

DELTA
GOODREM

SASKIA
BURMEISTER

CHRISTINE EVELY
STUDYGUIDE

HEATING
Alison Ashley

There's always one friendship that lasts forever...

PG

Mature themes, low level coarse language

FILM FINANCE CORPORATION AUSTRALIA, MOVIE NETWORK, THE NEW SOUTH WALES FILM AND TELEVISION OFFICE, AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION AND FILM VICTORIA
PRESENT A HAA PRODUCTION DELTA GOODREM SASKIA BURMEISTER 'HATING ALISON ASHLEY' JEAN KITTSON RICHARD CARTER TRACY MANN CRAIG MCLACHLAN GUESTS MAURA FAY & ASSOCIATES
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS VICTOR SYRMIS GARY HAMILTON DESIGNER PAUL WARREN EDITOR SURESH AIYAR COORDINATOR CEZARY SKUBISZEWSKI PRODUCTION DESIGNER RALPH MOSER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY STEVE NEWMAN PRODUCED BY SUB WILD DIRECTED BY JOHN BROUSEK
PRODUCED BY ELIZABETH HOWATT-JACKMAN & JOHN BROUSEK BASED ON THE NOVEL 'HATING ALISON ASHLEY' BY ROBIN KLEIN COSTUME DESIGNER CHRIS ANASTASSIADES FOSTER CHRISTINE MADAFFERI EXECUTIVE PRODUCER GEOFF BENNETT

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BASED ON THE BEST SELLING BOOK





FROM BOOK TO FILM: *HATING ALISON ASHLEY*

While there are similarities between reading a book and viewing a film, there are also important differences. Robin Klein wrote *Hating Alison Ashley* in 1984. Since then many children (and adults) have enjoyed reading this book, conjuring up images of the characters, settings and events in their minds based on their own experiences of the world. Reading a book is usually a very personal experience and one where you can make many decisions. You can choose when and where you will read, to read for a short period or a long period, to pause and do something else, to read the book out of sequence, to re-read sections and even to stop reading altogether.

Viewing a film, especially at the cinema, is quite different, as it is often a social experience, shared with friends or family. Unless it is a most unenjoyable film, you are unlikely to leave your friends in order to stop viewing. So, generally the complete story is viewed without interruption. While viewing you are not the one conjuring up the images; instead the filmmakers provide you with images and a soundtrack that creates the characters, settings and events. To do this, filmmakers use a number of codes and conventions of communication that differ from those used by authors of print texts.

This study guide will provide a range of tools to help Middle Years teachers and

students to explore and to compare and contrast the book with the film version of *Hating Alison Ashley*. In particular, activities in the guide will assist students in becoming familiar with the codes and conventions of film and to appreciate that the adaptation of a book to film is not merely a simple transfer of ideas from one medium to another; rather it is the re-crafting of a story using the tools of filmmaking to reach a contemporary audience.

Introducing the novel, *Hating Alison Ashley*

As a class, read chapters one and two of *Hating Alison Ashley*.

Portrait Gallery and Character Analysis

Use the worksheet 'Character analysis' to record your ideas about characters introduced in chapters one and two. Include physical characteristics or appearance; dialogue; character traits/behaviour and reasons for actions or behaviour; relationships with other characters; and other characters' opinions about the character. (See *Worksheets above*)

Select two characters from each chapter and draw a portrait showing how you think each character would look.

CHAPTER ONE			
Erica Yurken	main character, yr 6 girl	Mrs Orlando	school secretary
Barry Hollis	year 6 boy	Mr Nicholson	Principal
Miss Belmont	year 6 teacher	Mr Kennard	teacher

CHAPTER TWO	
Harley	Erica's older brother
Valjoy	Erica's 15-year-old sister
Jedda	Erica's 6-year-old sister
Mum	Erica's mother
Lennie	Boyfriend of Erica's mother

ABOVE (L-R): CHARACTERS IN CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

CHARACTER			
APPEARANCE (body shape/size, wardrobe, make-up, hair, gender, age, ethnicity)			
ACTION (character traits, behaviour, body language, gestures, facial expressions, mannerisms)			
MOTIVES (reasons for action/behaviours)			
DIALOGUE			
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHARACTERS			
OPINIONS (of other characters about this character)			

CHARACTER: Which character did you find most appealing, interesting or likeable? Why? • How did this character dress, behave and speak? • How was this character important in this story?	
SETTING: What were the main settings? • Did the story take place in the present, the past or the future?	
PLOT: Is this story real? • Does the story seem realistic? Why or why not? Could something like this really happen? • What was the story about?	
PERSONAL RESPONSE: What will you remember most about this story? Why? • How did this story make you feel? Why?	

