



# Between

by Adele Broadbent

## About the author:

Adele Broadbent is passionate about Children's Literature. A bookaholic, she is a children's author, bookseller, reviewer and avid reader. Her review site [www.whatbooknext.com](http://www.whatbooknext.com) is designed especially for children and teens to use and is also popular with parents and school librarians when looking for the next great children's read.

Adele loves her job at Wardini Books in Napier, and lives on a small lifestyle block in Napier with her husband and two sons. Her favourite age to write for is for 8-12 year olds, and especially adding secrets for her readers to discover. Say hello through her contact page on [www.adelebroadbentbooks.com](http://www.adelebroadbentbooks.com).

## Synopsis of Novel:

Olly is a typical year 8 student; he is football mad, hangs out with his hard-case but loyal mates, Egg and Loon, has a feud with the class 'nob' Regan and even attracts a bit of alpha-girl attention from Piper and Azara. But he is also a boy riddled with secrets and half-known family mysteries.

He lives with his mum, his dad having died in a car accident before he was born. His mother's older sister, Aunty Claire, always seems to be at their house and Olly can't work out why she is so hard on him all the time and he wishes his mother would stand up to her more. And then there is the problem of Mad Martha, the town 'crazy lady', who seems to know a great deal about Olly.

Despite her 'weird' reputation, and his mother's and aunty's repeated but unexplained warnings to stay away from her, he has a strange attraction to this mysterious woman. She calls herself a psychic and shares Olly's love for the occult, lending him books on the subject, which lands him in even more trouble with his mother and aunty. Martha repeatedly warns Olly that he needs to be careful, as he is in great danger, and he does indeed seem accident prone, with several potentially serious mishaps on a school holiday camp.

All is revealed towards the end of the book when he is hit by a car when running across a busy road to avoid being beaten up by his nemesis Regan. Olly is not killed but is propelled into a 'between' world where he meets with his father who is able to explain to him the circumstances of his car accident death and the reason for the discord between his mother, aunty and Martha. Olly wakes in hospital and the novel ends with a general clearing of the air – even with his enemy Regan.



## Themes / issues

The novel deals with that fascinating period between childhood and adolescence. It should be a carefree time but for many young people, family dynamics and fractured relationships weigh very heavy. The novel makes us question our communications with pre-adolescents and whether we accord them the honesty, respect and understanding they deserve. The novel also deals with the nature of friendships and the importance of loyalty – both for the preteens and the adults in the novel.

Understanding and compassion for those who don't fit the accepted social behaviour patterns is another theme of the novel and, as in 'To Kill a Mockingbird', we are encouraged to walk in another's shoes before we cast judgement.

The occult aspects of the novel should not be treated as a central idea / theme, rather they are vehicles for the author being able to dig into the secrets surrounding Olly's family.

## Writing style

The novel is told in the first person through Olly's eyes and is straight past tense. A strong feature of the book is the frequent and realistic dialogue. The slang/colloquialisms capture the personalities of the young characters, and the intended readers, very well and hit just the right balance of street cred and acceptable language for a book aimed at 11 to 13 year olds – and their parents/teachers. Another strong stylistic feature is how the story progresses through Olly's interior monologues. We really do feel for him as he attempts to balance loyalty to mates, family and to old Martha.

## Year level suitability and application

The mystery and relationships aspects of the novel will work very well with year 7 to year 9 groups, but the plot and themes will also work with socially aware year 6 students and even year 10 students - if they can get past to narrator being two years younger than them.

The target audience will be year 7 / 8 boys, but the two girls who feature as minor characters are physically and emotionally strong and will appeal to similar aged girls.

## Learning opportunities

### Before reading: Setting the scene

Reading the cover for visual/verbal clues:

Students work in pairs to study the verbal and visual clues given by front and back cover of the book. They make a set of predictions on plot, character and setting based on those clues alone. Younger students will need specific coaching in this skill.

While doing this, students can also make a list of statement that identify how they are being 'positioned' by use of colour, contrast, images, layout, font style.

### Prior knowledge discussion / activities:

Students share any personal experience they have of some of the challenges faced by Olly, eg sporting challenges, holiday programmes/camps, parental disapproval of a relationship.

Get students to share any experiences they have of facing and overcoming challenges in the 'minefield' of friendship loyalties/problems. This needs to be handled with tact, as the readers are likely to be in some very similar friendship issues as the characters in the story.

Class discussion on the 'cultural baggage' (family structure etc) we carry with us and how this influences how we think and relate to others. Younger students will need coaching on this activity.

### During reading: Understanding the content – answers may be written or oral

#### Chapter one:

1. Why were the local kids so fascinated by "Mad Martha Mischefski"?
2. What are your first impressions of Aunty Claire?

#### Chapter two:

1. What clue is there that Olly's mum is still annoyed at him being outside Martha's house?
2. Give two good things and one bad thing about the football competition?

