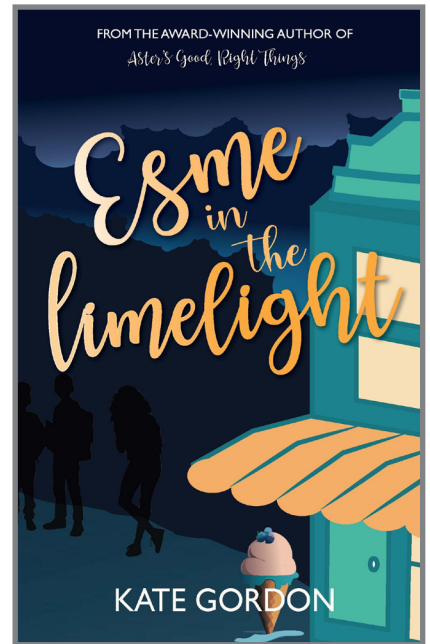


# Esme in the Limelight

AUTHOR

**KATE GORDON**



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**ISBN:** 9780645869316

**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Upper Primary/Lower Secondary

## SYNOPSIS

Esme has never liked the girl she saw in the mirror. Not pretty enough. Not thin enough. Not smart enough or talented enough. Nothing at all like her big sister, Ro.

Then, a new friend came into her life—a friend who wanted Esme to be exactly who she was, or so Esme thought. For a while, Esme liked who she saw in the mirror—even if it never really felt like her. But then, she messed up and her friend went away and she was alone again. Nothing could cover up the fact that she was a talentless nobody whose only real dream was to work in a milk bar. Which would never be good enough for her mum.

When two new friends try to help her see the real Esme again, she can't risk it happening all over again. She can't be their friend. And she definitely can't let them convince her to be in the school play . . .

School plays were for girls like Ro. So, of course she got a part. Because she was perfect. But what if Ro wasn't as perfect as she seemed? What if she needed Esme's help?

And what if the real Esme Rogers was nothing like who anybody said she was, but a creature of her own making, who could be more than any of them imagined . . . Even if it made her mother mad.

A book about finding friendship in unlikely places and finding yourself in even stranger ones . . .

And, most importantly . . . ice cream.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate Gordon grew up in a very bookish house, with two librarian parents, in a small town by the sea in Tasmania. In 2009 she won a Varuna fellowship and hasn't stopped writing since. Her first book, *Three Things About Daisy Blue*, was published by Allen and Unwin in 2010. She has since been published multiple times by everyone from Yellow Brick Books through to Random House Australia. Kate won the 2016 IBBY Ena Noel Award for *Writing Clementine*, and in 2018 was shortlisted in the Dorothy Hewett Awards for an Unpublished Manuscript. Her YA novel *Girl Running, Boy Falling* (2018) is a CBCA Notable. In 2021, *Aster's Good, Right Things* (published by Riveted Press) won the CBCA Book of the Year for Younger Readers, and in 2023, *Xavier in the Meantime* was shortlisted in the same category.

**THEMES**

- Mental health, including isolation, self-esteem, body image, eating disorders and perfectionism
- Parental expectations and sibling rivalry
- Pursuing your goals and dreams
- Resilience, friendship and hope

**STUDY NOTES****THEMES**

- Break into small groups and choose a theme from the list below, or another you can identify. Choose some examples from the text that show how this theme is explored and present as a Powerpoint or Prezi.
  - Mental health
  - Perfectionism
  - Self-esteem
  - Friendship
  - Body image
  - Goals and Dreams
  - Growth/change
  - Resilience
  - Courage
  - Parental expectations
  - Sibling relationships.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

- 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 reading, design your own cover for the novel. Write a short paragraph explaining your design choices.
- *Esme in the Limelight* is a companion novel to *Aster's Good, Right Things*, *Xavier in the Meantime* and *Indigo in the Storm*. 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 these stories as companion novels, rather than as a series.
  - Research the companion novel form and compile a list of other examples.
  - Choose any work for which you would like to write a companion novel. Write a persuasive letter to the publisher about why this companion novel should be written and include a sample paragraph.
- Esme sees herself as mist and fog, 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.