



**Graffiti Moon**  
**Cath Crowley**

**Teachers notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright**

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## Introduction

'It makes me think of a wall that Leo and me did once. A graffiti moon cut by the shadow of power lines. *A prisoner moon*, Leo wrote.' (p 77)

Lucy Dervish is searching for Shadow and Poet, the enigmatic graffiti artist and writer who have left their mysterious works on walls all over town. She's smitten by the idea of Shadow: 'A guy with the ocean pouring out of his can and words pouring out of his mouth, saying things she wants to hear.'(p 76)

It's the last night of high school and her friends are up for a party. Jazz wants to find a new boyfriend; Daisy thinks she wants to dump Dylan; Lucy wants to find Shadow; and Leo has a great scheme to get him and Ed out of their financial troubles.

The problem is that the scheme involves robbing from their own high school media lab, and also that it's a scheme orchestrated by Leo's very unreliable brother Jake.

Leo thinks he has no choice. He owes money to the very scary Malcolm Dove.

Ed has little choice. Since his employer Bert died, he's had no job and no way of earning a living.

Dylan has some choice. But he chooses to go along for the ride.

Ed and Leo are not the classic heroes of Lucy's imagining. And when she, Jazz, Daisy and Dylan set off to find Shadow and Poet, with Ed and Leo in tow, things really get interesting!

Lucy and Jazz have no idea how close Shadow and Poet really are. And they have no idea what these boys are up to. But they have committed themselves to a night of adventure with them. Truth or dare?

It's going to be a long, mean night.

## Themes

*Graffiti Moon*, in describing a teenage night of adventure, deals with a number of themes obliquely via razor-sharp character development, and by inviting the reader into several overlapping themes. It also uses suggestive language and nuanced descriptive and linguistic playfulness in an exhilarating way.

- **Rite of Passage into Adulthood**

‘Past the sign that says Wrong Way Go Back.’ (p 229)

Most young adult fictions deal with the theme of maturation in some way. Here the brink of adulthood is telescoped into 24 hours; the events of one long night (the final night of school) which teaches each of the protagonists something about their own characters, and offers each of them a possible future. Each of these teenagers have finished grade twelve, except for Ed who has already left school and started work. Choices are part of growing up; Ed and Leo feel initially that they have few choices. Lucy thinks she’s made a choice, but realises it’s the wrong one. Daisy and Dylan are grappling with the compromises it takes to make a relationship work.

*Question:* ‘Emma dumped me because I chose not growing up.’ (p 236) Has Leo grown up by the end of the novel?

*Question:* Who is the most mature of these characters and why do you think that is?

*Activity:* Read and compare this novel to other examples of the genre in which teenagers are embarking on post-school life. eg *Twelve* by Nick McDonnell; *Night Train* by Judith Clarke; *Vigil* by Nadia Wheatley; *Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger; *Good Oil* by Laura Buzo; *The Piper’s Son* by Melina Marchetta.

- **Outsiders**

‘ ‘You ever feel like that?’... ‘Like you’re stuck somewhere and the lid’s on tight?’ ’ (p 144)

Teenagers often feel that they don’t fit in, and young adult fiction generally reflects that feeling. Ed and Leo are not achievers, despite their talents. Ed paints pictures because he can’t express himself in words. Bert has his number when he suggests that Ed keeps his identity as Shadow secret from Beth: ‘you won’t tell her because what’s on that wall is what’s going on in there.’ (p 143)

Cath Crowley has written that: ‘I’m interested in art but I’m even more interested in how people on the edges find a way to fit in – and in what happens to them if they don’t.’

'Cath Crowley Talks Graffiti Moon'

<<http://content.boomerangbooks.com.au/perpetually-adolescent-blog/cath-crowley-talks-graffiti-moon/2010/08>>

*Question:* Invite your students to consider the concept of an outsider, or the notion of being 'different'. Have they ever felt like an outsider? In a sense we are all outsiders, as we are each individuals. But some people feel more isolated than others. Discuss the possible reasons for such isolation.

*Question:* 'I want Lucy to tell me something that changes what I think about myself.' (p 218) By the end of the novel has Ed become less of an outsider? Is he more confident and why?

- **Relationships**

'Maybe kissing blindfolded like this is the easiest way to start. I'm a little jealous that Jazz doesn't seem to need a sheet over her face to avoid first-date awkwardness.' (p 100)

Lucy is chasing a dream, and refuses to acknowledge that she's deeply attracted to Ed. Ever since accidentally breaking his nose on their first date she has steered clear of him. But now they are forced together in the search for Shadow, and she is surprised to find that he is witty, intelligent, and even interested in art! She's been searching for her ideal literary hero, or as Jazz puts it 'Your idea of a romance requires a corset and a time machine.' (p 153) Jazz is the opposite: 'I'll settle for action' (p 32). She's up for anything; puts out signals like 'a lighthouse' (p 152), and tends to be too easily satisfied by anyone who pays her some attention. Daisy loves Dylan but she has doubts about their love because they've been together for so long.

