

# Royals

by Tegan Bennett Daylight

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

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### THEMES

Identity

Relationships

Isolation

Discrimination

Mental health

Technology and social media

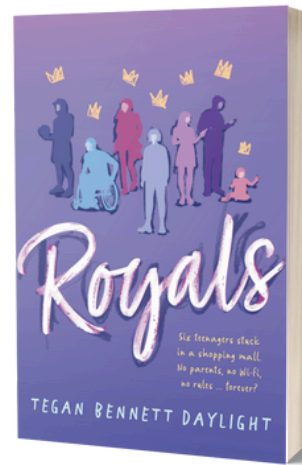
Sustainability and consumerism

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tegan Bennett Daylight is a writer, teacher and critic. Her books include the Stella Award shortlisted *Six Bedrooms* and the novels *Safety* and *Bombora*. She lives in the Blue Mountains with her husband and two children.



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### A group of teenagers alone in an empty shopping centre, with everything they could possibly want ... and a baby?

With no phones, no internet and no way out, Shannon and five other trapped teens are completely disconnected from the outside world... and their online lives. It's hard to say whether they'll be driven to delinquency, or – even worse – forced to make friends irl.

Will the limitless bubble tea, Maccas and new sneakers be enough to keep the six teens satisfied until they can find a way out, or is this the start of something much more sinister?

In *Royals*, her new novel for young adults, acclaimed author Tegan Bennett Daylight upends *Lord of the Flies* to find out what really happens when there are no adults in the room.

### Curriculum Links and Activities Guide

#### Learning areas: English Language & Literature

The following icons have been used throughout this guide to signify links to the Australian Curriculum Core Capabilities and English 7-10 Sub Strands.

#### • Core Capabilities

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Ethical Understanding
- Personal and Social Capability
- Intercultural Understanding

#### • Cross Curriculum Priorities

- Sustainability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

#### • English: Sequence of content 7-10, Sub Strands:

- Literature and Context:
- Responding to Literature:
- Examining Literature
- Creating Literature

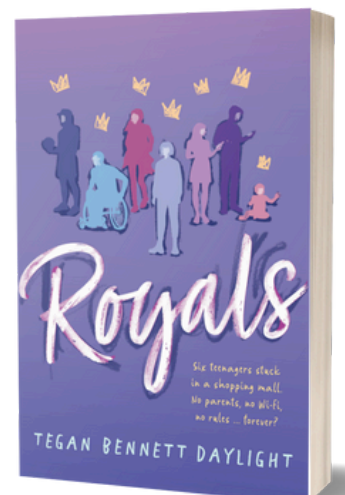
## Classroom Discussion Points and Activities



### Pre-reading

Before reading the novel, students could consider the following questions:

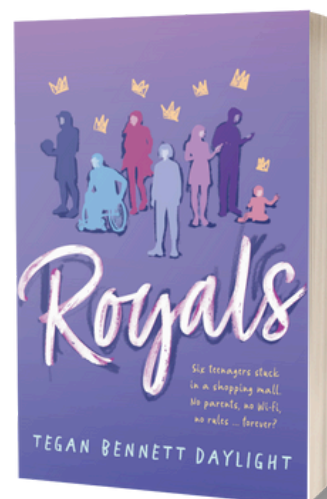
- Imagine you are trapped inside a shopping centre with no one else: what is the first thing that you would do? Later, students might compare their initial answers to the choices of the characters in the novel, discussing who they relate to the most and why.
- At times, this novel refers to the Coronavirus lockdowns experienced by many[KE1] Australian cities in 2020-21. During this time, you might have been in one of these cities. What can you remember about this time? What were some of the challenges that isolation presented for you? What positives did you draw from this time?
- An important aspect of this text is the way it explores our relationship with technology, particularly mobile phones. How would you describe your relationship with your phone? What positives come from your phone? What negatives? Do you think older generations (your teachers or parents) understand the role of phones in your life?
- Discuss the title of the book and the front cover.
- What connotations does the word 'royals' have? How would you describe royalty? Are there any downsides to being royalty? What might they be?
- What stands out to you about the front cover? Do you notice anything that seems out of place or any images and text that contradict each other?
- On A3 paper, write a list of questions and predictions that you have about the text. Teachers might hang these on the wall to return to as your study of the book continues.



