



Teachers' Notes

Jodie

Book 1: The Book of You

Randa Abdel-Fattah

Teachers' Notes Written by Carolyn Carter

OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Junior Fiction
Title	Jodie: The Book of You
Author	Randa Abdel-Fattah
Extent	192 pp
Age	10+
ISBN	978 1 74299 010 1

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Introduction

There's a lot going on in Jodie's life. It's her final year in primary school and her two best friends are in other classes. Charlotte Gorski's making her life difficult and if that's not enough, an anonymous blogger is picking on her too. Things aren't smooth sailing at home either. Her father is in a new relationship and Jodie has to learn to share him with Carla and her daughter, Samantha. But Jodie is getting help from her friends and an unexpected source – a mysterious book in which riddles magically appear. Even then, Jodie is faced with some difficult choices. With its themes of friendship, bullying and self-esteem, *The Book of You: Jodie* is an absorbing story, the first of four novels in The Book of You series for upper primary readers.

About the Author

Randa Abdel-Fattah is the award-winning author of the novels *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, *Ten Things I Hate About Me*, *Where The Streets Had A Name*, *Noah's Law* and *No Sex in the City*, and books for younger readers *The Friendship Matchmaker*, *The Friendship Matchmaker Goes Undercover* and *Buzz Off!* Randa is published around the world and regularly gives talks and workshops at schools and writers' festivals across Australia and overseas. She lives in Sydney with her husband, Ibrahim, and their two children. A former lawyer, Randa is also a human rights activist and is currently undertaking a PhD in sociology.

You can find Randa at www.randaabdefattah.com.

Reading the Text

Part One

Class discussion

After reading the first two chapters discuss your initial impressions. Here are some questions to help prompt the discussion:

- What do you learn about Jodie? How would you describe her to someone who hasn't read the novel?

- Can you relate to the characters and the story so far? If so, what is it that you can relate to?
- How do you think the plot will develop from here?

Research task

Your class is going to hold a mini Battle of the Minds competition with a range of quizzes, puzzles and riddles that test your general knowledge and problem-solving skills. Find (or create) five items that you can contribute. Divide into groups and share your quizzes, puzzles and riddles to see who can get the most correct answers.

Literary component

Authors use many elements to give you an insight into their characters' personalities. Look closely at the characterisation in *The Book of You: Jodie*. Visual cues (the dress and actions of characters), speech (what they say and what others say about them), and how characters relate to other characters combine to give readers clues. For example, we know that Carla is caring and understanding because she always treats Jodie kindly. Using the examples you find as a guide, write a piece on a set of imagined characters that conveys their personalities to a reader.

Part Two

Class discussion

- 1) What are the positive and negative aspects of friendship? In any friendship there will be times when there is conflict. What is conflict? What can you do when there is conflict?
- 2) Conflict occurs between the three best friends when Deyana and Rania learn about Jodie's plan to break up her father's relationship with Carla. How do Deyana and Rania react to this idea?
- 3) Rania believes that best friends should tell each other the truth, even if it is not what they want to hear. Do you agree or disagree with this logic?
- 4) What qualities do you look for in a friend? What qualities do you think your friends appreciate in you?

Research component

Think of a person you admire greatly. This can be somebody you know or someone you have never met. What does this person do (e.g. play sport, work in a profession, help others)? Which of their personal qualities do you admire the most (e.g. honesty, courage, helpfulness, ability to laugh and have fun)? To help answer these questions, think back to the literary exercise you completed in Part One. Consider this person's actions, what he/she says, what others say, and how he/she interacts with others. If it is someone you don't know well or have never met, do some research. Create a list of what you consider to be that person's most admirable qualities. Choose one of these and write a short story where the main character displays this same quality. Be creative with your genre, setting, plot and characters.

Literary component

The Book of You: Jodie is written in the first-person narrative, meaning the story is told from the point of view of the narrator who is talking directly to the reader. Readers see and hear everything from the narrator's point of view. We know when a story is written in the first-person because the pronoun 'I' is used. For example, Jodie says, 'Last night I was too excited to close my eyes ...' Choose a scene from the novel involving Samantha (Carla's daughter). Rewrite it with Samantha as the first-person narrator. Make sure you include her thoughts, speech and actions.

Part Three

Class discussion

- 1) Consider the statement: *a bully's greatest weapon is your fear*. Is this true?
- 2) How does Jodie find the courage to face her fears?
- 3) What happens when Jodie stands up to Charlotte Gorski?
- 4) At the end of the novel Jodie says that she is not afraid to stand tall. This is a metaphor – what does it mean?

Research component

Research an inspirational story about a person who found the courage to overcome his or her fears (e.g. competing in a major sporting event after suffering a severe

injury, speaking out publicly about a personal ordeal in order to help others, returning to a dangerous profession after being injured at work). Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on your findings to present to the class.

Literary component

Write a message in a bottle. The purpose of your message is to provide advice regarding bullying. Reflect on the class discussion about fear being a bully's greatest weapon and how Jodie found the courage to stand tall. You might like to write about this in your letter or you might want to offer advice about what to do if you or someone you know is being bullied, or how to protect yourself from cyber bullying. You could include examples from the novel, real-life situations or information you have gained from other sources.

After Reading the Text

Class discussion

What did you think of the novel? Here are some questions that you can use to prompt discussion:

- What do you think were the main messages in the novel?
- What does the novel suggest about friendship?
- What does the novel suggest about bullying?
- Was there a change in any of the characters' attitudes and behaviours by the end of the novel?
- Which character did you most sympathise with?
- Was the ending expected? Are issues resolved?
- Are you satisfied with the story?

Literary component

Complete at least one of the following activities attached to quotes from the novel.

- 1) *It's what's inside that counts.* (page 3) Write a piece using this sentence as the opening line. Be creative. Some ideas you might like to consider are a diary entry, poem or riddle.
- 2) *She's turned me into a mean girl.* (page 122) Write a news article with this as the headline. Remember that news articles show more than one side to a story.
- 3) *True friends are there for you no matter what.* (page 104) Write a response with close reference to characters and relationships in the novel.
- 4) *... special, inexplicable things happened to people sometimes ...* (page 32) Write a story where something special and inexplicable happens to one of the characters.

Extension Activities

- 1) Exciting chapter endings (cliff-hangers) make it hard for readers to put a book down. Imagine you are an author and write your own cliff-hanger. For an example, re-read page 20 in the novel.
- 2) Peacock Photos needs a new company logo. Create a simple design featuring an image of a peacock or peacock feather and incorporating the company name.
- 3) In groups, choose a scene from the novel and write a script to act out.
- 4) Jodie loves words, especially ones that have 'crusty, crunchy and crackly sounds' (e.g. sassy, twang). List five words that you think fit this description. Write a short creative piece using all of these words.
- 5) Is there an invention that you consider to be 'the best invention of all time'? Do some research on this invention and write a report on your findings.
- 6) Think of an occasion in the novel where you would have acted differently from one of the characters. Write about what happened and what you would have done.
- 7) Research the Australian gold rush and present your findings in a PowerPoint presentation.
- 8) Using invisible ink, write a message to someone in the class telling them something you like about them. A website where you can find out how to make invisible ink is:
<http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/experiments/invisibleink.html>.