*Activity:* 'I guess love's kind of like a marshmallow in a microwave on high. After it explodes it's still a marshmallow. But, you know, now it's a complicated marshmallow.' (p 200) Discuss.

*Activity:* The novel plays with the idea of romance in a teasing and enticing way. Lucy compares Ed unfavourably to Mr Darcy (p 64, p 108, p 137) in *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. Just like Elizabeth Bennett, Lucy seems to actively avoid realising that Ed is in fact her ideal romantic hero. Read this classic novel, and then compare Ed to Mr Darcy. How are they alike? How are they different?

- **Class, Wealth and Education as Sources of Power and Inequity**

'I think about her being disappointed because I'm a guy going nowhere, not a guy who's sensitive and smart and funny. I think about her going to uni and making glass and me staying where I am spraying walls and scraping rent.' (p 126)

The problems encountered by central characters in this novel are created by inequity. Leo has suffered an abusive childhood before being 'rescued' by his Gran. His brother Jake is already knee-deep in petty crime and Leo is on the brink of

becoming a thief as well. Ed lives with his single mother in a run-down house and they are perennially short of money. His learning problems haven't been identified at school which has led to his frustration and abandonment of his education. He finds it difficult to get work after Bert dies, as he has no contacts or networks of support. Both Leo and Ed have had wealthy girlfriends – Emma and Beth – and both have found that problematic. Now Ed is attracted to the artistic Lucy again, but fears that she, too, is beyond him. Lucy's parents have struggled with being artists and she's had to work to take lessons from Al. But she's overcome her difficulties, and has the confidence to believe in her own talents. 'Mean nights' is the life these kids live.

*Activity:* Discuss the difficulties faced by kids who don't have either education or the wealth necessary to attain education.

- **Hope and Aspirations in Life**

'Who does feel hope round here?' (p 144)

Hope is often denied to those who are disadvantaged or lack the basic education necessary to achieve. Ed has had his moments of despair but is lucky that art gives him a sense of control. 'I don't know if I ever feel hopeful when I work. I feel a high kick in and then sort of a floating ocean inside and then relief. Maybe that's hope ...' (p 144)

The little yellow bird which appears in his paintings is also symbolic of this hope.

*Activity:* Is hope essential to future success? Bert told Ed that 'dreaming's the only way to get anywhere.'(p 123) Is that true in your experience?

- **Teenage Crime, Delinquency or Vandalism**

'We've got at least a first offence before the cops even think about putting us in jail.' (p 12)

The issue of teenage crime is always a fraught one but, as this novel points out, such petty crime is often driven by need, disadvantage, impulse, misunderstanding, or peer group pressure. Graffiti artists are often accused of being criminals or vandals which illustrates just how tenuous the notion of crime really is.

*Activity:* Conduct a debate about the ethics involved in the robbery that Leo and Ed nearly commit, and the possible impacts of what might have happened.

- **Art as a Transformative Force in Life**

'Nothing about art is a waste of time. It's the time wasting that gets you there,' Al says.' (p 130)

Art is central to this book which celebrates both art in words, and words in art. Shadow and Leo escape the travails of their lives via their art, and express their feelings in evocative word pictures. They also entice their viewers into the ambiguous delights of the art they create on walls all over town. Graffiti is an egalitarian artform; it is not contained within a gallery space; it has no price; and can be enjoyed by anyone. Lucy is obsessed with Shadow's art because it speaks to her in ways which words simply cannot. Lucy is also obsessed with her own art of glass blowing. The magic of this process gives her the same 'zing' which the boys feel when they are creating wall art.

*Activity:* 'Art is more important than money, Lucy' (p 129). Debate this topic.

*Question:* Graffiti is often viewed as a form of petty crime; however, some communities have now legalised it by allowing graffiti to be painted in designated areas. Shadow's work is exceptional but won't give him any recompense unless it's commissioned. Is graffiti art or vandalism? [See also **Art Exercises 5**. below]

- **Social Commentary**

'You're right. It's the animals.' (p 121)

The importance of social commentary is constantly suggested in this novel. Often the artworks Shadow and Leo put together have a strong message about peace, global warming, the environment, or individual responsibility.

