

THE BOY I AM

BY K.L. KETTLE

Activity Sheets & Educational Resource Pack

SUITABLE FOR

Extracts: Year 9+ • Whole novel: KS3 upward, at your discretion • in the tradition of *Noughts & Crosses* and *The Handmaid's Tale*

Mature themes, handled with care — full content note & support links at the back (p.23).

EXPLORE THEMES OF

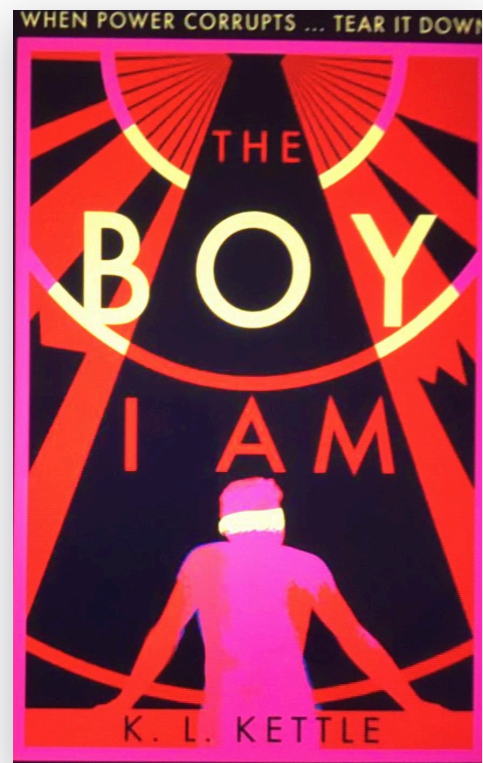
- ✓ Power and who holds it — a world with the gender rules flipped
- ✓ Worth, merit and fairness: who decides what a person is worth?
- ✓ Propaganda, history and the difference between story and truth
- ✓ Performance and masks — the self we show versus the self we hide
- ✓ Grief, conscience and the courage to refuse
- ✓ Resistance, and why freedom only counts if it's for everyone

SUBJECTS

English

PSHE / RSHE

Citizenship



Cover shown for reference

ABOUT THE BOOK

They say we're dangerous ... but we're not that different. Once a year, lucky young men in the House of Boys are auctioned to the female elite — and if Jude fails to be selected before he turns seventeen, a future in the mines awaits.

Ever since the death of his best friend at the hands of the all-powerful Chancellor, Jude has been desperate to escape the path set out for him. Entangled in a plot to assassinate the Chancellor, he finally has a chance to avenge his friend and win his freedom. But at what price?

A note, out of respect. A dystopia that flips gender and power, in the tradition of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Noughts & Crosses* — and gentler than Atwood. Many schools teach it from KS3 up. It carries real stakes (see the note at the back), handled with care. The extracts here read aloud comfortably from Year 9; for the whole novel, a quick preview lets you choose what suits your class.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

K.L. Kettle

K.L. Kettle is the pen name of an author and technologist. Made in Birmingham, she now lives, works and writes in London, and when she isn't writing she can be found travelling and working around the world, transforming businesses with technology.

The Boy I Am (Stripes Publishing / Little Tiger, 2021) is her debut YA novel. Its opening was shortlisted for the SCBWI British Isles Undiscovered Voices 2018 anthology, and she has been recognised for her flash fiction, including a longlisting for the Bath Flash Fiction Award. Her second novel, *Control Alter Delete*, follows in 2026.

She is passionate about the role of women as leaders, the value of creativity, and the need for diversity at every level in STEM and business — questions that sit right at the heart of *The Boy I Am*. She is also the creator of the *Book Chain Project*, a video and podcast series in which authors interview authors.

"I am an unfinished feminist. And that's how I want to be, always learning about the power I have, the systems I am a part of."

— K.L. Kettle, introducing *The Boy I Am*

More free classroom resources for this book — and for K.L. Kettle's other titles — at klkettle.com.

CONTENTS

Unit 1 · The stage

Extract The auction — Jude performs under the spotlight

Activity 1 The mask — what we show versus what we hide

Unit 2 · The lesson

Extract "They call it a meritocracy" — worth, merit and debt

Activity 2 Merits & demerits — is a "fair" system ever fair?