#### Chapter three:

1. What sort of person is Regan?
2. Why is Olly anxious about the football competition and what is he hiding from his mates?

**Chapter four:**

1. How does Regan try to undermine Olly in the final game?
2. How does Piper do the exact opposite?

**Chapter five:**

What does Olly's mum nearly embarrass him?

**Chapter six:**

1. Explain Egg's joke about Martha.
2. Explain the nickname Egg gives to his younger siblings?

**Chapter seven:**

1. What 'bombshell' does Olly's mum drop in this chapter?
2. What do you think of the fairness of Olly's punishment?

**Chapter eight:**

1. Who is missing from the family photos in Olly's lounge?
2. What special powers does Martha reveal in this chapter?

**Chapter nine:**

1. What is classic bullying about Regan's behaviour?
2. How does Loon show that he seriously likes Piper?

**Chapter ten:**

What is odd about the way Olly ends up outside Martha's house?

**Chapter eleven:**

1. What does Martha say she and Olly have in common?
2. How does Martha explain people's reactions to her?

**Chapter twelve:**

1. In what way does Olly's mother feel obligated to Claire?
2. What are two surprising things about the inside of Martha's house?

**Chapter thirteen:**

Explain the writer's digging holes metaphor.

**Chapter fourteen:**

What was Olly's first reaction to the name 'Camp No Nights'?

**Chapter fifteen:**

Explain Olly's close call in this chapter.

**Chapter sixteen:**

What does Olly learn about his Aunt Claire in this chapter?

**Chapter seventeen:**

What are three things that pleasantly surprise Olly about the camp?

**Chapter eighteen:**

1. What is interesting about the way Azara ended up at the camp?
2. What puzzling comment does Eddie make early in this chapter?

**Chapter nineteen:**

Apart from the message what is weird about Martha's phone call?

**Chapter twenty:**

In what ways does Azara seem old for her years?

**Chapter twenty-one:**

What is strange about the psychic game they play

**Chapter twenty-two:**

Describe Olly's close call in this chapter.

**Chapter twenty-three:**

What is Olly's plan in this chapter.

**Chapter twenty-four:**

What is Martha's explanation for Martha pushing the shopping trollies?

**Chapter twenty-five:**

How does Regan's father's behaviour contribute to his son's behaviour?

**Chapter twenty-six:**

How does Eddie describe his friendship with Olly's dad?

**Chapter twenty-seven:**

What is one interesting fact Eddie reveals about Olly's dad?

**Chapter twenty-eight:**

What is scary about the palm reading episode?

**Chapter twenty-nine:**

How do Claire and Olly's mum fall out in this chapter?

### **Chapter thirty:**

What is different about the end of this fight?

### **Chapter thirty-one:**

Does the boys' behaviour in the food-court seem typical to you?

### **Chapter thirty-two:**

What does Olly find emotionally exhausting in this chapter?

### **Chapter thirty-three:**

What major information does Olly receive?

### **Chapter thirty-four:**

Explain Piper's reaction to Olly's request on the phone.

### **Chapter thirty-five:**

What raw nerves does Olly hit with Regan?

### **Chapter thirty-six:**

Explain the visual link to a previous chapter.

### **Chapter thirty-seven:**

Describe the 'Between world' Olly finds himself in.

### **Chapter thirty-eight:**

Explain Martha's family connections to Olly. Why did she leave?

### **Chapter thirty-nine:**

How does the notebook further explain Regan's personality?

### **Chapter forty:**

What is your reaction to the ending of the story?

## **Post reading: Taking it further**

### **Theme analysis:**

#### **Activity one: Group work activity**

Select two of the themes / issues listed earlier in these notes and get students to elaborate more on what the author may be commenting on and how she may be positioning them think about these issues. When considering the 'how' aspect students will need to closely consider character presentation.

A group spokesperson reports findings to the class.

### **Activity two: Individual work – longer paragraph answers.**

Describe at least one challenge faced by a character in the written text. Explain how this challenge helped you understand the character.

Describe at least one idea that changed your perspective or point of view in the written text. Explain how this idea changed your perspective.

Describe a key moment in the written text that surprised or shocked you. Explain how this moment was important to the text as a whole.

Describe a character that you disliked or admired in the written text. Explain how your feeling towards this character helped you understand the text as a whole.

Role play activities: (all role plays need to be handled with sensitivity and closely monitored by the teacher)

Monologue – adopt the role of Olly, Martha, Kate, Claire or Regan and speaking in character explain your relationship with another character. Discuss how the relationship evolves.

Monologue - Speaking as Olly, Kate or Regan one year in the future reflect on the events of a year ago and comment on how they have helped make you the person you are now.

## **Beyond the text activities:**

Research a mystery or unexplained phenomenon and give a short talk to the class on your findings.

Design a poster promoting a children's holiday programme. Give the programme an original name.

*by Denis Wright*