*Activity:* Read the captions Poet writes for Shadow's images described (pp 121–2). Choose an issue which is important to you. Then create your own picture and come up with a pithy line which challenges people's perceptions about that issue. eg Teenage crime; alcohol abuse; treatment of refugees etc.

- **Memory**

'It's five bottles called *The Fleet of Memory*. Al helped me with the name. Inside the bottles are things I like remembering.' (p 123)

Memories of childhood are perhaps the most vivid memories we retain. They can assume symbolic power in our lives, and be either cherished or suppressed depending on their content.

*Activity:* How important are your memories? What are some of your memories? Create your own memory bottle in a vessel of your choosing. eg A box decorated with some of your memories; an album; a web page.

- **Parenting**

'My dad was a magician too. Got in his car and disappeared.'(p 124)

Parents in this novel are a mixture of good and bad. Ed's dad left his mum and Ed; Leo's alcoholic parents abused him; but Lucy's parents for all their eccentricity have inspired her to pursue her art, and Ed's mum is also supportive despite her constant money worries.

*Question:* Should Ed's mum have known that he was having money troubles? Should Lucy's parents have worried when she didn't come home on the last night of school? Where do parents' responsibilities lie?

*Question:* Both Leo and Ed are without fathers. How does this affect them? Was Bert a father-figure to Ed?

- **Truth**

'You shouldn't have lied to me all night,' she says.'(p 260)

Lucy and Ed taunt each other to reveal truths about themselves. But the night will lead them all to reveal truths about themselves.

*Question:* Lying is a major issue for these characters. They view the concept as an important personal measure of themselves and of each other. Is telling the truth always easy? When is it difficult for you?

*Question:* How much more difficult is 'truth' when communities and authorities become involved?

*Activity:* Truth or dare? Challenge the class to reveal one thing about themselves that the others mightn't have guessed. (Monitor this activity so that it's not too confronting for those who may have painful truths to reveal.)

- **Moral Responsibility**

'No point living if you don't live good.' (p 155)

In the end, this novel is about the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' and how fluid the difference can be. Leo and Ed could so easily have been painted as bad guys; Lucy certainly had been prepared to see Ed like that; and if they'd gone through with the robbery they may never have escaped the label.

*Question:* Why does Ed's mum say that Leo is a good guy?

*Question:* How would you define moral responsibility? What values are most important to you?



## Plot & Structure

**1. The novel is structured by weaving together the three narrative voices** and points of view of Ed and Lucy, and also of Leo ('Poet') who writes – not unexpectedly – in poetry, while the others write in prose. **Each chapter offers a different perspective on the action.** Sometimes the following chapter picks up where the previous one ended, and on other occasions it presents the action as it was happening in the previous chapter, but through opposing eyes. For example, in the first chapter Lucy (pp 1–3) is racing to catch Shadow painting outside Al's studio; the next is told by Ed (pp 4–15) and describes his thoughts as he's painting just before Lucy arrives to find him gone, so that it takes up the action **simultaneously**. Later Lucy (pp 19–36) meets Ed again, and taunts him as she leaves the room. The following chapter (pp 37–40) has Ed watching her leave, so it takes up the action **sequentially**. In the following chapter (pp 41–52) Lucy again takes up the action **simultaneously** to the previous one.

*Activity:* In choosing to play with time, Cath Crowley has created a narrative dynamism which is clearly very exciting to the reader. How did you feel the three stories worked together? Was there another way this story could have been told?

**2. Tension or Suspense are essential to a novel's structure** and here they are created by gradually revealing answers to several questions posed at the beginning.

*Activity:* Are there questions unanswered in this novel? What are they? Discuss.

**3. Pacing a story** to achieve minor and major climaxes is integral to a novel's structure. This story moves at breakneck speed, partly because of the multi-narrative technique described above. This pace is essential to its meaning because these kids are feeling a sense of urgency now that one thing (school) is over and the next about to begin.

*Question:* How else is pace achieved in this novel? One technique is the use of dialogue to advance the plot. Were there any other techniques which contributed to pace in this novel? Read the opening paragraph in preparation for a response to this question.

**4. Writers create turning points or key events to drive a plot in certain directions.**

*Activity:* What might have happened if Lucy hadn't broken Ed's nose? Or if Ed hadn't met Bert? Or if Lucy hadn't met Al? Or if Leo had put petrol in the van?

**5. The events which make up the plot** of a novel are designed by the writer to flesh out and develop characters and themes.

*Question:* What were the key events in terms of the theme of the 'outsider'? What were the key events which revealed Ed's character? What have been the turning

points in Lucy's life, and how has she responded to them? What events gave you an insight into Leo's character?