Unit 3 · The garden

Extract Turning off the sky — beauty, power and who owns it

Activity 3 The reveal — imagery and the world behind the wall

Unit 4 · The resolve

Extract "I'm going to fight" — names, freedom and the ending

Activity 4 The manifesto — writing to move people

Reference

National Curriculum links English · PSHE / RSHE · Citizenship

Before you teach content & how to use — at the back

Teacher notes indicative responses & model lines (for you, not students)

Extra activities & ideas comparisons, debates and ways to go further

EXTRACT 1 - THE STAGE

from Chapter 1 – Jude, on the auction stage

My name is Jude Grant and I am alive.

Centre stage, I face the deafening crowd.

And I smile.

"Tonight's final lot!" Mr Walker, Head of the House of Boys, introduces me over the theatre's loudspeakers. "Number one hundred and fifty."

Pinned in the spotlight, I squint. I shade my eyes with one hand and wave with the other. Cheers from the audience smack into my chest hard, skewering skin through to stomach, stomach through to spine, spine through to sparkling scenery behind me. Can't tell if it's the floor or my knees that are shaking more.

Smile number one we call gracious-without-being-smarmy.

That's what I'm aiming for, to hide my locked jaw. Sweat crawls from my hairline. As I adjust my collar, cold dread snakes down my neck.

Pose. Wave.

From *The Boy I Am* by K.L. Kettle, Chapter 1.

✓ Chosen to be classroom-safe and fine to read aloud (Year 9+) — but you know your class best, so preview and use your judgement. The wider chapter is stronger; see the note at the back.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Unit 1 • The stage

- 1 "My name is Jude Grant and I am alive." It's a bold, blunt opening line. What does it make you want to find out — and why is it such a strong hook?
- 2 Jude is being sold — but the chapter never uses the word "sold". How do "lot", "number one hundred and fifty" and "stats" do that work instead?
- 3 The smiles have *numbers* and names ("gracious-without-being-smarmy"). What does a rehearsed, catalogued smile tell you about Jude's life?
- 4 Find the gap between what the audience sees and what Jude feels. Which words show the surface? Which show the truth underneath?
- 5 "Cheers ... smack into my chest hard, skewering skin through to stomach..." Why describe applause as if it's an attack?
- 6 We meet this world through Jude's eyes only. What do we not yet know — and why might the writer hold it back?
- 7 In this world, women hold power and boys are the ones on display. What does flipping that around make you notice about our own world?
- 8 Is Jude powerful or powerless in this scene? Argue it both ways.
- 9 What genre signals tell you early on that this is speculative fiction — a world turned "up to eleven" from our own?
- 10 Where do people wear a "smile number one" — a public face that hides what they really feel? Think of a character, a job, or a situation where that mask makes sense.

ACTIVITY 1

The mask – what we show versus what we hide

- Read the extract aloud. Ask the class to split every detail into two lists: **what the audience sees** (the wave, the smile, the pose) and **what Jude feels** (locked jaw, cold dread, shaking knees).
- Draw out the technique: the writer builds a character by putting a calm *surface* against a fearful *interior*. The gap between them is where tension — and sympathy — lives.
- Look at the numbered smiles. Discuss: what does it do to a *character* to have to perform, rank and rehearse every reaction? Think of others — in books, films or games — who wear a public face very different from what they feel underneath.
- Introduce the task: students **invent a character** and write the **opening of that character's story** — a first-person narrator performing one feeling while hiding another, in a high-stakes moment for the character (an audition, a penalty kick, a first day undercover, walking into a hostile court). The hidden feeling is the writer's choice: nerves, anger, grief, excitement, dread.
- Model the craft rule: **show the surface and the truth in the same breath** — "I wave ... cold dread snakes down my neck." Students complete Activity Sheet 1: what the character shows on one side, what they hide on the other, then the opening lines.
- **Extension:** compare Jude's opening with the opening of Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* — how does each writer put a reader inside a controlled character, fast? (For KS4/older readers, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* makes a strong comparison; it's an adult novel, so check suitability first.)

Differentiate. Support — sentence stems ("On the outside... but inside...") and a body-language verb bank. **Stretch** — sustain the mask across a second paragraph and let it slip just once.

