idea of ‘memory seeds’ used throughout *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*.
- What is it about trees that Carina loves so much? Discuss the use of personification on p 7 when Carina explains why she became a dendrologist.
- Create an illustrated table that shares the criteria for moon trees.
- In the role of Carina, record a notebook entry of your experiences in Forrest.
- What does Gramps mean when he says ‘sadness comes in all shapes and sizes’ (p 9)? How do the characters in the books experience their sadness differently? How do people in your life experience sadness? Share in a reflection.
- How do the promises Carina made to her dad affect her decisions in *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*?
- What role does the yellow-tailed black cockatoo play in *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*? Why, although they usually are in pairs, is Colin on his own? What does this symbolise?
- In what ways are Gramps and Carina similar? Describe their relationship. How would this story be different if Gramps wasn’t in it?
- Make predictions about the anger that Carina ‘[sucks] down’ and stores in her appendix (p 14).
- Imagine you are Dad. Write a set of Post-It note messages for Carina that shows your understanding of his character.
- How important is Treebeard to Carina? Give evidence to support your thinking.
- How is magic used as a theme in *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*?
- Carina notices changes in her mother’s face (p 19). Why does she wonder if her mum sees anything different in her?
- What do you think Carina wishes for when she sees a shooting star?
- Why does Carina worry that her mother may ‘end up so far away she can’t find her way back’ (p 20)?
- Why doesn’t Carina want the blinds of her new room to be closed (see p 20)?
- What do the stars represent in *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*?
- How are Carina and her dad like moon trees?
- How does meeting Betty help Carina?
- Why does Carina get embarrassed when Gramps calls her Rina-roo in front of Betty?
- How does Carina ‘grow a forest of memory seeds’ at her new home (p 31)?
- Why is ‘keeping old friends’ like Thea hard (p 32)? What advice would you give Carina about this?
- Why does Carina make friends with Colin?
- Why does Carina wish she was like Treebeard (see p 35)?
- Why doesn’t Carina want to go moon tree hunting anymore? Why does she feel like a ‘squashed bug’ (p 41)?
- Why does Carina have a ‘wibbly-wobbly feeling’ in her stomach every time she thinks about the moon tree (pp 41–2)?
- Explain what Carina means when she says, ‘I think there are things you know with your head and things you know with your heart’ (p 43). Why is she scared of ‘not finding the tree and . . . scared of finding it’?
- In the role of Carina, write a journal entry about missing people ‘even when they’re right in front of you’ (p 43).
- Why do Jack’s words have such a lasting impact on Carina?
- In what ways does spending time with Gramps help Carina?