## Characters

The action in this novel revolves around three **major characters**:

### Narrators:

**Ed Skye (Shadow):** A 'sheddy, one of the kids who spent a lot of time leaning against the back sheds skipping class.' (p 26) He's always had trouble with reading and with school: 'Feel like art's the only thing I ever figured out. Words, school, I never got the whole picture.' (p 74) This has led to a constant feeling of frustration: 'Like every door in the world was open and the sound was pouring in.' (p 75) Hence he's resorted secretly to his art, and as Lucy says: 'He needs to be seen.' (p 222)

**Leo Green (Poet):** 'He's one of the good guys,' she always said, 'Just sometimes he's working undercover.' (p 9) 'He's trouble and Jazz knows it.' (p 64)

**Lucy Dervish:** 'Lucy's waiting for romance.' (p 32). She's passionate about art and her desire to meet Shadow is based on that. She's also very open to experiences despite her natural timidity: 'I like having friends from different groups.' (p 42). She's often fearless in her exuberance as well: 'I flirt like chopper blades' (p 185).

### Each of these three characters have a group of minor characters around them:

- **Lucy**

**Lucy's mother:** A 'part-time dental nurse and part-time novelist' (p 23).

**Lucy's father:** A 'part-time comedian/magician and a part-time taxi driver' (p 23).

**Lucy's friend Jazz Parker:** She's 'the sort of person who invites herself places and she doesn't follow the rules of high school geography.' (p 42) She also 'thinks she's psychic' (p 37).

**Daisy:** She's a new friend of Jazz and Lucy's, who is a 'sheddy'. 'She's the sort of girl who gets stared at. She's the sort of girl who likes being stared at.' (p 30)

**Al:** The owner of the glassmaking studio where Lucy has been working part-time since year ten: her mentor and employer.

- **Ed**

**Ed's mother:** A battler with a good heart.

**Beth Darling:** Ed's former girlfriend whom he considers to be too wealthy and well-bred for him.

**Bert and Valerie:** Owners of the paint shop where Ed used to work full-time, having left school. Bert was Ed's mentor.

- **Leo**

**Gran, Leo's grandmother:** She has been the only safe haven in Leo and his brother Jake's lives, and they now live with her.

**Jake, Leo's brother:** 'Jake's got a way of talking that makes people believe.' (p 11)

**Emma:** Leo's former girlfriend, who comes from a wealthier background.

**Dylan:** Mate of Leo and Ed's, and boyfriend of Daisy: 'I like to be neat' (p 87).

**Malcolm Dove:** A local thug, to whom Leo owes money: ‘Malcolm doesn’t have friends. He has a group of bad men who hang around, doing him favours.’ (p 11)

**1. Characters are often described in terms which relate them metaphorically to someone or something else.**

*Activity:* Lucy’s name is symbolic; she’s a whirling dervish most of the time! Ed is a Shadow because he’s still searching for his confidence. What other metaphorical descriptions did you notice which described these characters?

**2. The detail used to create a character often includes aspects of their setting which ‘echo’ their characteristics.**

*Activity:* What do descriptions of houses in this novel tell you about the people in them? For example: Leo’s house: ‘the zoo inside his house.’ (p 117); Ed’s house: ‘It’s the stains on the carpet from some other life that came and left before ours.’ (p 10)

**3. Dialogue** can also add to the characterisation established by a description, can progress a plot, and can also be an opportunity for the writer to simply play with the sheer wizardry of language.

*Activity:* Read pages 182–6 where the girls are talking about Lucy almost kissing Ed. The pace of this dialogue is rapier-like. What does it reveal about the three girls?

**4. Writers generally create a mixture of major and minor characters, some intended to invoke sympathy in the reader, and others not to.** There are also some characters who defy categorisation — whose motives remain obscure. Which characters did you have sympathy for and why? Which ones were unattractive, or annoyed you?

*Question:* Were there any ‘minor’ characters you would have liked more information about?

**5. Character arcs** are the curve on which key events show how a character grows or develops in response to events and to interactions with other characters in the novel.

*Activity:* Choose a character and trace an arc on which key events indicate some aspect of their personality or change in their behaviour.

## Style and Use of Language

1. The two prose narrative voices of Ed and Lucy are written in **first person**, and in **present tense**. Poet writes in a **combination of past and present tense** in his poems.

*Activity:* This narrative could also have been written in another voice. For example, Daisy might have told her version of events. Describe the incident at the school in Daisy's voice in past tense.

2. **Voice** is created by a range of devices including syntax, grammar, arrangement of words in a sentence, use of vocabulary and language, etc.

