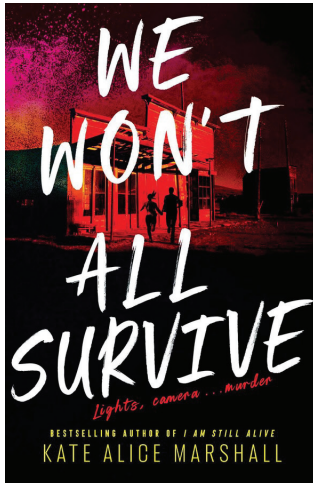




Teacher Notes

We Won't All Survive

by Kate Alice Marshall

Teacher notes prepared by Bec Kavanagh

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Themes

- Survival
- Control
- Trust
- Freedom

About the Book

Two years ago, Mercy Gray was hailed as a hero for saving lives during a shooting. She still carries souvenirs from that day, including the fragment of a bullet lodged in her back, and a mountain of medical debt.

So when billionaire turned TV host Damien Dare recruits Mercy to compete on his new survivalist reality show, she can't turn down a chance at the whopping cash prize.

But when Mercy and the other contestants arrive at the off-grid location, something isn't right. And then one of them turns up dead.

Soon, surviving the show takes on a new meaning. Mercy must figure out who to trust ... before she's *the next to die*.

From bestselling author Kate Alice Marshall comes a nail-biter that's part survival story, part murder mystery, and all thriller - perfect for fans of Karen McManus and Holly Jackson.

About the Author

Kate Alice Marshall started writing before she could hold a pen properly, and never stopped. She lives in the Pacific Northwest with a chaotic menagerie of pets and family members, and ventures out in the summer to kayak and camp along Puget Sound. She is the author of the young adult novels *I Am Still Alive*, *Rules for Vanishing*, and *Our Last Echoes*, as well as the middle grade novels *Thirteens* and *Brackenbeast*.

Before Reading

- Discuss the mood created by the title of the book. Does it make you want to know more?
- In the blurb, Mercy is described as a 'hero'. Make some predictions about the kind of character you think she'll be. Do you predict that she'll survive? Why/why not?
- From the blurb, what makes this story different from other thrillers?

Comprehension questions

- How would you describe the mood set by the opening page of the novel. Underline specific words or phrases that contribute to this mood.
- What is the premise of *Who Survives*? What has led Mercy to take part?

Comprehension questions cont.

- When Harrison first describes Damien Dare, he says 'Damien Dare, the man, the legend, the...' (here, he struggles to come up with a third descriptor) (p6). After you've finished the book, come up with your own descriptor to round out this trio. What kind of person does Dare turn out to be?
- How would you describe the relationship between Mercy and Jamie? Why does Mercy think that she owes Jamie? Do you agree with her?
- Why does Mercy keep her surname hidden from Harrison and Milo at first? How does she feel about being the poster girl for the mall shooting?
- What reason does each contestant have for taking part in the show? How do their motivations for wanting to win influence their actions and relationships with the other contestants?
- What is the meaning of 'cinéma vérité' (p17)? Why does Eli think that Dare has chosen to use this type of film-making?
- Who was Ryan Grant? How does Mercy describe him? How has her experience with Ryan undermined her trust in herself and in other people? Do you think this wariness is a pro or a con during the game?
- How does Mercy feel about the bullet fragment in her spine? Why does it bring her some comfort?
- What is Damien Dare's personal symbol? What is his philosophy, and how does this symbol represent it? What does Mercy think of him when she finally meets him in person?
- Why didn't Mercy believe Jamie when Jamie said that she was afraid of Ryan? Discuss the ways that Ryan's behaviour before the shooting could be considered abusive. What systems are in place to help protect victims of this kind of abuse?
- What does Piper's death make the contestants realise about the game? What does Mercy realise when she looks closely at the body?

Comprehension questions cont.

- Whose motivations do you trust? List one thing that each character does throughout the novel that makes you doubt your trust in them.
- At what point do you realise who Milo really is? What tips Mercy off about him? What stopped her from realising earlier?
- Mercy thinks the only thing she's done is recognise the strengths of the others. What strengths does she see in each of them?

