



Allie McGregor's list of problems is longer than a list of movie credits.
House renovations have forced Allie to share her room with her mouse-loving sister, Sarah.
Her dad, Will, calls Allie 'The Hormonal One' during his popular radio program.
Her brother, Riley, is just plain gross.
Her best friend Lou is fighting with Allie's new friend, Romy.
Oh, and Allie's mum has cancer.

Allie's world is in turmoil. Not only is she facing 'normal' teenage issues of peer pressure and working out where she fits in the world, but she's also trying to cope with her dad broadcasting her life, upheaval at home and a sick mother.

Allie McGregor's True Colours by **Sue Lawson**

Teacher Notes prepared by **Sue Lawson**

Readership: Upper primary,
junior to mid secondary)

Genre: Fiction

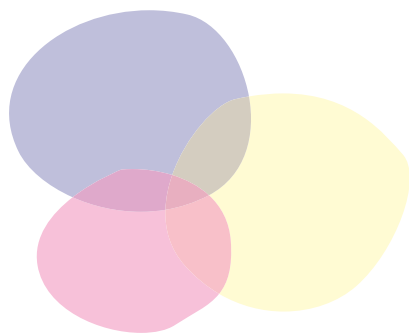
The Writing

- Find the full lyrics to the song, *True Colors* and discuss why you think the author included this song in the novel.
- Having read the novel and the song lyrics, what do you think is the significance of the book's title?
- When Allie's mum announces that Allie has helped her choose the song she'll sing for graduation, Will teases Allie, suggesting a number of possibilities. (Page 56). In groups, brainstorm a list of songs that would also reflect the themes covered in *Allie McGregor's True Colours*.

First Person

First person point of view allows the reader to form a close bond with the novel's main character. Everything the reader experiences in the story comes through the narrator, the 'I' character. This allows the reader to intimately know what the character is thinking and feeling.

- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of first person point of view.
- How do you think *Allie McGregor's True Colours* would change if it was written in third person?



- Write a list of questions you'd like to ask Allie McGregor and try answering them from her point of view.
- Try a change of point of view. Rewrite the scene at Aroma (page 32) from Lou's point of view. Comment on the differences between Allie and Lou's point of views of the same scene.

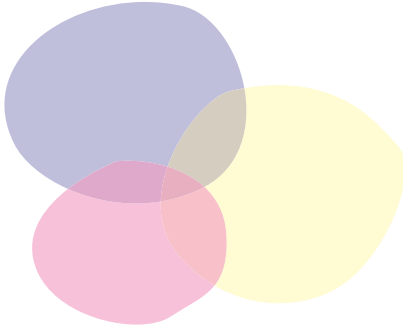
Group Discussion

Characters

- Allie is clearly going through a traumatic time. In groups, describe what you think Allie was like before her mum was diagnosed with cancer.
- Allie used to tell her family 'spread the love' (page 58). Discuss what you think she meant.
- Authors need to know their characters intimately. Many authors compile character profiles of their characters.
- Using the form supplied at the end of these notes, create character profiles for Allie, Lou and Romy.
- Think about Mandy and her behaviour. How would you describe her?
- Just like real people, characters are complex. Take Will McGregor for example. He appears to be relaxed and happy, but how do you think he's really coping with the turmoil surrounding his family? Write a page from Will's point of view describing his feelings.

The Party

- Discuss why Allie drank the beer but refused a cigarette at the party. Every day we are bombarded with images about the effects of drinking, drugs and cigarettes on our health, yet still people drink, take drugs and smoke cigarettes. How much pressure are teenagers under to smoke and drink? Is the pressure greater for boys or girls? Do you believe there are double standards in Australian society relating to drinking and smoking? Explain your response.
- In your opinion, how effective are the anti-smoking and drinking advertising campaigns?



Friendship

- As well as trying to cope with the situation in her family, Allie was trying to work out where she fitted in at school and in the world. Is it important to feel like you fit in?
- When did you first start to feel that Romy wasn't a true friend?
- Why do you think Lou recognized Romy as a fake before Allie did?
- Reread the fight scene between Lou and Allie (page 101).
 - Describe first Allie's then Lou's emotions.
 - Do you think what Lou said deserved Allie's reaction?
 - Could Lou have approached Allie and the subject of Romy differently?
- If a friend of yours was making bad choices, how you try to help them?

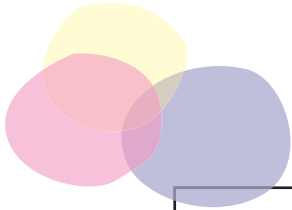
Grief

Grief is an emotion we associate with death, but there are many different types of experiences that cause grief. Discuss what these experiences could be.

- What do you think Allie was grieving for?
- Allie had an ever growing list of problems. Which of them was having the greatest impact on her behaviour and decision making?

Everybody copes with grief differently. Some cry and wail, others stew. Describe Allie's response.

- Why do you think she found it so hard to talk about her feelings?
- In groups, brainstorm other ways she could have handled her feelings.
- What ways can you best help a friend who is struggling with grief?



Character Profile

Name/Nickname:	
Age/Sex:	
Born:	
Lives:	
Description:	
Education:	
Ambition:	
Family: Mother Father Brothers Sisters	
Habits/Hobbies:	
Favourite clothes:	
Likes:	
Dislikes:	
Favourite Food:	
Favourite Book:	
Fav. Movie/TV:	
Other:	