

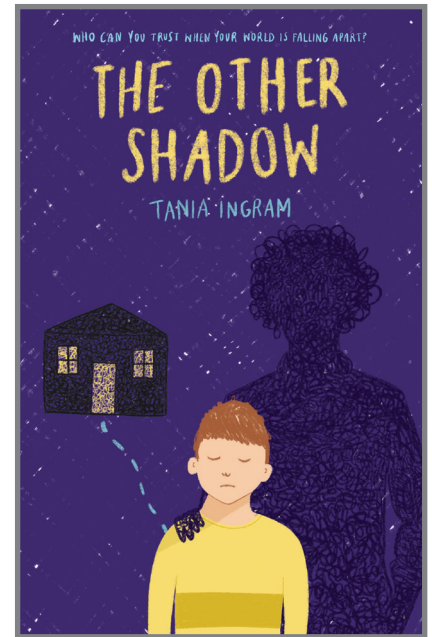
# The Other Shadow

AUTHOR  
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary



## SYNOPSIS

Life has not been easy for Thomas since his dad died.

His mother is acting strangely, he needs to care for his younger sister and things at school aren't great. And then there's the Other Shadow. The shadow that doesn't belong to anyone. The shadow that wants to be Thomas' friend. But who can you really trust when your world is falling apart?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tania Ingram is an internationally published author of children's picture books, novels and poetry. She has a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology and, prior to becoming an author, worked as a child psychologist. As well as creating books for young readers, Tania also writes stories and poetry for magazines and websites. She's a Premier's Reading Challenge Ambassador and enjoys giving fun, high energy presentations at schools and festivals to share her love of books and words.

## STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
  - What can you see happening on the cover of this novel?
  - What does the cover artwork tell you about the shadow in the title?
  - What type of shadow do you think the Other Shadow is likely to be?
  - What do you hypothesise might happen in this novel, and why do you think this?
  - Where and when do you predict this book might be set?
- Thomas's life is filled with a lot of sadness and emotionally distressing events. Which of the things that happened to Thomas, do you think was the hardest for him to cope with? As a class, discuss all the different answers everyone gave, and talk about your reasons for choosing this particular event, as being more challenging than the others.
- Why do you think Ollie says that Thomas's mother is 'crazy', when the Other Shadow seems to say to Thomas "crazy" is a cruel word to call anyone, especially someone with mental health problems.?' Based on the descriptions of Ollie and his behaviour later in this scene, how do you think he feels about his words and actions once he sees how upset Thomas is?
- Thomas's mother has bipolar disorder, which, while it can be well-treated with medication these days, as we see in the novel, a severe case like Thomas's mother can also be difficult to treat because people often dislike how the medication makes them feel. How common is bipolar disorder, and how does it affect people? In pairs or small

groups, research more about how it manifests, how it can be treated, and how it affects the person who has it, as well as their family, when it is untreated.

- What are some other mental health conditions that you have heard of? As a class, name as many of them as you can, and then write down next to each one what you know of it. In pairs or small groups, choose one mental health disorder that you have named, and research it further. Try to find out the sort of information that Thomas would have wanted to know about his mother's condition, and bring your findings back to share with the class.
  - As a class, discuss what the different groups found out, and compare their findings to the 'common knowledge' written next to the name of the disorder on your class list. How much of what you as a class thought you knew was wrong, incomplete, or misleading? How does knowing more about the actual details make you feel about discussing the topic of mental health? Be sure to include discussion of the impact that mental health disorders have on not just the sufferers, but also on their family and friends.
- The Other Shadow tells Thomas to 'Stop pretending that everything is okay when it's not.' Do you think that this is valuable advice for Thomas? What about for everyone else in all situations? As a class, discuss why trying to pretend that everything is okay can be damaging and make things worse, and why at other times it is all that someone can do to help themselves cope.
- At the start of each section of the novel, there is a different excerpt of poetry mentioning shadows or a shadow. As a class, discuss these excerpts, and what you believe each of them is saying. How do they talk of shadows? Are there any similarities or patterns in how the different poets address the subject of shadows?
- What are some of the different metaphorical ways that we use the word 'shadow', for eg. the phrases 'they cast a long shadow', 'they are always in the shadows', 'following you around like a shadow' and 'they have a shadowy past'. As a class, see how many more phrases or uses you can think of, and talk about how they are similar to each other and where they differ. What do these metaphorical usages say about how we as a society think about shadows?
- Write a short poem featuring the subject of shadows (or a shadow).
- Over the course of the novel, Thomas interprets the actions of the Other Shadow as variously supportive, disappointed or distressed. Choose one scene where Thomas describes the Other Shadow's behaviour, and re-read it. Can you see where his interpretation of the shadow's motive and or emotional state might be stemming from based on its behaviour?
  - In small groups, discuss how much we convey with body language, and how difficult it would be to use body language to convey emotion or understanding using only our shadows.
  - Create a shadow-screen in your classroom. Mount or hang a white or light sheet across one side of the classroom, leaving room behind it for people to move around. Place a bright light behind the screen and shining at it, dim the rest of the classroom lights and draw the blinds. Anyone walking between the light and the shadow screen should be visible as a crisp, shadow silhouette. Individually or in pairs, act out different scenes, vignettes and emotional states from behind the screen, while the rest of the class attempts to guess what you are trying to convey.
- When Thomas first goes to live with Ari and Becca, he sees a painting that Becca has done, which looks like it has the Other Shadow peeking in from the side. What mental pictures do you have of how the Other Shadow might appear to look like in different situations? Choose a scene from the book, and paint a picture illustrating what you think Thomas must have been seeing, being sure to include the Other Shadow.
- In small groups, or as a class, discuss the emotional impact of reading Thomas's story. How does reading this book make you feel? If you had to choose one descriptive word or phrase to share the emotional impact of this book, what would it be? What do you think is the saddest part of this story? What is the happiest and most hopeful part?

AUTHOR OF NOTES

**RAE CARLYLE**