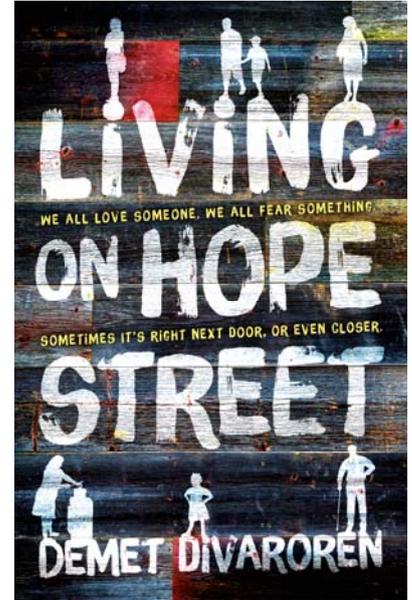


Living on Hope Street

By Demet Divaroren

June 2017 ISBN 9781760292096 paperback
Recommended for readers aged 14 years and older



Summary

Living on Hope Street follows the struggles, clashes and connections of seven residents who face the harsh challenges of life in working-class Melbourne. Kane wants to protect his family from his dad's fists. Sam wants to feel safe. Angie wants to protect her sons. Mrs Aslan longs to reconnect with her estranged family. Patriotic Mr Bailey is suspicious of the African refugee family next door. Gugulethu is trying to find her place in a strange new country, while Ada struggles to piece together her identity.

Living on Hope Street shines a light on contemporary society and delves beyond stereotypes to explore themes of intergenerational violence, cross-cultural friendships, class, multiculturalism and redemption.

Use in the curriculum

Living on Hope Street is suitable for the Year 9 or 10 English classroom. It directly addresses the Australian Curriculum, *explor[ing] themes of human experience and cultural significance, interpersonal relationships, and ethical and global dilemmas within real-world and fictional settings and represent[ing] a variety of perspectives.*

Language

Before reading, students should look at the chapter headings and accompanying images and relate them to the cover. How many main characters are there?

The most noticeable language feature is the shift in voice from first person (all the young people and Mrs Aslan) to third person omniscient (Mr Bailey and Angie). What might prompt this choice? A second prominent feature is the use of 'migrant English' and idiomatic usage e.g. 'Bro', 'we got no dog'. How does this affect the readers?

[\(ACELA1567\)](#) [\(ACELA1550\)](#) [\(ACELA1553\)](#) [\(ACELA1557\)](#)

Literature

The themes and characters provide numerous points for students to express their emotional responses to events and critical responses to issues. Comparing their judgements of characters after reading the first chapter from each character's perspective with their judgements at the end of the book leads to valuable insights and, possibly, debate.

[\(ACELT1642\)](#) [\(ACELT1634\)](#) [\(ACELT1635\)](#) [\(ACELT1812\)](#)

Literacy

Assessing the effectiveness of the language features above leads to an understanding of their use for a specific purpose and an evaluation of the work's literary value. [\(ACELY1742\)](#)

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Contact Carolyn Walsh, Education Marketing Coordinator,
Ph: +02 8425 0150 Fax: 02 9906 2218 Email: education@allenandunwin.com

Themes

- Australian identity
- working class life
- male violence
- power of kindness and love
- cross-cultural friendships and marriages
- intergenerational conflict in migrant families
- overcoming fear by finding common ground

Discussion questions

1. Literary Technique:
 - (a) Read the first chapter of the novel in class. Consider the mood that is established. How does setting (a normal domestic dinner), diction ('The lamb roast looked like a giant fist.' p. 1), dialogue, and point-of-view work together to create a mood of impending and then actual violence?
The following website may be of use <https://literarydevices.net/mood/> .
 - (b) Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from multiple points of view? What is to be gained by this approach and is anything lost?
 - (c) Ask students to 'walk a mile in someone else's shoes' and rewrite a passage from the POV of one of the characters.
2. Characterisation:
 - (a) 'Mr Bailey is a stereotypical racist.' Respond to this statement by comparing and contrasting Mr Bailey's responses to the African family next door and his daughter Katie's family.
 - (b) 'His laughter had rumbled through the flat. "Good thing our love isn't made from skin," he said.' p. 82. Is there anything in the novel that evokes sympathy for Dean?
 - (c) Which character changes the most over the course of the novel?
Describe this change and the events in the novel that created the catalyst for the change.
3. What does Mrs Aslan mean when she says, '[Australia] be good to us, it have many faces, just look this street! Australia give us a full stomach, house for hard work but it take away much too.' p. 161. What are some of the things Mrs Aslan feels she has lost? What have Gugulethu and her family lost in coming to Australia?
4. Read the scene where Kane confronts Bad Bill out loud in class. p. 189-91.
What is happening in this scene?
How has the author conveyed the idea that Kane is mixing the present moment with past memories?
5. *My lip curled, and I lifted my chin. 'I know all about the real world. I've taped my mouth and tied my hands at school protests to stand up for asylum seekers and refugees, thank you. My school teaches us to stand up to injustice.'...I watched the news, read books, I knew the meaning of empathy.* pp. 210-11.
What do you think the author is implying here about practical help for refugees versus political gestures?
6. Whole Class Discussion:
'Does *Living on Hope Street* make you feel 'hopeful' for Australia's future?'
Explain your reasons in relation to the characters' responses to issues such as diversity, domestic violence, refugees and multiculturalism.