Curriculum links. English — narrative voice, characterisation, and reading/writing openings; analysing how language reveals character (KS3 & KS4, GCSE AO2/AO5). PSHE / RSHE — identity, self-presentation and the roles we play.

ACTIVITY SHEET 1

The mask

My character is: _____ The high-pressure moment: _____

What they see — the surface

What they hide — the truth

My opening — show the surface and the truth in the same breath. Start with a line as bold as "My name is ... and I am alive."

EXTRACT 2 - THE LESSON

from Chapters 16-17 – a lesson in the kitchens

"They call it a meritocracy," the head cook droned as he wrote the word *merit* on the orders board in dark-text dots.

"Yes, Cook," we replied, all sitting between the ovens in a line, picking at the grit between the tiles.

"Merit," he said.

Merit.

All us boys copied the dots down on our papers. You scribbled in the furthest corner, saving as much of the paper as you could for your sculptures.

Every woman Above, Cook explained, is born with a thousand merits to their name as well as any inheritance officially sanctioned by the House of Merit. On top of their birthday gifts, girls would be credited merits for doing good works, helping others and passing exams. This is what they call 'showing your worth'.

A note for readers: Jude tells his story to his lost friend, so "you" here is that friend — the boy who drew in the margins instead of copying the lesson.

From *The Boy I Am* by K.L. Kettle, Chapters 16–17.

✓ Chosen to be classroom-safe and fine to read aloud (Year 9+) — but you know your class best, so preview and use your judgement. The wider chapter is stronger; see the note at the back.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Unit 2 - The lesson

- 1 A "meritocracy" is meant to mean that people rise by their own effort and ability. Who, in this world, is *born* with a thousand merits — and who has none?
- 2 The word is written, said, and made a paragraph of its own: "Merit." Why repeat it so hard? What happens to a word when a system drums it in?
- 3 The lesson is delivered by an adult to boys "sitting between the ovens in a line". What does the setting tell you about who this teaching is *for*?
- 4 Girls earn merits for "doing good works, helping others and passing exams". That sounds positive — so what's the catch?
- 5 The boys copy down dots while Jude's friend saves paper "for your sculptures". Is there quiet resistance in that choice? What makes you think so?
- 6 "Showing your worth" — who gets to decide what a person is worth here? How is that decided in our world?
- 7 If you're born owing a debt you didn't choose, can you ever really "earn" your way out? Is that fair?
- 8 A dystopia often works by making an unfair system sound reasonable. Where does this lesson try to sound reasonable?
- 9 Compare this "merit" system with a real one you know — grades, likes, rankings, credit scores. What do they reward, and what do they miss?
- 10 If you rewrote this lesson to tell the truth, what would the first line be?

ACTIVITY 2

Merits & demerits – Is a "fair" system ever fair?

- Read the extract. Establish the rules of this world together: women are born with a thousand merits; boys inherit debt. Put the two starting lines on the board, literally unequal.
- Define the key idea: a **meritocracy** claims people succeed on merit alone. Ask the class to find the hidden assumption the Cook never says out loud (that everyone starts from the same place).
- **Debate.** Split the room: "A meritocracy is the fairest way to run a society." One side argues for, one against, using the extract and real examples (exams, talent shows, job interviews, social media).
- Then the writing task: students **rewrite the Cook's lesson from the point of view of a Hysteric** — one of the banished women who live Outside and see the system from the other side. Same facts, opposite spin.
- Share a few aloud. Notice how the *same information* can be taught as pride or exposed as propaganda, depending on who holds the pen.
- **Extension:** link to *Noughts & Crosses* or a real historical propaganda poster — how do systems make unfairness feel normal? (For KS4/older readers, Alderman's *The Power* is a strong adult comparison; check suitability first.)

Differentiate. Support — the for/against grid pre-labelled and a viewpoint sentence stem. **Stretch** — make the Hysteric rewrite sound reasonable, then annotate its propaganda tricks.

Curriculum links. English — viewpoint and bias, writing to argue and persuade, analysing rhetoric (KS3 & KS4, GCSE AO5/AO6). Citizenship — fairness, rights, power and how societies justify inequality. PSHE / RSHE — critical thinking about status and self-worth.

ACTIVITY SHEET 2

Is a "fair" system ever fair?

For — why a meritocracy could be fair

Against — why it might not be

Rewrite the lesson — tell it as a Hysteric would, from Outside. Same facts, the truth turned up.

