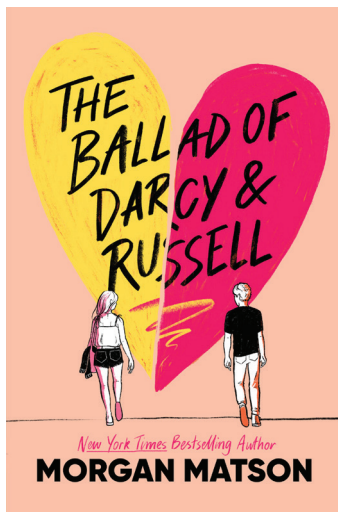




Teacher Notes

The Ballad of Darcy and Russell

by Morgan Matson

Teacher notes prepared by Bec Kavanagh.

Publication details

Publisher: Affirm Press
ISBN: 9781923135611
Size/format: 208 x 135mm, 400 pages, PB
RRP: \$22.99
Pub Date: 28 January 2025
Reader ages: 14-18 years

Themes

- Romance
- Love
- Discovery
- Saying goodbye

About the Book

Darcy believes in love at first sight. She's spent her whole life waiting for that perfect magical moment.

When Darcy finds herself stranded at a bus station after a music festival, her life is anything but perfect. She is convinced nothing good can come of this night ... until she meets Russell.

Russell is funny, kind and extremely cute. And just what Darcy has been waiting for.

But over the course of twenty-four hours – filled with night swimming, run-ins with the law, epic road trips and dramatic revelations – Darcy will have to question everything she believes about love. Can you really fall for someone you just met? And is it worth saying hello when you know you're destined for a goodbye?

From *New York Times* bestselling author Morgan Matson comes a sweeping romantic novel about love, fate ... and one night that can change everything.

About the Author

Morgan Matson is the *New York Times* bestselling author of six books for teens, including *Since You've Been Gone* and *Save the Date*, and the middle grade novel *The Firefly Summer*. She lives in Los Angeles but spends part of every summer in the Pocono Mountains.

Before Reading

- Read the book's blurb. Consider the questions it raises: 'Can you really know someone after only a handful of hours? Is it possible to fall in love in just one day? Is it worth saying hello when you know you're destined for a goodbye?'
- What are your answers? Write them down and come back to them when you finish reading to see if your thoughts have changed.
- An epigraph is a 'short quotation set at the beginning of a literary work or one of its divisions to suggest its theme'. Read the epigraphs for this book. What theme/s do they suggest?
- Do you predict that the book will have a happy ending? Give reasons for your answer.

Comprehension questions

- What makes Darcy decide to go to the music festival? What does she imagine it will be like? What is it really like?
- What is Darcy's all time favourite novel?
- What does Darcy hope for because of romance novels and movies?
- What are some of the things Darcy and Russell have in common?
- Consider the Ship of Theseus thought puzzle (p71-72). Do you think it can still be considered the same ship or not? What does Russell liken the ship to?
- What's so scandalous about Wylie Sanders?
- What souvenir does Darcy take from the hotel? What does she hope that it will remind her of?
- Why do you think Russell didn't tell Darcy about his dad? Was he wrong to keep it from her?
- Darcy is heartbroken that she has shown Russell her 'whole heart' only to find out that 'he had his own agenda' (p125). What was his agenda? Was she really the only one opening up?
- Although we only meet Katy and Didi through Darcy's imagined conversations with them, how would you describe their personalities?
- What does C.J. suspect Darcy of?
- How does seeing Wylie's relationship with his family change Darcy's thinking about her mum and step-siblings?
- What do you think motivates Chloe's kindness towards Darcy?
- What makes Darcy change her mind about giving Russell a second chance?
- What are some of the challenges that Russell describes about being in a famous family?
- How have Darcy's wants changed from the beginning of the book to the end?