*Activity:* 'Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.' Linguist Noam Chomsky created this sentence – which is grammatically correct but incomprehensible – to demonstrate that the rules governing syntax are distinct from the meanings words convey.

<<http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/syntax.htm>>

'The train belts along the line and the world outside the window rockets and blurs.' (p 76) Take this sentence apart and work out how the language has been constructed to achieve its effect and meaning.

3. **Literary devices such as metaphor and simile** are frequently used as description.

For example:

'where houses swim in pools of orange streetlight' (p 1)

'we watch the dirty silk of the factory smoke float across the sky.' (p 20)

'I told her yeah, but there was no skin on my voice and she heard the bones in my words like I did.' (p 57)

'I escaped onto the wall, a painted ghost trapped in a jar.' (p 61)

'I had this thought, this feeling that there was a drought in me, like there was no water for my insides to float on.' (p 88)

'You ever notice how the night changes shape?' I ask Lucy. 'It starts out thick with people and sound and then gets thinner till in the middle there's almost nothing in it but you.' (p 117)

'The night's mean in this place, full of smog that eats the stars.' (p 144)

*Activity:* Choose a description which appealed to you and analyse how it works and what devices were used to create its effect.

*Activity:* Word play is used to explore the suggestive nature of language and the ambiguous telling of stories, and this novelist delights in words. eg 'we step over a guy still going nowhere from the night before, determined to get there tonight.' (p 117) Often Shadow's thoughts are like poetry as well eg 'I had this urge to throw cans at the windows so I could hear a noise that sounded like escape.' (p 145) Lucy says of her growing attraction to Ed: 'if Ed is a toaster then I am a girl with a knife' (p 178). Find other examples of such word play.

4. **Humour** is another device used by this writer to deal with serious themes or to develop character. When Lucy meets Ed again two years after she broke his nose

during a disastrous date, they play 'fingers' to fill the gap left empty by their lack of conversation, in a sequence which is very funny (pp 34–6). When Ed hears that Lucy vomited after breaking his nose he says he feels 'jaunty' (p 116) in another very amusing sequence of his thoughts.

*Activity:* 'Humour without sadness is just a pie in the face.' (p 252) How would you describe the humour in this book? Is it 'pie in the face' humour or something else?

5. **Leo's poetry** appears as the third voice between the voices of Ed and Lucy. These are Leo's poems:

'Where I Lived Before' (pp 16–7)

'Love in handcuffs' (pp 67–8)

'The daytime things' (pp 82–3)

'Remember love' (pp 97–8)

'Maybe' (pp 114–5)

'The ticking inside' (pp 127–8)

'Almost' (pp 164–5)

'Losing her' (pp 228–9)

'Here' (p 247)

*Activity:* In 'Remembering love' he makes a point about the duality of love as an emotion. Discuss the meaning of this poem in relation to how you feel about love.

*Activity:* Leo recites a haiku poem to Ed (p 233). Try to write a funny haiku like this one.

*Activity:* These poems make up a small 'collection' of Leo's poetry. What title would you give the collection? Design a cover for this collection as well.

*Activity:* If your class is into music they might want to create a simple tune to accompany one of these poems and make the words into song lyrics to perform.

*Activity:* Dylan writes a poem (with Leo's help) about his like for Daisy (pp 245–6). Write your own poem beginning 'If my like for you was ...'

## Setting

**1. Writers create a vivid setting by making it come alive for the reader; by investing it with animate details rather than describing a static picture.** This novel is set in inner Melbourne and is a paean to the beauty of that city's night. Hosier Lane is a well-known graffiti area which is not mentioned in the novel, but is referenced on Cath Crowley's website. <<http://cathcrowley.com.au/writing/graffiti-moon-a-little-of-ed-and-lucy>> Hosier Street is also mentioned in an article on graffiti by Florencia [See below under **Art Exercises 5**].

*Activity:* Read the passages on p 2 and p 255 in each of which Lucy is riding her bike to Al's. The words used to describe the city are deliberately metaphorical eg 'I see the city neon blue and rising (p 2) and 'grey buildings pointing at the stars' (p 255). Discuss the sort of images of the city which these passage evoke for you. Draw that city.

**2. John Marsden in his book *Everything I Know About Writing* (Pan Macmillan, 1992) reminds writers not only to use detail in describing setting (p 113) but also to **use words which appeal to all the senses** (pp 121–6); not to simply describe what can be seen but also what can be felt, heard, touched, felt on the skin, smelt etc.**

*Activity:* Describe your suburb or city using all the senses.

