



Maisy Hayes Is Not For Sale

ALLAYNE L. WEBSTER

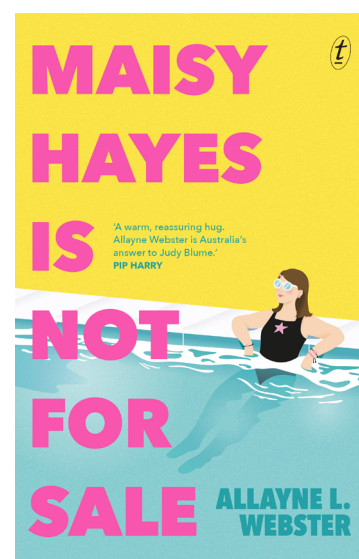
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RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 13+

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CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allayne L. Webster grew up in rural South Australia and now lives in Adelaide. Her books include *Sensitive*—an IBBY Outstanding Book for Young People with Disabilities—the CBCA notable novels *Paper Planes* and *A Cardboard Palace*, the Adelaide Festival Awards—shortlisted *The Centre of My Everything*, and *Our Little Secret, That Thing I Did, Selfie*, which was shortlisted for a NSW Premier's Literary Award, and *Maisy Hayes Is Not For Sale*, which was shortlisted for the 2024 Max Fatchen Fellowship.

SYNOPSIS

Maisy's fourteenth birthday is coming up, and she expects it to be a total non-event because instead of a party or lavish gifts she'll get, 'ten dollars in a handmade card', if she's lucky.

But Maisy knows she can't complain about that or about not being able to afford to go to the year-nine formal. She must keep all her frustrations to herself because her mum has bigger things to worry about. Maisy's sister, Luka, has a heart condition and is on a waiting list for treatment, and their eleven-year-old border collie, Bruce, isn't doing so well either. What's more, vet bills are not cheap. The Housing Trust may be about to sell their house, and her little brother Liam is basically left to fend for himself. Life's not easy for Maisy.

Luckily, there's some light in her life: new girl Bobbie seems like she might be new friend (or even girlfriend) material—something Maisy may need because her usual besties, Ava and Beth, have been doing things without her and said some stuff about her mum she can't easily forgive and forget.

Maisy also can't easily ignore the fact that it seems her dad has the means to help but won't, and didn't even invite his daughters to his wedding. Then, suddenly he wants Maisy and Luka to go stay with him and his new family in Melbourne on the school holidays. Could this finally mean there's some light at the end of the tunnel for Maisy or will this be another let down in a long string of disappointments?

When Maisy finally gets to meet her other 'family', she learns not only about her dad, but also about herself and what she really wants.

BEFORE READING

1. Read the blurb on the back of the book. Can you predict what might be meant by things for Maisy not feeling right after getting 'everything she always wanted'? What might being true to herself involve?



- Discuss the difference between wants and needs. How would you classify some of the things you do and use in your daily life?

WHILE READING

- 'Everyone knows rich people live better lives.' (p. 13) Why do you think Maisy has this worldview?
- 'Ava and Beth have been my friends for as long as I can remember, and we're definitely tight, but that doesn't mean I tell them everything. I'm pretty good at playing stuff down—especially the pov bits.' (p. 15) Why can't Maisy be honest with her best friends?
- 'Luka shrugs. "I've given up wishing for things."' (p. 22) Why do you think Luka tells Maisy this? Can wishful thinking be a bad thing?
- 'Beg him to come back, Maisy. Try really hard. I tried and tried, but it never worked, and now I realise how bad it was that she even asked me to do that. I spent years feeling like I'd failed.' (p. 46) Why do you think Maisy felt like a failure because she couldn't get her dad to come home?
- "Mum has to pay for Luka's medicine too. It's all she talks about. Liam and I don't get jack anymore. Luka's, like, the favourite child." I feel gross hearing the words come out of my mouth. It's not Luka's fault. But I have to say something and this is as close as I can get.' (p. 67) Why is Maisy lying to her best friends here? Why won't she tell them about her family's financial problems?
- Maisy is talking to Bobbie and says about Ava and Beth: '[S]ometimes they say dumb stuff.' (p. 69) Just before this, Maisy describes Ava's words as 'bullets'. What might the author be suggesting here about the power of words?
- 'Maybe money isn't the thing I need? Maybe it's something else.' (p. 71) What might Maisy be thinking she needs?
- Once Maisy arrives at her dad's house, she understands her mum's 'deep resentment'. (p. 109) What does resentment mean and why would Maisy's struggling mother feel it towards her ex-husband?
- Portia tells Maisy she should be celebrated, causing Maisy to get teary. (p. 165) Why would being told a nice thing like that cause Maisy so much emotion?
- 'He gets out, opens my door and holds it for me. I get out and we stand there looking at each other. I want to hug him, to fall into his arms, to feel close to him, to know my father. But there's more than a car door separating us.' (p. 181) What else is separating Maisy and her father from making physical and emotional contact?
- What does Maisy mean when she thinks, 'This isn't playing out how it was supposed to.'? (p. 214)
- 'Hitting back is all I have.' (p. 232) Why does Maisy think 'hitting back' is all she can do? How else she

could she have reacted? Is there something that suggests she'll regret her actions later? What is it?