ABOVE TOP: CHARACTER ANALYSIS WORKSHEET - NAME: _____

ABOVE BOTTOM: RESPONSE TO *HATING ALISON ASHLEY* - NAME: _____

Event Ladder

In small groups begin to list key events that occur in the story to create an event ladder. Begin by listing events at the bottom of the ladder. Add new events above these after reading each chapter.

Point of view

Give examples from the novel to show from whose point of view the story is told.

Reading the novel

Read the novel as a class serial or, if the school has multiple copies, form reading groups and read one or two chapters together each day. Use the discussion points or activities (provided at the end of this guide) to support and extend the reading of each chapter.

After reading the novel

Storyboard

Work with a partner to develop a storyboard showing key scenes from the story. Select two key scenes and show how you might produce those scenes on film.

If you were the producers responsible for creating a film version of *Hating Alison Ashley*, what would the title of



your film be? Explain whether you would retain the title or select a new one, and why.

Complete and discuss

Complete the worksheet 'Response to *Hating Alison Ashley*', then, as a class, discuss your responses and also the following questions:

- Why does Erica eventually become friends with Alison?
- How do you think Erica and Alison might act towards each other when they return to school?
- Did you enjoy the ending of the novel? Do you think it had an appropriate ending? Were all the conflicts or problems resolved? If not, what was left unresolved?

Story box

In groups of four create a story cube using a large cardboard box. Illustrate each side of the box to show key aspects of the novel, for example, setting, main characters, Erica's family, teachers at Erica's school, kids at Erica's school and a key event. Display the boxes and spend time sharing ideas with other groups.

Letter review

Write a letter to a classmate as one of the characters from *Hating Alison Ash-*

ley, explaining why he or she should or should not read the novel.

Alternatively write a letter as a character from *Hating Alison Ashley* to a classmate explaining what happens next year.

Cover it!

Students design a cover for a sequel to *Hating Alison Ashley* that includes title, front cover illustration, blurb and notes about the author.

Going further

Read the biographical information (below) about the author. Find out how many novels she has published and how many awards she has received for her work.

Students should watch *The Robin Klein Video* (in Victoria borrow from www.acmi.net.au/borrow) where Klein discusses how she creates her novels by drawing upon the powers of everyday encounters and self-discipline.

Biography of Robin Klein

Robin Klein is one of nine children. She was born in 1936 in Kempsey, New South Wales. She has worked in many different fields and has four children.

Her first short story was published when she was just sixteen years of age. In 1981 she was awarded a Literature Board grant and since then has had more than forty novels published across many different genres. Her books are often humorous and explore many issues including friendship, loneliness and disability.

A number of Robin Klein's books have been shortlisted for the Australian Children's Novel of the Year Award, including *People Might Hear You* (1984), *Hating Alison Ashley* (1985), *Halfway Across the Galaxy and Turn Left* (1986) and *Seeing Things*. Her highly acclaimed novel *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* won a Human Rights Award for Literature and also won the 1990 Australian Children's Novel of the Year Award for Older Readers. Klein's *Penny Pollard's Diary* (1983), was Highly Commended in the 1984 Book of the Year Awards and was later adapted for television.

In 1991 Robin Klein was awarded the Dromkeen Medal for her significant contribution to the appreciation and development of children's literature in Australia.

- Conduct a web search to find out the titles of Robin Klein's many books.
- Find out which books have become films or television shows.



Introducing the film, *Hating Alison Ashley*

Like the book, the film *Hating Alison Ashley* explores the complexities involved in being teenagers. Through its two main characters, Erica Yurken (Saskia Burmeister) and Alison Ashley (Delta Goodrem), the film unravels the many dimensions of a person's life that work together to make up their personality. The film does not sanitise the world of young people by ending 'happily ever after', with characters forever changed in order to promote a message about being kind and generous of spirit to one another. Rather, it acknowledges that we are all human with many flaws and imperfections and, at times, we make mistakes and misjudge people. The film shows us that we can often repair, move on and learn from our mistakes.

As students become familiar with the codes and conventions of film they will further appreciate that the adaptation of a book to film is not merely a simple transfer from one medium to another. While a film may resonate strongly with the book from which it arose, the very nature of creating and communicating meaning through film necessitates that the content is explored from a fresh perspective.

Developing an understanding of the craft that underpins the creation of a film can enhance the enjoyment and understanding that can be gained from viewing a film. Furthermore, enjoyment and appreciation of a well-crafted film can be extended by viewing it more than once and by sharing the experience with other people.

Synopsis of the film

Hating Alison Ashley has been described as a coming-of-age story about the dilemmas, feelings and emotions faced by teenagers in relation to peer rivalry, friendship and family relationships.

This film explores the life of fourteen-year-old Erica Yurken. As far as she's concerned, her life sucks: her classmates are not in her league, her family is an embarrassment, her acting genius is not recognized and, to top it off, because of her name, she is nicknamed 'Yuk'.