**3. Marsden suggests that contrast and dichotomy are useful in description too.**

*Activity:* Re-write the description you wrote for (3.) above, using contrasts.

**4. This novel is set in the contemporary world and time, in a particular social milieu.**

*Question:* What cues you to the fact that this novel is contemporary? Re-write one brief scene setting it in the 1960s. How would this change this scene?

**5. The mood of a novel is very much about setting as well.** This novel is set at night which lends a dreamlike flavour to the events; this is a down-at-heel suburb but under the stars it assumes a real beauty.

*Question:* How would you describe the mood which is conveyed by setting this novel at night?

## Writing Exercises

1. This is a novel written in three voices; it's two parts **diary** of the events of one night, told by two people, with the third voice of a poet adding his own reflections on the events. Records of events can be written in a range of genres. Here both prose and poetry are used to tell a story.

*Question:* What other genre might have been used?

*Activity:* Add a fourth voice to the novel. Write it in any genre you like, for example, Dylan could tell the story in a **series of emails** to a friend.

*Activity:* Write a **newspaper report** of the capture of Malcolm Dove by the security guard.

*Activity:* Write an even more cryptic account of the night in a **tweet**.

2. **The cover and the back cover blurb of a book** must offer the reader an insight into the contents, style and emotional impact of a book, without giving the ending away. Examine the cover of this book, assessing how the image of the aerosol can, and the words on the front and back cover interact, and whether they are descriptive of the novel after you've read it.

*Activity:* Design your own cover using any medium you choose. Then write your own back cover blurb summarising the themes of the novel in 200 words.

3. There is also a lot of **reference to music** in this novel.

*Activity:* Write the **lyrics for a song** detailing the exploits of Shadow and Poet and friends on this 'long, mean night'. Have fun choosing a familiar song tune to go with the words. Examples:

'Ballad of Mack the Knife' from 'The Threepenny Opera' by German dramatist Bertolt Brecht and composer Kurt Weill, sung by Sting

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y7lbEM1Or4>>

Johnny Cash's 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down'

<[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_Xk8Cp09aM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_Xk8Cp09aM)>

'The Ballad of Gilligan's Isle' the theme song for the TV show 'Gilligan's Island'

< <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QiyliPmppTY>>

Sarah Blasco 'All I Want'

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX1RgyCl1Xs>>

4. Lucy writes that 'Adding things to the world is a game Mum and Dad and I play when we're really strapped for money.' (p 99)

*Activity:* Add something to your own world in a **short story**.

5. Ed and Lucy flippantly list a range of things which 'disappoint' them such as the fact that peppermint Freddoes don't 'come in king-size.' (p 125)

*Activity:* Make up your own **list of things** which could be better, eg that railway stations could display paintings and quotes by artists like Shadow and Poet, instead of boring ads for insurance companies or beers.

### **Art Exercises**

1. Leo writes: 'The disappointed sea' under one of Ed's paintings.

*Activity:* Paint your own version of a disappointed sea.

2. During the night Lucy and Ed talk about a number of paintings.

*Activity:* You might like to examine and discuss some of them eg Michael Zavros's *Till the Heart Caves In* (p 65); *The Lovers* by René Magritte (p 100); *Woman with a Crow* by Picasso (pp 131–2); Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* (p 154); *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (p 162); Rothko's No. 301 is described by Ed very eloquently (p 167); *The Spoils* by Sam Leach (p 168); Angela Brennan's *Everything is what it is and not some other thing* (pp 206-7).

A blogger called Persnickety Snark has done most of the trawling for you. The following website has a gallery that features most of these works  
<<http://www.persnicketyarnark.com/2010/10/graffiti-moon-cath-crowley-art-gallery.html>>

*Activity:* Lucy also offers a beautiful description of Bill Henson's 'photographs of teenagers in the night. When I looked at them I felt like someone got it, like someone saw what it was like to be bare skin shining in darkness.' (p 141) In view of the controversy about Henson you might wish to discuss his work with your class. Visit his website <<http://www.billhenson.net.au/>>

*Activity:* Read more about Vermeer's use of 'camera obscura' to create his paintings.

3. Shadow's paintings are very evocatively described in this novel.

*Activity:* Choose any one of Shadow's paintings as it is described, and try to paint or collage your own interpretation of it.

4. Graffiti Art is a major subject in this novel.

*Activity:* Study Graffiti Art by visiting websites about graffiti [such as the sites listed in the **Bibliography** below].

*Activity:* You might also visit Graffiti Artists' Websites [listed in the **Bibliography** below].