- 'Bobbie says, "Marriage is just some goal we're told to move towards. Like if you're not shackled up with someone, you're a failure."' Do you agree with her? Why or why not? Do you think Maisy agrees?
- 'I check my reflection and like what I see.' What's changed in Maisy? Why is she starting to be okay with who she truly is? (p. 265)
- 'I'm the richest girl alive.' (p. 316) How can you be rich without material wealth? Explain all the ways Maisy is rich at the end of the novel?

AFTER READING

- Were you surprised that Maisy had not been invited to her dad's wedding? Did you accurately predict why this might have been the case?
- On pages 41–42, Maisy lists all the things she doesn't know about her dad and the little she does know about him. Is there a person in your life who you know well enough to make a list like this?
- 'I don't want to be mega rich anymore. I don't want to buy mansions and cars and fancy jewellery. I don't want things. If I could buy anything, I'd buy a magical crystal ball. That way I'd know everything there is to know about the future and I wouldn't need to worry ever again.' (p. 267) Would having a magic crystal ball have solved any of Maisy's problems? Would you want to know the future if you could? Why/why not?
- Maisy often believes others have it better than she does. 'Why do I automatically assume other people's lives are better than mine?' (p. 276) What do you think makes people often believe their problems are the worst? Are they always right?

Character

- When Maisy is pushed to breaking point, she takes it out on her mum, with Liam watching on. She feels shame and thinks: 'Maisy who shuts her mouth. Maisy who wishes away the arguments. Maisy who pretends it's not happening. Maisy who dreams of being someone else. Maisy, waiting for her life to start. Maisy, who blows herself up and takes everyone with her.' How has she changed from the quiet girl who pretends everything is okay to this honest girl who speaks up? (pp. 206–207)
- Maisy's stepsister Abbey is described as having 'long blonde hair, ocean-blue eyes, freckled pink cheeks. She's wearing a preppy white tennis dress with the collar turned up. Rake-thin and dripping in bling—fingers, wrists, neck, ears—she sparkles in the sun.' (p. 102) Why has the author chosen to use 'ocean-blue' rather than just blue? Why are Abbey's cheeks 'freckled and pink' rather than only freckled? Why is the dress 'preppy'? Why is Abbey described as 'dripping' in jewellery? What effects do these word choices have on your idea of how Maisy sees Abbey?



Style and structure

1. The novel is told in first person, and we only ever see things from Maisy's point of view. How does this help the reader understand Maisy?
2. Examine the way the book is broken into three parts:

Part 1 of the book is titled 'Expenses'. What word associations arise from reading that word? Do you think the author is giving their readers a clue about the story?

Part 2 is titled 'Profit & Loss'. What do these words mean in a financial sense and how might they also apply to what's happening in Maisy's life?

Part 3 is titled 'Balance Sheet'. A balance sheet is a financial statement showing what a business owns and what it owes. What would Maisy's balance sheet look like at the start of Part 3? What about at the end of the novel?

'My friends get parties. I get slushies. Ten dollars in a homemade card if I'm lucky.' (p. 11)

'She (Mum) has to figure out how to make rent and pay for food and petrol.' (p. 12)

'I'm not going to my year-nine formal. We can't afford the ticket.' (p. 16)

'I'm not going to my year-nine formal. We can't afford the ticket. I'm pretty good at playing stuff down—especially the poyo bits.' (p. 17)

'Mum will stress if I ask her to buy tampons.' (p. 23)

Despite that fact that so many low-income families often find themselves living in, or close to, poverty in Australia, it's not something we read or hear about very often in books or media consumed by teenagers. Why do you think the author has chosen to highlight this common but usually 'taboo' topic?

