BOOK REVIEW

Friendship on fire

Danielle Weiler. (2010). Glen Waverley, Vic: Sid Harta Publishers.

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School captain, Daisy Brooks, had high hopes for her final year in high school. She soon realised that life does not always go to plan. Tensions develop in her relationships with teachers and students alike. How will she relate to opposition from fellow students, pressures from never-ending deadlines and the handsome stranger who has intercepted her world?

Daisy loves life and wishes to live it to the full but she is often unprepared for the situations life is pushing her into and she struggles with clear decision making. Her warm, caring nature contrasts with her quick, sometimes difficult to control temper. Through the year, she discovers much about friendships, relationships and first love.

Tugs of war and tugs of love exist side by side and Daisy is pulled in many directions as she tries to negotiate between fantasy and reality. Friendships she thought were stable falter and new ones develop. Constantly intruding into her busy life is the realisation that life is changing; she is changing. She is aware of her impending adulthood with its rights and responsibilities.

Not all of Daisy's decisions are wise and she is tempted to believe that she has ruined her life forever. Her much-loved grandmother is able to reassure her and give her a gentle nudge into the right direction.

Friendship on fire is written with Australian teenagers in mind. The author has a sympathetic, tolerant attitude to her characters as they develop through the novel. The book is an excellent medium for investigating personal values. Themes of identity and belonging, trust and betrayal, relationships and friendships, character development and life philosophies may all be considered when reading/studying this book. Students will be able to identify with the characters and think seriously about the choices they make, the relationships they are involved in and the ability to start again after mistakes. Such wisdom is a much desired trait for young readers.

Year 12 students, who have read this text, commented, "The characters were believable and realistic and it was refreshing to read a text with values that weren't shoved down your throat." They believed that this style of writing gave credibility to the themes.

Friendship on fire is a welcome change to the subtle and not so subtle inclusion of the supernatural into young adult fiction. It is about real life situations with real life characters. It is recommended for secondary school study and the author has written a comprehensive, flexible teacher's program that can be adapted for Years 9–12.

Author, Danielle Weiler, also writes a blog at *www.danielleweileronline.com* and can be contacted there regarding her novel. TEACH