EXTRACT 3 - THE GARDEN

from Chapter 8 – the Chancellor's rooftop, under a real sky

Kicking off my slippers, I roll my toes through the prickling, uneven green carpet. Except it's not carpet, not like I've known before. It's alive.

The air tastes rich. Drinking down breath after hot breath, my head spins and I have to steady myself but there's nothing within reach except me. So I fold my arms across my chest and squeeze to stop my lungs from filling up too much, my body from floating away.

"Now this is beauty!" the Chancellor hums. "Right?"

Under vast swirling bulbs that plink and sparkle like they're dancing, she leads me, light-headed, into a garden beneath a huge glass dome. The artificial glare almost blinds me from chinks of darkness beyond. The sky? Real and endless and black.

The ladies call their dark-hours the 'night'. In the kitchens, the dorms, our appointments, the dark-hours are when the House Fathers flip a switch. I wonder who turns off the sky.

From *The Boy I Am* by K.L. Kettle, Chapter 8.

✓ Chosen to be classroom-safe and fine to read aloud (Year 9+) — but you know your class best, so preview and use your judgement. The wider chapter is stronger; see the note at the back.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Unit 3 - The garden

- 1 Jude has never stood on real grass. "It's alive." Why is that tiny sentence such a big moment for him?
- 2 The writer floods the passage with the senses — touch, taste, sight. Find one example of each. What does it do to *slow the moment down* like this?
- 3 "I ... squeeze to stop ... my body from floating away." What does Jude's reaction tell you about the life he's used to?
- 4 The Chancellor says "Now this is beauty!" She owns this garden. What does it mean that one person controls who gets to see a real sky?
- 5 "I wonder who turns off the sky." Why end on a question? What does it make the reader realise about this world?
- 6 In Jude's world, "night" is a switch the House Fathers flip. How does controlling something as ordinary as darkness show us how total this power is?
- 7 Beauty here is rare, hoarded and artificial ("swirling bulbs", a "glass dome"). What's the difference between beauty that's shared and beauty that's owned?
- 8 Why might a writer give the villain the most beautiful setting in the book?
- 9 Think of something ordinary in your life that would feel miraculous to someone who'd never had it. How would you describe it to them?
- 10 Where else — in stories or in the real world — do powerful people control access to nature, space or light?

ACTIVITY 3

The reveal – Imagery and the world behind the wall

- Read the extract aloud, slowly. Ask students to underline every word that touches a **sense** — "prickling", "tastes rich", "plink and sparkle", "real and endless and black".
- Name the craft: this is a **reveal** — a controlled character meets something the powerful have kept from them, and the writer uses **sensory imagery** to make us feel it as strongly as they do.
- Look at the ending: a short, quiet **rhetorical question** ("I wonder who turns off the sky") that turns a beautiful moment into a political one. Discuss why that lands harder than a paragraph of explanation.
- Introduce the task: students write a **reveal paragraph**. A character who has been kept from something ordinary — the sea, the stars, snow, silence, a full plate of food — encounters it for the first time.
- Two rules: **use all five senses at least once**, and **end on a question** that quietly exposes who has been in control. Students plan on Activity Sheet 3, then draft.
- **Extension:** swap paragraphs and highlight a partner's strongest image and their closing question — does the question make the world feel bigger than the paragraph?

Differentiate. Support — the sense-bank grid and an image word bank. **Stretch** — end on a question that implicates the reader, not just the regime.

Curriculum links. English — imagery, sensory language, symbolism and descriptive writing; structure and the effect of a closing line (KS3 & KS4, GCSE AO2/AO5). Citizenship / PSHE — power, access and inequality.

ACTIVITY SHEET 3

The reveal

My character has been kept from: _____

Sense bank — one vivid image for each sense before you draft

See: _____

Hear: _____

Touch: _____

Smell / taste: _____

My reveal paragraph — and end on a question that shows who's really in control.

EXTRACT 4 - THE RESOLVE

from the final chapter – Jude decides who he'll be

Maybe I'll take a new name, maybe I won't. Truth is, Jude Grant could be any one of a hundred boys. A name is a story that gets passed down and twisted by time. This has to be the start of more than one story, so it needs more than one name.