*Activity:* A popular debate question seems to be: 'Is Graffiti Art or Vandalism?' Invite your students to either conduct a debate or write an essay with illustrations to support the points made. Refer, for example, to new laws being instituted in NSW which toughen penalties for teenage graffiti artists. [See **Bibliography** below.] Alternatively, graffiti has also been used by several local authorities to support youth culture. You might refer to bureaucracies condoning graffiti such as the Brisbane City Council's Artforce project which commissions the painting of traffic signal boxes all over Brisbane. <<http://svc169.wic021v.server-web.com/artforce/default.asp>>

*Activity:* Conduct an activity at your school allowing students to 'express themselves' on a designated wall or fence or other freestanding construct. Visit 'How to Draw Graffiti' <<http://www.wikihow.com/Draw-Graffiti>> for some tips to get you started.

*Activity:* Access the website created by artist Andreas Rehnberg which allows you to actually create graffiti artworks on screen. <<http://graffiti.playdo.com/>>

5. Lucy's glass blowing is another aspect of art celebrated in this novel.

*Activity:* Cath Crowley has said that the inspiration behind Lucy's glass came (in part) from an artist called Bethany Wheeler. Visit her website <<http://www.bethanywheeler.com/>> Students may wish to explore this topic further as well. [See **Bibliography** below.]

## **Quotes for Discussion after Reading the Novel**

Use the following quotes to provoke discussion:

1. 'Most times when I look at Shadow and Poet's work I see something different from what the words are saying. I like that about art, that what you see is sometimes more about who you are than what's on the wall. I look at this painting and think about how everyone has some secret inside, something sleeping like that yellow bird.' (p 19)
2. 'Lucy, you're lucky if romance ends in something you can add water to and rehydrate.' (p 24)
3. 'If you don't want a generation of robots, fund the arts.'(p 24)
4. 'If you treat glass right it doesn't crack.' (p 200)
5. 'Some things are hard to see, I say. Everything's hard to see when you've got your eyes closed ...' (p 224)

## Further Reading and or Discussion Ideas for Class Discussion

1. People say graffiti is ugly, irresponsible and childish. But that's only if it's done properly.' Banksy, an anonymous and famous English graffiti artist. Discuss.
2. Are there enough support networks for 'at-risk' youths like Ed and Leo? How could Ed's problems with reading not have been picked up? How could such a bright boy have been allowed to abandon school? Why is Leo having to pay for poetry lessons when he's still at school? Has the system failed them, and does it fail regularly in your opinion?
3. Have a look at some of the online reviews of the novel written by teenagers, and discuss what the writers say. A good place to start is at Insideadog <<http://www.insideadog.com.au/books/graffiti-moon>> the site managed by the Centre for Youth Literature.
4. On the *Overland* website, the launch of the book is reported along with a review by Clare Strahan: 'The novel embraces some dark themes – hopelessness, poverty, fatherlessness, grief, illiteracy, violence – and manages them with uplifting pathos, tempering their effects with the power of hope, art, friendship, humour and love.' Discuss this summary of the novel. <<http://web.overland.org.au/2010/08/fiction-review-graffiti-moon/>>
5. In a review posted by Persnickety Snark on her blog, she writes a review of the novel including this quote: '*Graffiti Moon* is a love letter to the arts and teachers (in all their forms) that bewitch students with their passion.'  
<<http://www.persnicketySnark.com/2010/10/review-graffiti-moon-cath-crowley.html>> Discuss this statement.

## Further Ideas Using Technology

1. Access websites which add to your knowledge of graffiti art.
2. Locate online information about Cath Crowley. Find out as much as you can about the author. Try to locate book reviews and author information, such as interviews. [See also **Author Note** below.]
3. Create your own Facebook graffiti text banners at the YourGen website <<http://yourgen.com/graffiti>>
4. Watch 'The Graffiti Artist' a film directed and written by James Bolton 2004 Mettray Reformatory Pictures See Trailer <<http://www.thegraffitiartist.com/trailer.php>>
5. Listen to music by Melbourne bands or singers to get you into the mood for reading this novel. eg 'Paul Kelly's 'From St Kilda to Kings Cross'; or songs by Missy Higgins, Steven Cummings, or Clare Bowditch.

## Conclusion

*Graffiti Moon* is a contemporary novel of visceral emotional impact and stunning poetic brilliance. It is a heart-stopping romantic adventure, which sings with a love of art and language, while it explores the challenges of personal responsibility. But most of all, this novel is a celebration of the sheer exhilaration of being really alive.

