



# Wakefield Press

## TEACHERS' NOTES

### Indigo Owl

By Charlie Archbold

Notes prepared by Charlie Archbold © 2020



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## 1. Introduction to *Indigo Owl*

*After Earth was destroyed by climate change and overpopulation, private corporations colonised new planets. On one such planet, Galbraith, the fertility of its citizens is tightly controlled. But at what cost?*

When Scarlet Bergen leaves her childhood home to be trained at the Arcadia Institute, harnessing her psychic Solitaire talents, it feels like the beginning of her future. But on the Institute steps, her father whispers a life-changing secret about the past. Her mother, a geneticist who disappeared when Scarlet was ten, had enemies...

Scarlet vows to discover the truth about her mother – and is joined in her mission by fellow cadets with their own family secrets and special talents: tech-savvy Rumi, a tenacious truth-hunter, and Dylan, the aloof classmate who can literally read her mind.

Together, they'll uncover a planet-wide conspiracy ... and discover that there's little the Galbraith Executives won't do to get what they want.

***Indigo Owl* is a fast-paced dystopian adventure from author Charlie Archbold, winner of the 2018 Children's Book Council of Australia Honour Book for Older Readers.**

## 2. About the author

**Charlie Archbold** was born in London.

She completed a degree in drama before training as a teacher and has worked as an educator for twenty-five years. She recently completed a Master of Education in Studies of Asia. After travelling extensively she settled in Australia and lives with her family in Adelaide.

*Mallee Boys*, her first novel, was an Honour Book for Older Readers in the Children's Book Council Awards. It was published after winning the 2016 Adelaide Festival Unpublished Manuscript Award.

### ***Praise for Charlie Archbold's Mallee Boys***

'A story of love, mateship, growing up in the country and chasing your dreams. While a YA book, it's engaging for adults, who will be transported back to those awkward teenage years and may find it's hard to fight back that lump in the throat at the climactic end. A hidden gem.'

– Shelley Hadfield, *Herald Sun*



Photo by Deb Smith

'Charlie Archbold ... explores masculinity with great perceptiveness and verisimilitude.

It's a novel that teenage boys will recognise themselves in - a feat difficult for any writer to achieve.'

– Cameron Woodhead, *Age/Sydney Morning Herald*

'A well-paced and ultimately suspenseful tale full of convincing and engaging characters.'

– Katharine England, *Advertiser*

### 3. Inspiration behind the novel

Around the world, population clocks are counting upwards. Second by second, hour by hour, day by day, deaths and births are recorded. Global population growth is a complex question we face in our efforts to mitigate climate change. The ethics around this are complicated and a huge challenge for the twenty-first century.

Should states and governments have input into people's rights to have children? Should fertility choices be monitored and regulated? Who decides? What right do others have to make these deeply personal choices for us?

In *Indigo Owl*, the executives of the planet Galbraith have made one such decision. A condition of living there is that all fertility is managed by the state.

The character Dylan's father says to him, 'Do you think it's easy to maintain a planet with optimum conditions for life? Our work is constant for the good of Galbraith. Some people have to make tough decisions so you can have all you've got.' Therefore, on Galbraith, all young women are given a sterilisation vaccine.

But Scarlet, Rumi and Dylan challenge this premise and, as the corruption behind it is revealed, it opens dialogue about the ethics of such draconian population regulation.

### 4. Key curriculum links

General Capabilities *Ethical Understanding* Level 5/6 'In the Australian Curriculum: English, students develop ethical understanding as they study the social, moral and ethical positions and dilemmas presented in a range of texts. They explore how ethical principles affect the behaviour and judgement of imagined characters in texts and the real-life experiences of those involved in similar issues and events.' (ACARA)

General Capabilities *Critical and Creative Thinking* Level 5/6 'English ... In discussion, students develop critical thinking as they share personal responses and express preferences for specific texts, state and justify their points of view and respond to the views of others.' (ACARA)

#### Learning Area, English Year 8–10, Literature & Language

- Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635 - Scootle )
- Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812 - Scootle )
- Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635 - Scootle )
- Understand that authors innovate with text structures and language for specific purposes and effects (ACELA1553 - Scootle )
- Compare and contrast the use of cohesive devices in texts, focusing on how they serve to signpost ideas, to make connections and to build semantic associations between ideas (ACELA1770 - Scootle )

## 5. Discussion questions and activities prior to reading the book

- *Indigo Owl* is told from the alternating perspectives of Scarlet, Dylan and Rumi. The structure of the book makes it easy to follow and track character actions and motivations. Why do you think authors use first-person in narratives? What other narrative devices are used in this book and why are these linguistic choices made?
- Investigate instances where population regulations have been applied. What are the ethical implications and outcomes of such policy? What are the racial, economic, belief system, ramifications?
- In groups, develop a debate and or drama piece. One side representing the Galbraith executive lobbying for the sterilisation vaccine. The other side representing Scarlet, Dylan and Rumi lobbying against it.
- In the story some friendships unravel and some new friendships are made. How do we navigate conflict and differences of opinion within our friendship groups?
- We live in a world where we have never had so much access to information. What are issues that matter to you, and like Greta Thunberg for example, what causes could you advocate for and how?