



EXIT
THROUGH
THE
GIFT SHOP
MARYAM MASTER

Illustrated by ASTRED HICKS

TEACHER'S NOTES



BLURB

Anahita Rosalind Ghorban-Galaszczyk (yes, that really is her name but you can call her Ana) is discovering that life is absurd. As if dying of cancer at the age of 12.5 isn't bad enough, she still has to endure daily insults from her nemesis, Alyssa (Queen Mean) Anderson.

Ana's on a wild rollercoaster of life and death, kindness and cruelty, ordinary and extraordinary.

And she's got a few things to do before she exits. . .

ABOUT MARYAM MASTER

Maryam Master was born in Iran and moved to Australia when she was nine. She is a screenwriter and playwright who loves creating shows for young audiences.

Maryam has adapted three of David Walliams' books for the stage – *Mr Stink*, *Billionaire Boy* and *The Midnight Gang* – as well as Oliver Jeffers' *The Incredible Book Eating Boy*, all of which premiered at the Sydney Opera House and toured across Australia. She also collaborated with Australian Children's Laureate Leigh Hobbs on *Horrible Harriet: Live on Stage*.

She began her career in TV, writing for shows like *Home and Away*, *Blinky Bill* and the Jim Henson Company's *Bambaloo*. In 2011 she was selected by Sesame Workshop as the writer for Elmo's tour of Australia.

Exit Through the Gift Shop is her first novel.

NOTES

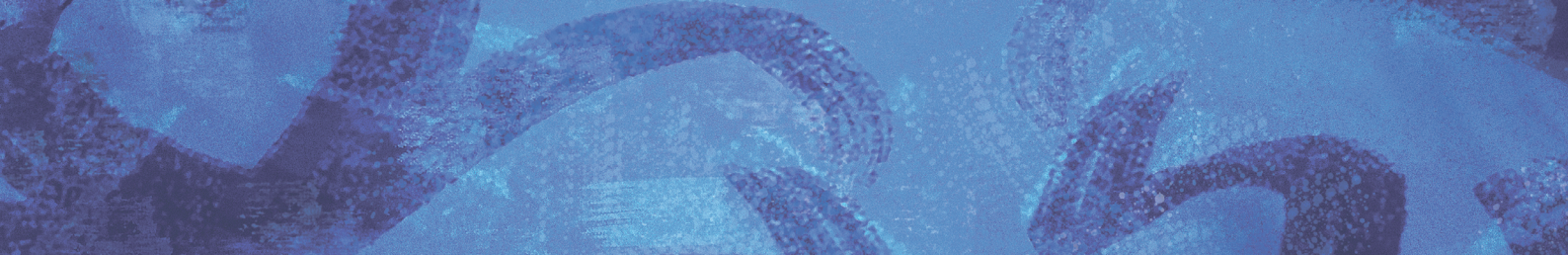
1. After reading the novel, discuss the title *Exit Through the Gift Shop* as a class, and what it means in the context of Ana's story. Think about both the figurative and literal meanings of the phrase, and how it is a metaphor for embracing life's treasures.
2. Even though Ana is dying of cancer, she uses humour to see the bright side of life. Discuss the ways in which Ana's story is a celebration of life rather than a story about death.
3. Ana tackles life's biggest questions, including 'Is there an afterlife?' Everyone has different beliefs. For example, some people believe in an afterlife, but some people do not. At the beginning of the novel, Ana's parents have differing beliefs. Create a Venn diagram (two circles that cross over each other) with one circle representing you and the other representing a friend, a member of your family, or your caregiver. Consider how your views differ from this person and the beliefs you share. Do you have more similarities or more differences? How do you think your Venn diagram would compare a Venn diagram showing Ana's parents?
4. As a class, list the different ways Alyssa bullies Ana throughout the novel. Why are these encounters considered bullying? Why is bullying wrong? How does cyber-bullying introduce an added layer of complexity? Compare and contrast the different forms of 'restorative justice' that Mr K outlines on pages 182–183. Which option would you choose and why?
5. ***'A girl in my English class, Sasha Lalic, has literally thousands of embarrassing pouty selfies on her Insta page ... And if she doesn't get at least 100 "likes" within ten seconds of posting a pic, she goes into a total funk. Her pout becomes real. Her face sinks and her shoulders droop. She hides her phone under her desk during class and presses "refresh" over and over again – ever hopeful for more "likes". She's a selfie junkie.'*** (Page 62.)

What is Ana trying to express about 'selfie' culture and social media in *Exit Through the Gift Shop*? Do you agree with her stance? Why or why not?

6. ***'I'm bald. I'm ugly. No boy will ever like me now. No boy will ever like me anyway, because why would anyone bother liking a dying girl?'*** (Page 90.)

While Ana is going through chemotherapy, she questions her body image and hair loss.

- a. How does AI help her get through this? Would she have made it through this on her own? What does this say about friendship?
- b. How does Ana's journey promote body positivity?
- c. Compare and contrast the way Ana sees herself to the way Alyssa Anderson, AI and Sasha Lalic see themselves.

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7. Alyssa is ‘good’ to her brother, and ‘evil’ to Ana. As Al says on page 175, ***‘Do ya reckon it’s possible for someone to be both good and evil at the same time?’*** As a class, create two columns headed ‘good’ and ‘evil’. Define both words, then list examples in the book that are considered ‘good’ and compare them those that are considered ‘evil’. Then, in a third column, list things in the book that can be considered both good and evil.
 8. Ana’s perspective on Alyssa changes throughout the novel. How and why does her perspective change?
 9. Ana’s English assignment was to write the story of her life, and she chose to create a zine. Why do you think Ana chose to tell her story this way? How does she use different designs, fonts and illustrations to create interest, convey mood and emphasise ideas on the page?
 10. Research the elements and history of zines. Create a zine of a day in your life. It can be fact, fiction or a creative amalgamation of both fact and fiction.
 11. The protagonist, Ana, is half Iranian. Does this affect the story, and how? Why is it important to read books written by diverse voices? Look at your own background and culture. How is your life shaped by your background?
 12. Ana writes her own definitions for words throughout the novel. Choose five words from the book and write creative definitions for them. Each definition should include: pronunciation, the type of word it is (a noun, verb, colloquialism etc.) and an example of how to use the word in a sentence.
 13. Ana ticks things off her bucket list throughout the novel. Create a vision board of all the things you’d like to achieve in your life. What would you include on your bucket list? Which things have you already ticked off? Is there anything on your vision board that you could do right now? Write a plan to achieve one of your goals.
 14. Discuss Ana’s parting words on page 207. If you had to write a message that encapsulated your thoughts and feelings on life, what would you say? Research the famous last words of someone in history. How do their words influence the way you view them?
 15. ***‘I had to accept that not all stories have a neat, satisfying ending. You can’t wrap up everything in life and put a pretty bow on it. Some things remain unresolved.’*** (Page 200.)
 - a. Traditionally, stories have a narrative arc, which includes a beginning, a climax and a resolution. Compare fiction to real life. What does Ana mean when she says her story is unresolved? What kind of ending does *Exit Through the Gift Shop* have?
 - b. Discuss the concept of a ‘happy ending’, and why stories should or shouldn’t have happy endings?