THEMES

Guilt and shame

1. Maisy feels a lot of guilt for wanting things that are out of reach, for resenting her mum for not providing for her, for not sharing money, and for lying. 'I've wished and dreamed, prayed and pleaded to see my dad and now I feel nothing but guilt.' (p. 87) Why is she feeling guilty? What often hides beneath feelings of guilt?
2. 'Shame. It's what's been crushing me, suffocating me, weighing me down. Shame over just about everything—my dad, my mum, money, where I live, what I wear, which school I go to, what I own, what people think about me, my sexuality, the things I say and if I get them right, my job applications, my failures I hold so tight.' (pp. 287–88) Shame can be an overwhelming emotion and it can cause us to act in ways we normally wouldn't. What does shame lead Maisy to do that goes against who she truly is?

Financial hardship

1. There are times in the novel when Maisy's family can't afford period products. This is known as period poverty. Have you heard of it? Do some research on where women and girls can go for help when experiencing it.
2. Bobbie thinks, 'The whole consumerism thing is actually pretty gross. And bad for the environment—all the packaging and catalogues and the fossil fuels used to ship stuff around the world.' Luka likes to repurpose clothes. Maisy's family sometimes 'shops' the hard rubbish to give someone else's old belongings a new life. What other ways can people lessen their environmental impact when it comes to consuming?
3. Look at some of the ways Maisy's family's financial troubles are described:

Identity and representation

1. 'It's like she found my stitching, pulled a thread, opened me up, and read everything inside.' (p. 70) The author uses metaphor in this scene to help readers understand how much of an impact Bobbie has on Maisy. How does this metaphor apply to Maisy?
2. Look at these two moments in the story:

'A fluttering relief fills my chest. Abbey likes boys and girls. She's like me.' (p. 106)

'I should be embarrassed all over again, but instead I feel a beautiful warmth spreading across my chest.' (p. 262)

How important is it to Maisy to be known for who she really is and understand that she's not alone? Why might this be?

3. "'Eat! Models are so diverse these days—all shapes, sizes, skin tones, non-binary, drag, disabled. There's a model I really like who has that skin condition... what's it called?" She pauses. "Vitiligo. Her look is incredible. Trust me, an agency would love your vibe. I'm surprised no one's picked you up. Aren't there agencies in Adelaide?"' (p. 133) Is this 'diversity' that Abbey describes your experience of people you see in advertising on social media, TV and in print? Give examples to highlight your view.
4. "Is everyone putting on a show?" (p. 266) Do you think everyone is hiding something? Why do you think some teenagers feel unable to express who they really are?
5. Maisy realises getting real and saying how she feels won't leave her weak or exposed. (p. 298) How is being honest with yourself and others related to your identity?

Friendship

1. How does Maisy's friendship with Bobbie begin? Why is she drawn to Bobbie? In what ways is her friendship with Bobbie different from her friendship with Ava and Beth?

RESPONDING

1. 'Then I hear the message and say none of the things I want to.' (p. 32) Write the text message Maisy could have written back to her father on her birthday. Then write one she might have drafted after being sent home early from Melbourne. (p. 207)
2. 'Sometimes I think scary stuff like that. If I did something bad to myself, would Dad come home? I imagine lying on a stretcher about to be loaded into an ambulance, and him pulling up in a taxi, jumping out, and dashing to my side. *I came straightaway!* he'd say breathlessly. *I caught the first plane here!* I'd smile and tell him not to make a big deal of it. He'd smother me with loving kisses. I don't know why I imagine stuff like that. Dad doesn't care about Luka—and she really could die.' (p. 46) Do you think Maisy's dad would have come if she did self-harm? Why/why not? What are some other (safe) ways could she have let him know what she was feeling?
3. 'Ms Romano addresses all of us, "You know what bothers me? You're all young and yet to make your mark on the world, and you're already disillusioned. When I was your age, I believed change was possible. I believed in protests and democratic freedom. I believed if we petitioned politicians we could make things happen. It sounds like your generation has skipped the revolution and gone straight to despair." She shakes her head. "I worry about what the future holds."' (p. 59) Is Ms Romano right? Is Maisy's/your generation disillusioned? Write a list of things you find hopeful, and a list of thing that concern you.
4. 'What I mean is, I agree you have to be hard sometimes. Survival of the fittest. Law of the jungle. People are selfish. Sometimes you have to be too.' (p. 61) Do you agree with Maisy and Bobbie? Write a paragraph about a time you had to be selfish.
5. 'This song is called 'Society'. Eddie Vedder from Pearl Jam sings it.' Bobbie shares her favourite song with Maisy. (p. 253) After hearing it and reading the lyrics, Maisy thinks, 'The song is really political; he's singing about excess, about how the world is telling you that you need to own all this stuff to be happy. And he's basically saying he's not playing that game.' Find the lyrics to the song 'Society' by Eddie Vedder. Is Maisy right about its meaning? How does the song relate to the story being told in the novel?