

TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

Longacre Press NZ Young Adult Fiction

Shadow *of the* Mountain

anna mackenzie

'I want to climb a mountain and I need a guide.'

Geneva's world has been blown apart by loss. Maybe that's why her decisions are not always the sharpest. One thing she knows: there's no way back to the person she once was.

When Angus appears in her orbit it seems an omen that things are changing—but life is never that simple.

In trying to find a way forward, Geneva risks her friendships, risks repeating the errors of the past, even risks her life. But maybe there's no other way to find the person she can be.

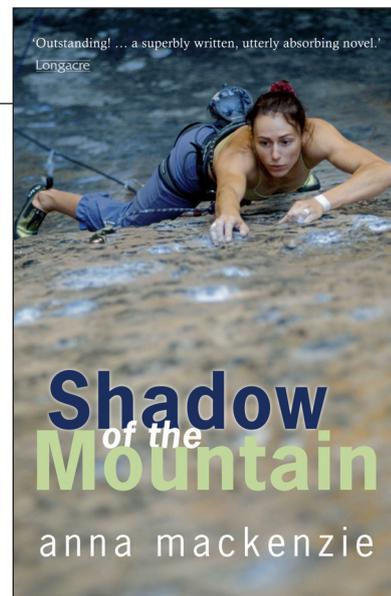
A superbly written and utterly absorbing novel.

"All teenagers are trying to make decisions that will shape their lives for years to come. The biggest struggle for anyone this age ... is trying to find out who you are, where you fit, what you'll do. It's a quest that age doesn't alter." Anna Mackenzie

Shadow of the Mountain
Resource Kit contains:

- Author statement
- Language exercises
- Character study questions
- Creative responses / research ideas

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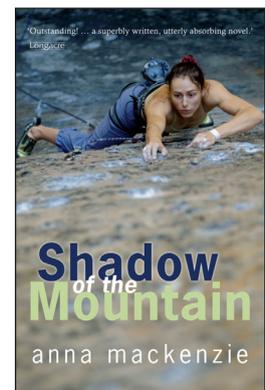
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ANNA MACKENZIE is a full-time writer and editor. She lives on a farm in Hawke's Bay with her husband and two children. Her first novel, *High Tide*, was featured in the Children's Literature Foundation List of Notable Books of 2003. Her second novel, *Out on the Edge*, for young adults, was published by Longacre Press in 2005.

Her third novel, *The Sea-wreck Stranger*, is a finalist for the 2008 New Zealand Post Children's and Young Adults' Book Awards, is joint winner of the 2008 Sir Julius Vogel Award, and has been awarded a prestigious White Raven Award for outstanding children's literature. *Shadow of the Mountain* is Anna's fourth novel; she is working on her fifth—and the sequel to the acclaimed *The Sea-wreck Stranger*.

Author Statement

The idea at the heart of Geneva's story grew from thinking about how we cope (or fail to cope) with grief and loss. Sadly, we don't have a choice about facing grief, but we do have a choice about how we deal with it. In my experience there are many different ways and not one of them works for everyone.

When I was about halfway through writing *Shadow of the Mountain* my own life dealt up a number of challenging issues in a short space of time. The story suddenly felt too close for comfort and I set it aside. I wrote another novel, *The Sea-wreck Stranger*, before I was ready to return to this one.

I have no doubt that my experiences helped me tell Geneva's story. Maybe telling it helped me too.

A strange thing happened when I did return to

the novel: I found I really liked it but that there was something about Geneva that didn't quite work. I changed her name – and suddenly she came together as a complete and credible character. The power of names!

Geneva's interest in (but not obsession with) climbing is one that I share. From a very young age I loved to climb things (my parents always said it had to do with being the shortest member of the family!). I also liked walking along walls. I freaked out some tourists in Paris once, crossing the Seine along the parapet of a bridge. These days I stick to indoor climbing walls.

Geneva and Angus are both characters I admire. They found each other at the right time and were lucky enough to grow from their shared experiences.

Language:

1. Write a definition for the figure of speech 'hyperbole' (p. 85).
2. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that otherwise might be difficult to express. An example of figurative language is the simile, which uses 'as' and 'like'. For example, 'her doubts had been circling like vultures' (p. 26) [OR] 'stretched like a lizard on a warm plateau of rock' (p. 19). Find two more examples of similes in the book.
3. The author sometimes uses food imagery in the similes. For example, 'memories pouring thick and cloying as treacle' (p. 111). Write a simile using each of the following words: cream, custard, apples, toffee, cucumber, lemon.
4. The author uses symbolism in the book. What do the following phrases typically symbolise: 'olive branch' (p. 118) and 'crossroad' (p.138)?
5. The author uses personification to help describe the mountain 'Kaitiaki was dressed in a shawl of cloud' (p. 161). Write a poem or paragraph about a place that is significant to you using personification.
6. Geneva mentions 'BACA' (p.16). What does this stand for? What kind of figure of speech is this – alliteration, acronym or anagram? Can you think of five more examples from the media and other organisations?