## Classroom Discussion Points and Activities

### Part One: Disappearing

- In Part One, we are introduced to each of the characters through the first-person narration of the protagonist, Shannon. What do we learn about Shannon in the opening of the novel? What does she hope for? What does she fear?
- How is an atmosphere of uncertainty created in the opening pages of the novel?
- As students read, they can create a character charts, identifying Shannon's first impressions of each character.
- Make note of which characters are named right away and which aren't, their physical descriptions, and the way Shannon observes their behaviour. As you continue to read, build these character profiles using quotations to illustrate the following:
  - Character details, personality traits, values, relationships with others, fears and hopes.
  - You could also consider how this information is revealed, is the characterisation direct (revealed explicitly through dialogue or physical descriptions) or indirect (revealed through behaviour, thoughts, relationships). Authors use a combination of both – see if you can identify where the two types of characterisation are used.
  - What do you notice about Shannon's first impressions? Do they change over time?
- James and Jordan decide to name the baby 'Juno', which Shannon thinks is in reference to the film. Do some research – where does the name Juno come from? What does it mean? Why do you think this name was chosen?
- Make a list of the mysterious things the group discover about their surroundings. Keep adding to this list as you read through the novel. Why do you think the details are revealed gradually to us? What effect does this have?



## Classroom Discussion Points and Activities



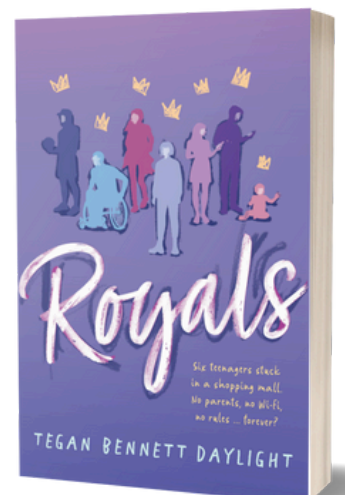
### Part Two: Royals

- This section begins with Shannon referencing a series of novels and films that feature people – mostly teenagers – who have been forced together into an isolated environment. These include, *Squid Game*, *The Hunger Games*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *The Breakfast Club*.
  - Research each of these, writing a brief description of what happens to the groups who are trapped together. In what way does *Royals* appear to challenge the narratives in these stories?
  - Why do you think Bennett Daylight does this? Where else do we see her challenging assumptions and stereotypes about teenagers?
- The group has everything they could possibly want or need with endless replenishing food and products, though there is a downside – their waste remains. Where do we see this start to accumulate? Do you think there is a broader warning in this story about the way we view the products and the waste in our lives?
- At the end of this section, Akira and Shannon have a conversation about ‘living like royals’. They discuss the palace at Versailles, Marie Antoinette, and the Court of Louis the 14th. What happened to these historical figures? Why do you think they were included here?



### Part Three - The Interview Series

- In this section, the characters decide to interview one another, filming it as a record of their experiences in the centre. Return to the character profiles that you created earlier – add to them using the information gathered during each interview. Remember to consider direct and indirect characterisation.
- In this part of the novel, each of the characters’ memories begin to fade. Why is this so ominous?
- Across many of the interviews, characters discuss the multiple forms of discrimination that they have faced at school and in their lives outside (homophobia, ableism, racism, misconceptions regarding mental health). Through Shannon’s first-person narration, we also see the ways in which her own perceptions of characters and her surroundings change. For example, she begins to see the physical spaces in the text differently when she realises that they are not designed with Jordan in mind. Drawing from examples across the novel, answer the following extended response question:
  - In what ways does the characterisation in the novel challenge negative stereotypes and social prejudices?



## Classroom Discussion Points and Activities

### Part Four: Home

- Grace and Shannon's interviews are conducted differently to the rest of the group, as Grace insists that they are interviewed together. Why do you think Grace does this? What is revealed about both Shannon and Grace here?
- In the final section, the group decide to have a party. Look at the way the narration changes in the party sequences, where Shannon's memory of time is altered. What is the effect of this shift in narrative style?
- Why do you think the group are compelled to destroy the Apple Store? What might it represent for them?
- Closely read the final pages of the novel, from the moment Shannon is left alone in the shopping centre. How is tension built in this extract? You might like to consider the physical descriptions of the setting and the products as they begin to multiply uncontrollably. Why is this image so terrifying?

## Post-reading

### Creative and Reflection Tasks

- Imagine the group get back together a year later to conduct another interview series, reflecting on their time in the shopping centre. Students may take on the role of two characters and perform the interview for the class.
- Discussion: do you think any of the characters would be changed by this experience? In what way?
- Has this novel invited you to reconsider any of your relationships? You might like to think about your relationships with family, friends, the environment, or those in society whose lives you might not know very much about.