- Why is Carina worried about making memories without Dad? How does she overcome this?
- What is the importance of science and magic to Carina?
- How is Carina like a *Mimosa pudica*?
- Carina finds the courage to tell Betty about moon trees. Why is it important to find someone ‘who likes me for me’ (p 57)? In a reflection, write about a true friend of yours who accepts you for who you are.
- Discuss Carina’s comment that ‘being brave doesn’t mean you’re not scared’ (p 58). When have you felt both brave and scared? Share with a friend.
- What does Carina mean when she describes missing her dad as sometimes being ‘a quiet buzzing in my ears and sometimes . . . like being dunked by tidal waves again and again and again’ (p 61).
- Carina and her dad performed a lot of science experiments together. Choose an experiment to do with a family member and share your findings with your class.
- Discuss the contribution of figurative language in *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*. Examples include:
 - The sun filters through the trees on both sides of the road, making tiny golden diamonds dance across my lap (p 24)
 - I feel like a science experiment (p 28)
 - The words zip around inside me like fireflies (p 59)
 - I have a lot of twisty thoughts to untangle (p 73)
 - Holding herself all stiff like she’s a robot that’s run out of oil (p 99)
 - A clap of thunder rumbles like an angry dragon (p 213)
- How does the ‘magic’ of the snow globe help Carina (pp 65–6)? In the role of Carina, write a journal entry after the globe is broken by Jack.
- In your own words, explain what ‘the wibbles’ are.
- Why does Carina feel that no-one else in her house understands memory seeds (p 71)? What is she worried may happen to her memories of Dad?
- Carina feels that she and Thea ‘grew into different shapes and now we don’t [fit]’ (p 72). Have you ever felt like this over a friendship? What advice would you give to Carina?
 - How is the ‘companion planting’ Gramps does in his vegetable garden a metaphor for friendship?
- How does reading letters from her dad help Carina?
- What does Carina mean when she refers to her mum’s smile as ‘silk flowers’ (p 82)? Why does she also see this ‘silk-flower smile’ in Nanna June?
- Create a character profile of Carina’s dad using evidence from the text to share your ideas.
- Carina says that ‘sometimes it’s the idea of doing something that’s scary and not the thing itself’ (p 96). Write a journal entry of a time this was true for you.
- Why does Carina feel like a ‘new stick’ (p 101) when she and Gramps go into town?
- Stop reading after Carina finds the moon tree (p 118). Write the next few paragraphs before reading on.
- What does Carina mean when she says, ‘Gramps tries to be strong all the time, but even the tallest redwood sways in the wind’ (p 124)?
- In the role of Carina, write your letter to Dad after finding the moon tree (before reading her letter starting on p 125).
- Why does Carina say that the memory seeds she has been planting ‘keep growing into weeds’ (p 138)?
- Why, when Nanna June asks Carina how she is, does she say, ‘It’s a big question. And the answer is even bigger’ (p 140)?
- Nanna June says, ‘if you don’t let out your feelings they turn into poison’ (p 141). How does Carina liken this to her appendix?
- Why does Carina say that ‘hope is magnetic’ (p 144)? Why is ‘not hoping’ harder than hoping? How does doubt ‘eat up all your hope’ (p 146)?
- Why does Carina feel as though she is ‘borrowing’ Betty’s dad (p 151)?
- In the role of Carina, write a journal entry about your day at the swimming hole with Betty and her family.
- Explain what Carina means by ‘riding a seesaw of feelings’ (p 156).
- What does Carina mean when she says, ‘Every happy thought I have has a shadow clinging to it’ (p 174)?

- Discuss the impact for Carina of the following statement: ‘Betty and me are beetroot and lettuce’ (p 178).
- Carina says, ‘When I slip between the two mother shield ferns, it feels like I’m stepping through a portal into another world’ (p 180). Why does she feel this way?
- Why do you think Carina’s dad lied to her about the moon tree?
- Why does Carina feel alone when lost in the forest? Is she alone?
- Discuss Carina’s realisation that she and her mum have been ‘missing each other because we didn’t stay still’ (p 227).
- How do Jack’s letters help Carina?
- How does the family meeting help the family to move forward?
- How does the author use the analogy of flowers and trees to explain how Carina’s family functions both before and after her dad’s death (see p 234)?
- How does talking about her feelings help Carina’s wobbles to become ‘less wobbly’ (p 235)?
- Why does Jack write the letters from Dad? What does this tell us about him?
- Explain Carina’s scientific theories of how wishes come true.
- How is the death of Carina’s dad like a black hole? How have stars, stardust, the moon, and magic been used to help tell this story?
- Discuss the tree motif throughout *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*. How is Carina like a tree?
- How is hope an important theme in *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*?
- How does writing letters help Carina? What helps you to express yourself? Why is this important?
- Write a series of questions to ask different characters in *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*. Take turns answering these questions in Hot Seat rotations.
- Discuss the symbolism of the tin can telephones and their vibrating strings.
- Throughout *Meet Me at the Moon Tree*, Carina mentions various scientists who have linked science with ‘magic’, including Isaac Newton, Marie Curie, Alexander Fleming and many more. Choose one of these to find out more about. Share the science behind one of their discoveries with your class.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

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