I'll be a boy. Just that.

A boy that started something. A boy that went to Madam Glassey and insisted he pay off the debt of as many in the dorms that he could.

They can ignore one boy.

Not a hundred, more maybe.

Freedom for as many of us as possible. There's more power in that than anything.

I'm going not just to live, I'm going to fight. We all are.

From *The Boy I Am* by K.L. Kettle, final chapter.

✓ Chosen to be classroom-safe and fine to read aloud (Year 9+) — but you know your class best, so preview and use your judgement. The wider chapter is stronger; see the note at the back.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Unit 4 - The resolve

- 1 "A name is a story that gets passed down and twisted by time." What does Jude mean? Why does he decide his story "needs more than one name"?
- 2 "I'll be a boy. Just that." After a whole book of being a lot, number 150, why is choosing to be simply "a boy" such a powerful ending?
- 3 "They can ignore one boy. / Not a hundred, more maybe." Read those two lines aloud. How does the writer use length and repetition to build force?
- 4 Jude chooses freedom "for as many of us as possible" rather than just his own. Why does the book end on *collective* freedom instead of a personal happy-ever-after?
- 5 "There's more power in that than anything." What kind of power does Jude mean — and how is it different from the Chancellor's power?
- 6 The last line is "We all are." Who is "we"? Why hand the ending to more than one person?
- 7 This is a hopeful ending, but the fight isn't over. Why might a writer choose hope-with-work-still-to-do rather than a neat victory?
- 8 Look back at the very first line of Extract 1. How far has Jude travelled from "gracious-without-being-smarmy" to "I'm going to fight"?
- 9 Where have you seen real change come from many small voices rather than one loud one?
- 10 If this ending were the start of a speech, what would its title be?

ACTIVITY 4

The manifesto – writing to move people

- Read the ending aloud twice — once quietly, once like a rallying cry. Ask which reading the words seem *built* for, and how the class can tell.
- Map the rhetoric together. Find: **short, certain sentences** ("I'll be a boy. Just that."), **repetition and rule of three**, the **build from one to many** ("one boy ... a hundred, more maybe"), and the **turn from "I" to "we"** in the final line.
- Discuss the big idea: freedom in this book only *counts* when it's shared. A good manifesto makes a private feeling into a shared cause.
- Task: students write a short **manifesto paragraph** in role — a character (from the book or their own) choosing *collective* over personal freedom, and calling others to join. Any cause they believe in works.
- Give them the toolkit from Activity Sheet 4: a short punchy opening, one repetition, one "from one to many" line, and a final line that turns "I" into "we".
- **Extension:** perform them. For KS4/older readers, compare the quiet, determined hope of this ending with the ambiguous final lines of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (an adult novel — check suitability) — which lingers longer, and why?

Differentiate. Support — the toolkit as fill-in frames. **Stretch** — write two endings — one hopeful, one ambiguous — and argue which is stronger.

Curriculum links. English — rhetoric and structure, writing to persuade, analysing how endings deliver theme (KS3 & KS4, GCSE AO5/AO6); spoken language. Citizenship — protest, collective action and change. PSHE / RSHE — values, agency and standing up for others.

ACTIVITY SHEET 4

The manifesto

My cause: _____

Rhetoric toolkit — tick each off as you use it

- ☐ A short, certain opening line ☐ One repeated word or phrase
- ☐ A "from one to many" line ☐ A rule of three ☐ A final line that turns "I" into "we"

My manifesto — write to move people. Make a private feeling into a shared cause.

TEACHER NOTES

Indicative responses & model lines – for you, not the students

Quick steers so you can pick any lesson up cold. These are starting points, not “correct” answers — reward any reading that is anchored in the text.

Unit 1 • The stage

Listen for: the gap between the calm surface (waving, the practised smile) and the interior (“locked jaw”, “cold dread”, shaking knees); “lot” and “number 150” reduce a person to stock; the flipped power makes the everyday performance of calm visible. Strong answers quote a surface word and a truth word side by side. **Model opening:** “I walk out and give them the smile I’ve practised. Inside, my heart is a fist.”

Unit 2 • The lesson

Listen for: “meritocracy” hides the unequal starting line (a thousand merits vs inherited debt); the drummed repetition turns a word into belief; “showing your worth” means the powerful get to define worth. **Model Hysteric rewrite (first line):** “They call it merit. They just don’t mention who starts the race owing.”