Literacy

Suspense

- According to the Macquarie Dictionary, suspense is a state of mental uncertainty, as in awaiting a decision or outcome, usually with more or less apprehension or anxiety.
- Suspense is a vital part of a successful thriller because it helps to keep the reader invested in the story and its characters.
- Suspense can be created through tension (or conflict), descriptions of setting, foreshadowing, dramatic irony (when the reader has access to knowledge or information that the characters don't), and pace. In *We Won't All Survive*, Kate Alice Marshall uses setting and foreshadowing, particularly in the early pages of the novel, to develop suspense, as you can see in the examples below. Find other examples from the text to add to these lists, and discuss the way she later uses pace (either speeding up or slowing down the action) and conflict to maintain suspense.

Setting

- 'there's something foreboding about the gray rock, the rutted road, the utter emptiness' (p11)
- 'The whole entrance to the town is blocked off by a twelve-foot-high fence – chain link and loops of metal at the top. "Is that razor wire?" Harrison asks' (p12)

Literacy cont.

Foreshadowing

- 'This doesn't look like a ghost town so much as a prison' (p12)
- 'Run, Mercy, a voice echoes in my mind' (p12)
- 'Yet her voice falters, and then so does her smile. We stare at each other for a moment. And then she turns away, moving quickly, not acknowledging the feeling that passed between us. The sense that she was wrong. That we're not getting out of here at all. That Landry's Gap isn't ready to let us go' (p143).

Theme: Survival

"I don't know about his philosophy, though," Harrison says. "All that stuff about separating out the survivors and humanity needing to get strong again. Seems to me? That kind of thing can get dangerous."

"Maybe," Milo says. "But is he wrong about that part? I mean, some people are built to survive when shit gets real. Other people crumble."

A woman shoves her kid behind a pillar, shielding him with her body.

A man stands unmoving, staring straight at the gun. His mouth opens and closes. (p7)

- Consider the way the theme of survival is explored in the novel. Mercy has been in situations where survival is based on chance or luck, but Milo's argument (above) positions survival as a skill – something you can control. What is the effect of bringing both perspectives together in this paragraph?

Later, Dare promises the contestants that they will 'show the world what it means to be a survivor' (p34).

- What does it mean to be a survivor? Using your own response to the book as a starting point, write a short definition of what survival means to you.

Literacy cont.

In her final confrontation with Dare, Mercy tells him that 'only someone who already has everything can think they don't need anything else' (p303).

- Do you agree? What other models of survival have been demonstrated in the novel?
- What is Harrison's last word on survival in the epilogue?

Final reflections

- What genre would you say this book is? Come up with two 'readalikes' (books that you would recommend to other readers who enjoyed this novel).
- Why do you think the author has chosen to include an epilogue? What do you think has happened between the last chapter of the book and the epilogue?
- If this were a series, what do you think might happen in the next novel?

Creative activities

- At the beginning of the novel, Mercy thinks about what it would be like to win a hundred thousand dollars: 'that much money can change a life – or break one' (p4).
- What would you do with a hundred thousand dollars? What would you endure to get it?
- Design your own reality TV show, where the prize is one hundred thousand dollars. What kind of contestants would you invite? What would they have to do to win the money?
- Design a challenge for *Who Survives*, including clues and a description of the prize.
- A lot of YA crime/thriller novels have been adapted for screen recently including *A Good Girls Guide to Murder* (based on the novel of the same name by Holly Jackson) and *One of Us is Lying* (based on the novel by Karen M. McManus).
- Imagine that you're a producer – would you pick up *We Won't All Survive* for film adaptation? Why/why not?
- Who would you cast in the leading roles? What (if any) changes would you make to the story?

Creative activities cont.

- Imagine you are planning to develop the novel into a 6-8 episode TV series. Write a brief episode description, summarising which key events would happen in each episode.
- Collect Mercy's first impressions of the following characters in the table below.

Name	Mercy's first impressions
Harrison	
Milo	
Piper	
Eli	
Alethea	
Colby	
Spencer	

- Discuss how accurate (or inaccurate) her first impressions of these characters turn out to be. Does anyone surprise her? How?
- Using Mercy's descriptions as inspiration, write a first impression paragraph that introduces a new character to the story. Now write a scene that takes place later, allowing your character to do something surprising, or that might make the others reconsider their first impressions.