## Author Note

**Cath Crowley** grew up in rural Victoria. She comes from a family of seven: her parents, three brothers and a dog called Elvis. All of them encouraged her to give up full-time teaching to write. Cath studied professional writing and editing at RMIT and works as both a freelance writer in Melbourne and a part-time teacher. She has lived and taught overseas but now lives in Kingsville/Elwood, in a sunny spot close to the beach. Although Cath has only played soccer once, and is very clumsy, she observed kids at schools where she has taught and poured all that knowledge into her acclaimed trilogy beginning with her first published work *The Life and Times of Gracie Faltrain*, followed by *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control* and *Gracie Coltrain Gets it Right (finally)*. In between, she wrote her second novel *Chasing Charlie Duskin*. *Graffiti Moon* is her latest work which has already received wide acclaim. It won the Ethel Turner Literary Prize in the NSW Premier's Awards, and the Young Adult category in the Prime Minister's Literary Award 2011, and has been shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year (Older Readers) 2011. Visit Cath's website <<http://cathcrowley.com.au/>> See also: 'Cath Crowley: Interview' The Tales Compendium <<http://www.thetalescompendium.com/2011/02/author-interview-cath-crowley.html>>

'Cath Crowley: Interview' *Rollercoaster*

<<http://www.abc.net.au/rollercoaster/therap/interviews/s1593482.htm>>

'Cath Crowley talks Graffiti Moon'

<<http://content.boomerangbooks.com.au/perpetually-adolescent-blog/cath-crowley-talks-graffiti-moon/2010/08>>

'Cath Crowley' *Good Reading Magazine*

<<http://www.goodreadingmagazine.com.au/meettheauthor.cfm?hot=19>>

Insideadog < <http://www.insideadog.com.au/books/graffiti-moon>>

Strahan, Clare 'Fiction Review: *Graffiti Moon*'

<<http://web.overland.org.au/2010/08/fiction-review-graffiti-moon/>>

'Review: Graffiti Moon/Cath Crowley'

<<http://www.persnicketyarn.com/2010/10/review-graffiti-moon-cath-crowley.html>>

## Further Reading

### Graffiti Art:

Art Crimes: The Writing on the Wall <<http://www.graffiti.org/>>

Benny-Morrison, Ava 'New Laws Target Graffiti Artists' *Northern Star* 3 June 2001 <<http://www.northernstar.com.au/story/2011/06/03/tarred-with-the-same-brush/>>

Graffiti Art Gallery <<http://www.graffitcreator.net/htm/gallery/artist.htm>>

'Graffiti Artist Hired to Paint Jet' *Sydney Morning Herald* 15 February 2001 <<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/graffiti-artist-hired--to-paint-jet-20110215-1au6x.html>>

Graffiti Playdo <<http://graffiti.playdo.com/>>

Graffiti Removal Melbourne <<http://www.graffitiremovalmelbourne.com/>>

Liguori, Florencia 'Graffiti: Art or Vandalism?' <<http://www.upstart.net.au/2009/09/11/graffiti-art-or-vandalism/>>

Melbourne Graffiti.com Australian Graffiti <<http://www.melbournegraffiti.com/>>

Melbourne Stencil Festival <<http://www.stencilfest.com/>>

Stowers, George C. 'Graffiti Art' (1997) <<http://www.graffiti.org/faq/stowers.html>>

'Tribute to Graffiti: 50 Beautiful Graffiti Artworks' <<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2008/09/14/tribute-to-graffiti-50-beautiful-graffiti-artworks/>>

38 Marvellous Graffiti and Street Art that will Blow you Away' <<http://www.onextrapixel.com/2009/06/17/38-marvellous-graffiti-art-and-street-art-that-will-blow-you-away/>>

Yourgen <<http://yourgen.com/graffiti>>

**Graffiti Artists:**

Banksy <<http://www.banksy.co.uk/>>

Duel (aka John Williams) <<http://www.duelsart.com/about0.0.html>>

Ghostpatrol (mentioned on p 123) <<http://ghostpatrol.net/>>

Regan Tamanui <<http://www.regantamanui.com/>>

Retna <<http://www.digitalretna.com/>>

Saber <<http://saberone.com/>>

**Glass Artists:**

'Sculpture- in Glass' *Australian Artists and Art Galleries* <<http://www.ozartists.com/ScGlassGN.html>>

Bethany Wheeler <<http://www.bethanywheeler.com/>>

Gordon Studio Glassblowers <[http://www.gordonstudio.com.au/outdoor\\_sculpture.html](http://www.gordonstudio.com.au/outdoor_sculpture.html)>

Linda Fraser <<http://www.lindafraser.com/>>

Making Glass Sculpture <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JarOiqsunWQ>>

'Studio Glass' *Wikipedia* <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Studio\\_glass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Studio_glass)>