

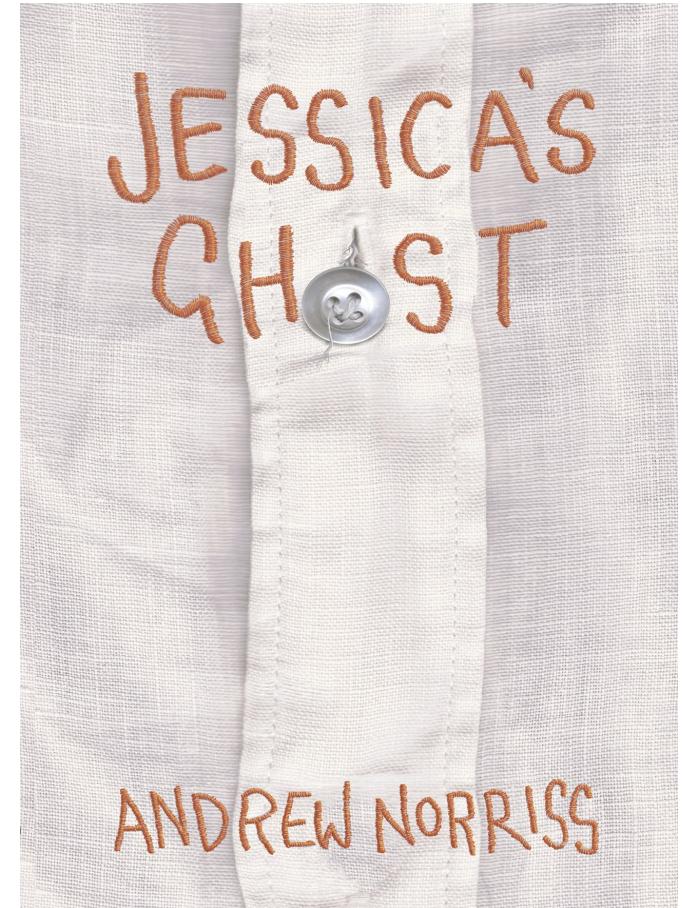
JESSICA'S GHOST

ANDREW NORRISS

When Francis meets a real 'live' ghost, Jessica, he's not the only one who can't believe what's happening. Jessica has been dead for a year now and no-one has been able to see her before.

As they attempt to unravel why, they soon discover other teens who can interact with Jessica. What connects her and the others, who've all just met, they wonder. The group band together to solve the mystery behind Jessica's inability to remember how she died. Unlikely friendships form and through the experiences they share, these teens learn something valuable: it's okay to be different.

About the author: Andrew Norriss is a British children's author and a writer for television. He won The Whitbread (Costa) Children's Book Award in 1997 for **Aquila**, which was also adapted for television for the BBC. Andrew has retired from giving talks in schools and libraries around the country for children and teachers, but is still writing. **Jessica's Ghost** was shortlisted for The Costa Children's Book Award 2016.



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STUDY NOTES

- 'There's things going on all over the place, and I can watch any of it'. (p 18) If you were a ghost where would you go? Describe your chosen place(s) and what you do there. Would you do anything different that you wouldn't in life? Why?
- 'Everything about her — apart from the fact that she was dead — was too normal to be scary.' (p 19) How does context have an impact on whether or someone/something is scary? Using this extract as a starting point, what literary devices can be used to make things scary or not scary?
- Imagine and write a different version of Jessica meeting one of the characters in the novel. It may help to pick a specific genre and write using its conventions.
- Francis is creating an illustrated history of fashion in the last fifty years by designing and making clothes for dolls. Select some fashion styles and assign each to a group in class to research. They are to present their findings to the class in a presentation that can use any media or performance they consider apt for their style.
- Re-read pp 26–28. Discuss Jessica's predicament. Why doesn't she feel free?
- Think about other ghosts you've read about or watched in films/television. How do they compare with Jessica's ghost character? How do these ghosts 'interact' with humans?
- Debate topic: Ghosts should always be scary in stories.



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- Why are ghosts fascinating? How do we fear and celebrate ghosts in our culture? Consider organising a ghost tour for the class.
- 'It can't just be coincidence, can it?' (p 33) Discuss whether students believe in coincidences. Can they think of other stories where coincidence and/or chance is a theme. Why do you think this theme is appealing?
- How does worrying about what other people say impact Francis? Should people worry about other people's opinions? Discuss instances where yes and no answers might apply.
- 'The boys don't want her around because she's a girl, and the girls don't want her because, well, she's not very girly.' Discuss Andi's situation. What factors in society contribute to others isolating her? Do you think it's appropriate to always categorise people (and things) as girly or boyish?
- 'I think I'm just made differently ... But I've always envied people like you.' (p 91) How do Francis and Andi see each other? Do you think people need to be like-minded to admire one another or can opposites attract? Explain your answer.
- Discuss The Pit (pp 142–143) with the class. What are the factors that lead to Jessica feeling like she's in The Pit? Why do you think it's hard even when people are nice to Jessica? Do you think anyone could feel similarly? Discuss what avenues are available for people when they feel this way? Consider initiatives such as R U OK day.
- 'Why, Francis wondered, should "being different" be so painful? Why did it matter so much when, if you thought about it, everybody was different in one way or another.' (p 238) How can feelings

of being different be amplified by the world and events around someone? How can labels others attribute to individuals have a positive or negative impact? What are some things people can do to minimise the painful feelings someone might have?



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