Unit 3 • The garden

Listen for: sensory verbs slow the moment (“prickling”, “tastes rich”, “plink and sparkle”); Jude’s shock shows how deprived his life is; the closing question turns beauty into politics — someone controls the sky. **Model closing line:** “...and I wondered who had decided the sea was theirs to lock away.”

Unit 4 • The resolve

Listen for: short, certain sentences and repetition build force; the turn from “I” to “we” makes freedom collective; hope-with-work-still-to-do is braver than a tidy win. **Model final line:** “I’m not asking any more. We are.”

On the activity sheets: these are open writing frames, so there is no single answer key. Assess each against the craft rule named in its activity — surface + truth said together (1); facts kept but viewpoint flipped (2); five senses plus a closing question (3); the rhetoric toolkit ticked off (4).

NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINKS

Across the four units, this pack supports:

English

Reading speculative fiction and analysing how writers use language, imagery and structure for effect; narrative voice and characterisation; viewpoint, bias and rhetoric; writing to describe, persuade and argue; reading and writing openings and endings (KS3 & KS4, incl. GCSE AO2/AO5/AO6).

PSHE / RSHE

Identity and self-presentation; power and how it is used and resisted; self-worth and status; media literacy and critical thinking; resilience, agency and standing up for others.

Citizenship

Power, fairness and rights; how societies justify inequality; propaganda and the control of information; protest, collective action and how change happens.

A note on content. The four extracts in this pack read aloud comfortably from Year 9. The whole novel — a dystopia in the tradition of *The Handmaid's Tale*, taught from KS3 up — carries real stakes, including a suicide attempt, sexual assault and the death of a major character, handled with care. See the fuller note at the back, and choose the passages that suit your class.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES & IDEAS

- **Flip it.** The whole novel asks "what if the power were reversed?" Students take one everyday rule or expectation and flip who it applies to. Write the opening scene of that world.
- **Comparative reading.** Pair with Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses*, Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* or Dhonielle Clayton's *The Belles*; for confident older readers it's a gateway to Naomi Alderman's *The Power* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. How do these worlds make unfairness feel normal?
- **Propaganda lab.** Design a poster for the House of Merit that makes an unfair system look glorious — then annotate every trick you used.
- **Hot-seat Jude.** One student answers in role as Jude at three points — the stage, the garden, the ending. How has his voice changed?
- **Reading-group questions.** Is Jude powerful or powerless? What makes something "real"? Is freedom worth anything if it's only for you? Can a good person survive a bad system without becoming part of it?
- **Debate.** "A perfect system would have no rebels." Argue both sides using the novel.
- **If you loved it.** Try *Control Alter Delete* by K.L. Kettle (2026); and Louise O'Neill, Patrick Ness and Malorie Blackman.

Bring the author to your school

K.L. Kettle offers visits, assemblies and workshops for KS3, KS4 and sixth form — on power, gender, dystopia, creativity and hope — and virtual reading-group events.

klkettle.com

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Content & how to use this pack

The Boy I Am is an award-recognised dystopia in the tradition of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Noughts & Crosses* — and, like them, a book many schools teach from KS3 up. This note sits at the back out of respect for the material, so you can pick what fits your class — not to warn you off.

What to know

Like the dystopias it sits beside, the novel carries real stakes. It touches on a suicide attempt, sexual assault and coercion, and the death of a major character, alongside grief, propaganda and control — handled with care rather than shock, and less dark than *The Handmaid's Tale*. It's named here simply so nothing catches you off guard.

How to pitch it

1 • The four extract lessons in this pack read aloud comfortably from Year 9 (top of KS3) and up; each extract page is marked accordingly.

2 • The whole novel is taught from KS3 upward. As with any dystopia, read it yourself first and choose the passages — and the year group — that suit your students; its strongest chapters land best with older readers.

Support links

If a theme ever raises a concern for a student, follow your school's usual process. Handy to have nearby: **Papyrus HOPELINE247** 0800 068 4141 / text 07860 039967 • **Shout** text 85258 • **Samaritans** 116 123 • **Childline** 0800 1111 • for bereavement, **Winston's Wish** 08088 020 021.