Literacy

• Genre - romance

- *The Ballad of Darcy and Russell* is a romance novel, which the Romance Writers of America suggest is comprised of two basic elements: a central love story and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending.
- In addition to this, romance writers often use familiar tropes (recurring or common themes or literary devices) to engage their readers. Some tropes in romance include the enemies to lovers storyline, or the love triangle. As a class, brainstorm other romance tropes.
- Discuss the ways that the novel meets the basic criteria of the genre. Does it diverge from this at all? Which tropes does it use? What feels familiar/what feels new?

• Privacy, ethics and the media

- Define these terms – privacy, ethics, media. Russell tells Darcy that his ex, Olivia, broke his trust by revealing family secrets to the media. Read this scene closely, and discuss the issue of celebrity, privacy and the media. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:
- Do celebrities deserve privacy? What are the boundaries of public life?
- What are some of the ways that irresponsible reporting can do harm?
- How can journalists avoid doing harm in their writing, while maintaining a commitment to sharing information?
- Would you share a piece of gossip with a magazine if they offered to pay you? Why/why not?
- Would you read a piece of gossip in a magazine? Is this different? Why/why not?

Final reflections

- Return to your responses to the questions in the 'Before Reading' section. Have your thoughts changed? If so, how? If not, why?
- How did you feel about the ending of the book? Would you describe it as a happily ever after or a happily for now ending? Give reasons for your answer.
- Beginning with the phrase 'you'd like this book if...', come up with three things that you'd recommend to someone else about the novel.

When they meet _____

Creative activities

- Consider how the epigraphs at the beginning of the book speak to its theme. Quotes from other sources can be great inspiration for writers. Find a quote that resonates with you. It might be from a book, a song, a speech, a poem, a play – any text is fine. Read your quote aloud. Spend some time thinking about it. Make a list of five possible themes it speaks to. Choose two. If you were going to tell a story about these themes, how would you tell it? Write an outline that includes the epigraph, the themes, character names, a title, the genre, and a key conflict.
- When Darcy meets Russell's family, she's surprised by how many people are in it. Choose one of these characters and rewrite this scene from their perspective.
- One of the big moments in any romance novel is the meet cute. How would you describe a meet cute? Fill in the blanks in the prompts below to create a thumbnail sketch of two characters, then write a meet cute scene for them.

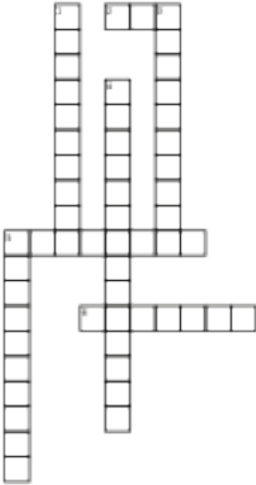
(CHARACTER ONE NAME) is a (ROLE/JOB) who just wants to _____

(CHARACTER TWO NAME) has always believed that _____

Creative activities cont.

- Using the clues, which are all quotes or references from the novel, complete this crossword. (Teachers, answers are on the final page of these notes)

Crossword Puzzle



Down:

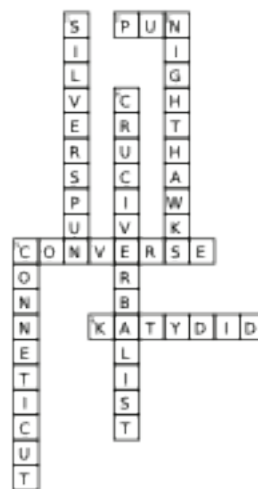
- a music festival, 'the Coachella of Nevada!'
- the band that Darcy is named after
- 'a person who creates crosswords'
- 'a godforsaken place'

Across:

- 'a joke nobody enjoys'
- 'used to be the official show of the NBA'
- Darcy's two best friends

• **Answers**

Crossword Puzzle



Down:

1. a music festival, 'the Coachella of Nevada!'
3. the band that Darcy is named after
4. 'a person who creates crosswords'
5. 'a godforsaken place'

Across:

2. 'a joke nobody enjoys'
5. 'used to be the official show of the NBA'
6. Darcy's two best friends