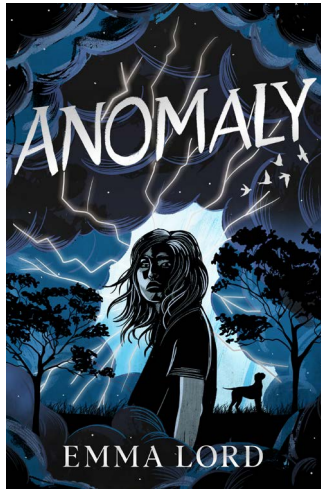




Teacher Notes

Anomaly

by Emma Lord

Teacher notes prepared by Bec Kavanagh.

Publication details

Publisher: Affirm Press
ISBN: 9781922848307
Size/format: 208 x 135mm, 400 pages, PB
RRP: \$22.99
Pub Date: 27 August 2024
Reader ages: 14+ years

Themes

- Power
- Identity
- Survival
- Trauma
- Grief
- Mental health

About the Book

Piper Manning survived the apocalypse. Barely.

She recovered from the virus that killed millions, but it left behind a new, uncontrollable power that's forced her to isolate herself from others — for their sake.

Then an injured boy shows up at her mountain hideaway. And what hurt Seth is out to get her, too.

Now she's on the run, risking everything for a shot at an actual future. But to get there, she'll have to trust a stranger, control her abilities ... and face her ghosts.

Because the end of the world was just the beginning.

A high-octane YA debut, *Anomaly* will force you to question destiny, memory and how far you would go to survive.

About the Author

Emma Lord is a freelance copywriter and author living in Sydney's Inner West. She loves all things sci-fi, fantasy and horror, but she has a particular soft spot for reading and writing YA. Her debut YA novel *Anomaly* was selected for the Varuna and Affirm Press Mentorship Award in 2020 and is set for release in September 2024.

Before Reading

- What is an anomaly? What does the title tell you about the novel?
- Read the blurb aloud. Does this seem like a book that you'll enjoy? Why/why not? Make a note of any specific details that capture your interest.

Comprehension Questions

- Why is Griff so important to Piper? Who did he belong to?
- How does Piper keep track of time at the beginning of the novel? Why do you think this is important to her?
- An 'inciting incident' is the thing that happens in a story to trigger the narrative chain of events. What is the inciting incident in *Anomaly*?

Comprehension Questions cont.

- Does Piper trust Seth? Why/why not? What does he do to earn her trust?
- What do Reapers do to people? What becomes of the person after the Reaper has made contact with them?
- What is so special about the way that Reapers communicate with each other? How is their narrative voice different from Piper's narrative voice?
- What is the power source at Eden?
- Why doesn't Piper want to think about what happened to her dad? Why does she think she's to blame for his death?
- Would you describe Shepherd as evil? Why/why not? What do you think his motivations were for testing people with anomalies? Is there any excuse for his actions?
- Towards the end of the book, Piper feels 'untouchable, invincible [and] in the space between heartbeats, she knows exactly who she is' (p312). Who is she?

Literacy

Genre: horror, speculative fiction or future dystopia?

- The genre of a novel doesn't just help us to figure out where to put a book on the shelf; it also helps readers know what to expect. For example, if you pick up a romantic comedy novel, you probably wouldn't expect to find a monster (although all rules can be broken!). Of course, authors also mix genres all the time, bringing them together to create different types of stories. As readers, if we can understand genre, we can start to understand the details of character and plot, and perhaps even make predictions as to how the story will end. Our enjoyment of a book is often shaped by how well an author navigates our genre expectations.
- *Anomaly* is a novel that straddles several genres, in particular, horror, speculative fiction and dystopia. In small groups, come up with a list of conventions that are characteristic of each of these genres (consider character, plot, worldbuilding, voice, point of view, setting, research and tense). Consider how *Anomaly* uses or rejects the conventions you've found and decide what genre you think it most belongs to.

'In Media Res' means to begin in the middle of the action. This technique allows writers to engage readers by throwing them immediately into the middle of something happening, providing further detail for context as the story progresses.

- What other novels can you think of that use this technique?
- Why do you think it's such an effective way of engaging the reader?
- Can you think of any instances where this kind of opening wouldn't be appropriate?

Theme: depression and anxiety

- At a plot level, this is a novel about power, identity and survival. But it also explores themes of grief, trauma and mental illness. Discuss the ways the Reapers might be read both literally and as a metaphor for depression and anxiety. Begin by exploring what the Reapers have in common with these mental health issues.
- Why do you think writers might choose to use metaphors to explore themes that can be challenging to talk about?
- In her author's note at the beginning of the novel, Emma Lord writes: '*Anomaly* ventures into some dark places. There's light at the end of the tunnel, but there's content along the way some readers may find distressing'. Discuss the ways content notes can be used to help readers.

Final reflections

- The novel ends on a cliff-hanger – what unresolved questions do you have that might be explored in book two?
- Imagine you want to recommend *Anomaly* to another reader. What other books might you compare it to? What three things would you share with them that would inspire them to pick it up?
- Compare Piper from the beginning of the novel to Piper at the end. What has she learned? How has she changed? What do you think she believes now that she didn't believe at the beginning (about herself, about the world, or about other people)?

Creative Activities

- Use the cliff-hanger questions you came up with earlier as inspiration to write a hypothetical blurb for book two. What would you call the sequel?
- *Anomaly* has all the elements of a thrilling film or TV series. What other movies or television shows does it remind you of? Imagine that you are adapting the novel for a screenplay and write or draw a series of thumbnail sketches that outline the main plot points. What would you keep/add/remove?
 - As an extension, create a short trailer for your series or film.
- We learn that the Reapers have already taken over other worlds, including Seth's. How do you think these worlds might have been similar or different to ours? Using an omniscient point of view, describe the setting of the world you've imagined, trying to capture some of the details that make it distinct. (You might respond to this activity visually if you prefer.)
- By the time the events of the novel take place, the world has already succumbed to the sickness. But what do you think the early days might have been like? Choose one of the secondary or minor characters from the novel and write a scene from their perspective that explores the moment the world changed for them.