Characters:

Geneva:

1. Draw a picture of Geneva based on the physical description of her (p. 11).
2. List the qualities of Geneva's personality and find examples of when she displays each of these qualities (p. 9).
3. What effect has Stephen's death had on Geneva's relationship with:
 - her mother
 - her father
 - KittyHow do these relationships change and develop by the end of the novel?
4. Why is it important for Geneva to climb the mountain? Do you think it was wise for Geneva to climb the mountain alone? List the risks she took in doing so.
5. Do you think it was necessary for Geneva to make such an extreme decision to climb the mountain? What other actions do you think Geneva could have taken to help her come to terms with Stephen's death?
6. Think of three adjectives to describe Geneva.
7. Summarise Geneva's character in a single sentence.
8. Geneva feels isolated. Give examples of both her physical and mental isolation.

Other characters:

1. What is Simon's nickname? What does it tell us about his personality?
2. Give two examples of occasions when Simon exhibits inappropriate and/or sexist behaviour.

3. Compare and contrast the relationships that Geneva, Kitty and Angus have with their mothers. List the similarities and differences.
4. Geneva states in the novel that Kitty has stayed still while 'she'd grown up' (p. 59). What events have led to her feeling this way?
5. Geneva is bullied at school. List the episodes of bullying and who was involved. What steps did Geneva take to deal with the bullying? Were these steps appropriate? Were there other things she might have done?
6. What was Geneva implying when she said to Roz, 'I'd expect more of a baa from you...' (p. 88)?
7. Geneva says that Stephen was obsessed with rock climbing. What is the definition of obsession compared to a hobby?
8. What does the novel say about friendships and their importance during difficult personal times? Do we need friends to help us get through these times?
9. Compare Leonie and Geneva's reaction to Kitty's accident.
10. Which events led to Geneva and Dayna's budding friendship?

Creative Responses/ Research:

1. The name of the mountain is Kaitiaki. What does this mean (p. 68)? How is its name relevant to Geneva? What irony might the author have intended?
2. Geneva believes Stephen appears to her on the mountain and helps her survive. Investigate the notion of a protector or guiding spirit in Maori and other cultures.
3. Geneva studies a poem from World War I in school. (The author tells us that the poem she had in mind was Wilfred Owen's 'Dolce et decorum est'.) Read a poem about World War I and look for themes that are similar to the novel (e.g. futility, grief, isolation, loss, silence) (p. 31). Find out if any men from your local area died in World War I. Is there a monument in your city/town?
4. What support groups or agencies exist in New Zealand to help people suffering from grief? Does your school offer grief counselling services?
5. Geneva's mother goes into residential care. What does this mean?
6. Stephen tells Geneva that there is 'No law against people doing what they enjoy for a living' (p. 46). What are you interested in doing for a career? What will you need to do to reach this goal? Look at what training is required, at what you need to get into the training, how long the training will take, where the location of the job would be and what the job availability would be in your chosen field.
7. Geneva mentions milestones (p. 218). Make a timeline of the major milestones in your own life.
8. On the mountain there is a cairn to commemorate Stephen's life (p. 172). What other cultures and religions use cairns? Where do they have them and why?

9. Write a review of this book for your favourite magazine.
10. Re-write the 'blurb' of the book.
11. Write a letter from Geneva to Stephen expressing her feelings about what has been happening to the family since his death.
12. Draw a picture of the mountain and/or Geneva's family farm.
13. Design a pamphlet for 'RockZone' to get new members to join the climbing club.
14. Kitty and Jax are in a drink-driving accident. Design an anti-drink driving campaign poster aimed at teenage drivers.
15. What does OE stand for? If you could travel to any one country, where would you go and what would you see and do?
16. Write a letter of apology from Geneva to her mother after Geneva has recovered from her accident.
17. Dayna and Geneva go to see a Deepa Mehta film. Watch a movie directed by Deepa Mehta and write a review.
18. Choose one of the episodes below as the basis for a theatre performance and write a script for it:
- when Geneva's mother has her accident (p. 68).
 - when Jax, Kitty, Geneva and Angus are driving to the party (p. 54).
 - when Kitty confronts Geneva in hospital (p. 119).
19. With a partner, role-play the characters below, as they discuss the issue that is listed beside their names. Are the characters in conflict? What point of view would each character take on the issue?
- Jax and Kitty's mother Sonya – drink driving.
 - Geneva and Leonie – incidents of bullying.
 - Geneva and her father – placing her mother in residential care.
 - Angus and Miriam – their feelings about his budding relationship with Geneva.
20. Research mountain climbing rules (p. 172) and mountain survival and safety (p. 183).
21. Are there rock-climbing facilities or clubs in your local area?
22. Stephen mentions three mountains from around the world that he would like to climb (p. 47). Research the highest mountain in the world and the first mountaineer to conquer it.
23. List the three highest mountains in New Zealand. Locate them on a map of New Zealand.