

Don't Let the Forest In

AUTHOR
CG DREWS

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Secondary
(Language, Violence)



SYNOPSIS

On the first day back at boarding school, Andrew can't wait to find refuge in the twisted fairy tales that he writes for Thomas—the boy with hair like autumn leaves.

But Thomas' parents have vanished, and he has blood on his sleeve. Stranger still, Thomas won't talk to Andrew, even though he's always loved sketching the monstrous creatures from Andrew's stories.

Desperate to discover the truth, Andrew follows Thomas into the forest and catches him fighting a nightmarish monster—his drawings have come to life.

To ensure no-one else dies, the boys must battle the creatures every night. But as their obsession with each other grows stronger, so do the monsters, and Andrew fears the only way to stop them might be to destroy their creator.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CG Drews is the author of *A Thousand Perfect Notes*, *The Boy Who Steals Houses* and *Don't Let the Forest In*. CG's work has been translated into five languages, and was nominated for the 2020 CILIP Carnegie Medal and won the 2020 CBCA Honour Award. CG lives in Australia, never sleeps and is forever buried under a pile of unread books.

STUDY NOTES

- What genre do you think this novel is, and which other YA novel would you compare *Don't Let the Forest In* to?
- Why do you think stories and storytelling are so important to Andrew? How does it help him connect with Thomas?
- Why do you think the author CG Drews chose to include the snippets of Andrew's stories and the pages of Thomas' art? How did they affect your reading experience?
- 'Invisible was best. It was easier to speak less and hide his softest parts so he could fit between the shadows of the rich private school kids with their bored expressions and catlike claws,' (p 6). How does Andrew change his personality to stay under the radar at Wickwood, and how has this affected him?
- What did you think of Thomas as a character? Do you think you were able to form an unbiased view of him, since the novel is from Andrew's point of view?
- Discuss the way the theme of loyalty is explored in the novel, considering both the potentially positive and negative impacts.
- What do you think Thomas brings out in Andrew and why? How does their relationship change throughout the

course of the novel?

- In what ways do Lana and Chloe support Andrew when he tells them he's asexual? Discuss what it means to be part of the Ace community, using resources from Minus18 <<https://www.minus18.org.au/articles/what-does-it-mean-to-be-aseexual/?srsltid=AfmBOoom1cv6S9Mn9T34xQRYoa0Hz3ryHp3f7amWW2skhDlqbBS6crAx>> as a starting point.
- 'But Andrew was calm. Maybe it was because he'd grown used to packing his own anxiety into boxes and pasting on wan smiles while on the inside he imploded. Maybe he'd been freaking out for so long it felt normal', (p 140). How does Andrew face up to his anxieties, and how does the novel explore the theme of mental health?
- Did you have suspicions about 'what happened last year?' Did learning the truth surprise you? Why or why not?
- In the acknowledgments, author CG Drew says: 'If you've turned the last page and are now frowning at the wall, then everything is as it should be.' What did you think of the ending? Did you find it satisfying, or were you left with questions?