Further reading

Students have probably encountered some of the many 21st century Australian novels for teenagers around the theme of cultural diversity. A selection of such novels that may be new to students is below. More novels are referred to in the links below. The issue of diversity in YA literature is widely discussed on social media. If students have not already discovered the book-blogging and tweeting world, they should be introduced to it. Students can discuss and debate the issues raised, such as 'who can write about people of colour?', 'How can I write about cultures I don't belong to?' etc. Some starting points are:

<http://loveozya.com.au/topic/diversity/> (and explore the other sections of this website, started by writers, readers and publishers of Australian Young Adult literature)

<http://loveozya.com.au/love/dear-ya-white-are-you-doing/>

<http://loveozya.com.au/love/readmuslimoz/>

<http://loveozya.com.au/love/readasianoz-poster/>

<http://diaryofareadingaddict.blogspot.com.au/2017/01/the-bookish-diversity-link-list-2017.html>

<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23DiverseBookBloggers&src=tyah>

<http://justinelarbalestier.com/blog/2016/11/14/guest-post-ambelin-kwaymullina-thoughts-on-being-an-ally-of-indigenous-writers/>

Novels

Keepinitreal by Don Henderson. Omnibus Books. 2009.

For younger readers; a funny, warm story of a working-class community, Victory Gardens.

The Way We Roll by Scot Gardner. Allen & Unwin 2016.

Set in the western suburbs of Melbourne, about the friendship between a working class and a middle-class boy. Focuses on male relationships and feelings.

Omega Park by Amy Barker. University of Queensland Press. 2009.

A working-class community and a son's ethical dilemma when he witnesses a tragedy and sees sides taken and social unrest resulting from a misconception.

Grace Beside Me by Sue McPherson. Magabala Books. 2012.

Warmer, often humorous, look at a country community. Fuzzy Mac must find her place in the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous world, while struggling with the ever-present Grace, one of the spirits and ghosts that she communes with. See also:

<http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/grace-beside-me/article/2017/01/17/nitv-commissions-first-ever-scripted-live-action-childrens-series-grace-beside-me>

The Incredible Here and Now by Felicity Castagna. Giramondo. 2013.

Short, tight book centred around a boy growing up in Parramatta.

Bro by Helen Chebatte. Hardie, Grant, Egmont. 2016.

Looks at the ugly side of mixed communities divided along ethnic lines (Lebs, Ozzies etc.) which feeds into young male violence with tragic consequences. Can any of these young men break out of their rigid cultural identities?

Tin Soldiers by Ian Bone. Lothian. 2000

Ethnically divided suburban life, again seen through the prism of young male violence.

Books and plot summaries were found on Magpies' The Source. Many school libraries subscribe to this excellent service. <https://www.magpies.net.au/the-source/>



About the author

Demet Divaroren is the co-editor of the CBCA short-listed *Coming of Age: Growing up Muslim in Australia*. Demet was born in Adana, Turkey, and migrated to Australia with her family when she was six months old. She teaches creative writing at TAFE and writes fiction and non-fiction exploring life, love and the complexities of human emotions. She writes:

'I was born on a couch in my mum's childhood home in Adana, Turkey. Mum was one of eight children and gave birth to me when she was fifteen. I migrated to Australia with my family when I was six months old and lived in Footscray and Meadow Heights. As a child, I watched the world from afar. I was shy and scared to raise my voice.

As I got older, I fell in love with books and suddenly my life extended beyond one Melbourne suburb to the rest of the world. Books made me love, laugh, cry and question things. They inspired me to write and create worlds, characters and diverse voices. Writing is my way of being part of something bigger. It is freedom and expression, a way for me to articulate the things that bug me, that make me happy, that fascinate and move me, that confuse and challenge me.

Living on Hope Street is my third novel but the first to be published. It's a story I've wanted to tell for many years. I've always been passionate about giving a voice to disenfranchised kids, especially those affected by domestic violence. When I was eight years old I lived in Turkey for a brief time. My grandmother lived next door to a woman who was often abused by her alcoholic husband. Her kids would frequently come over and ask my grandfather for help. I've never forgotten those kids or my feeling of helplessness that haunts me still.

Living on Hope Street captures my passion for diversity, multiculturalism, cross-cultural friendships, and challenging stereotypes. Diversity is a huge part of my life. My husband is Indian-Catholic and people often wonder how the Turkish/Indian, Muslim/Catholic mix "works." Simple, I tell them. We are human first.'

Author's inspiration

Living on Hope Street started its life as a short story about two young brothers who live in a violent household. I was sitting at the hairdresser when I first heard my main character's voice. "When Dad broke Mum," he said and that was enough of a hook for me to work backwards and ask questions to understand his world and find his story. The story gradually grew into a novella and finally a novel that's told from multiple perspectives. I've always been passionate about giving a voice to disenfranchised kids, especially those affected by domestic violence. When I was eight years old I lived in Turkey for a brief time. My grandmother lived next door to a woman who was often abused by her alcoholic husband. Her kids would frequently come over and ask my grandfather for help. I've never forgotten those kids or my feeling of helplessness that haunts me still.

Some days it was really hard to write *Living on Hope Street*, especially when I was writing the darker/violent scenes. I felt physically sick and angry and would chip at them in small doses. After a certain point, I focused on the craft of writing and that helped me get past the emotions and move forward.

Why this novel? The laws that are meant to protect women and children leave them exposed and vulnerable. With this book, I hope to challenge us as a society to stand up and not turn a blind eye to domestic violence—to raise our voice and inspire change.