From the moment the perfect, blonde Alison Ashley arrives at school, it is clear that Yuk's world is to become even more turbulent. Yuk has always felt superior to everyone at Barringa East, but the very beautiful, rich and smart Alison Ashley seems to have everything and be everything that Yuk has ever dreamed about having or

being. Yuk daydreams about her life as a famous movie star—but reality bites back as she learns to deal with schoolgirl rivalries, first kisses, insecurity and misunderstandings on a journey to new discoveries about true friendship and family relationships.

Before viewing the film

Book to screen

- As a class, list films you have seen that have been based on books. Share your thoughts about books being made into films.
- What were your feelings as you waited for the film to be released?
- What were your thoughts when you saw the characters come to life on the screen? Were you impressed by the filmmakers' portrayal of the book? How? Have any films been disappointing? If so, in what ways?
- How do you feel when key scenes from a book are changed significantly or not included in a film?
- Do you think a film based on a book should be totally true to the book? Why? Why not?
- Have you read *Hating Alison Ashley*? Do you expect the film version to be true to the book? Why? Why not?
- What do you already know about the film *Hating Alison Ashley*? How do you know these things?



After viewing the film

Setting the scene

The opening sequence of a film is very important. In the first few minutes the filmmakers must capture the attention of the viewers by introducing key characters and giving hints about what is to follow. Their task is to whet the viewers' appetites so they want to find out what this film is all about and what will happen next.

- As a class discuss the following:
 - The opening sequence of the film, *Hating Alison Ashley* shows two contrasting school settings. Provide reasons why you would or would not have begun the film in this way. Read the opening of the book. Is the film true to the book?
 - How does the film provide information about Alison's appearance on her first day at her new school?
 - How does the film provide information about what Alison's first day at the new school was like for her?
 - How does the film provide information about what Alison's first day at the school was like for Erica?
- Draw a story map showing both Alison's and Erica's neighbourhood.

Include at least ten features, such as Erica's and Alison's homes, the schools, and roads that contributed to the re-zoning of the suburb in relation to school attendance.

Find a way for the map to represent some of the differences in Alison's and Erica's neighbourhoods.

Plotting key events

- Work in a small group to create a flow chart to illustrate the sequence of events in the film *Hating Alison Ashley*. While creating the flow chart refer to the event ladder (constructed while reading the book) to help list elements from the film that differ from the novel, for example: primary school setting to secondary school setting.
- With the same group, select three scenes from the film and evaluate the effectiveness of each one in terms of communicating meaning. Rate the importance of dialogue compared with action for each selected scene.
- Compare how each scene is presented in the book.

Close analysis

- Form new groups of four students. Hold four short film discussion sessions. During these sessions

rotate the following roles:

- **Facilitator:** responsible for deciding what questions will be discussed and encouraging everyone to participate.
- **Reality-checker:** responsible for encouraging the group to consider ideas about how the film relates to the real world.
- **Note-taker:** responsible for recording the group's ideas.
- **Reporter:** responsible for sharing the ideas of the group with the class.

Examples of discussion questions

Responding

- How did you feel about the film while viewing? After viewing?
- Did anything about the film surprise you?
- Does the film remind you of other films or other books? If so, how?

Reflecting

- What three events do you think were pivotal to the story?
- What do you think were the best two scenes? Why were they the best?

Thinking deeply

- Does the film raise any important issues? If so, what are they?
- Does the film reflect aspects of your own life? How?



Thinking critically and creatively

- The film *Hating Alison Ashley* is based on the book of the same name by Robin Klein. In what ways has the film been adapted successfully?
- If you had the opportunity, what changes would you make to the film version?

Following the final group-discussion reports to the class, meet in groups again and work together to represent all the ideas of the group about the film, as a mind map. When finished, display the mind maps in the classroom.

Script to screen

... [I]n adapting such a well-known and well-loved novel, deciding what elements from the book should be included in the script and what would work on screen was a source of continual tension. In some areas it was necessary for the script to depart from the novel.

Christine Madafferri (writer)

If you're slavishly faithful to the book, what you end up with is a film that doesn't quite work. With a book like this that is so popular, having sold a quarter of a million copies in Australia, there was a huge responsibility to remain faithful to the book's audience

as much as possible, not necessarily to the book itself. And the way we tackled that was by making sure that the essential emotional strains of the book were present in the film, but to make it more contemporary and relevant to the youth of today.

A significant difference between the novel and the screenplay was the age of the characters. In an effort to broaden the appeal of the film to a larger audience, the team decided to make the characters in their early-teens as opposed to twelve-year-olds as they appeared in the novel.

Another challenge was contemporising the novel for a modern audience. The novel was set in the late 1970s, early 1980s, so certain elements needed to be overhauled for the screenplay.

John Brousek
(Executive Producer/Producer)

That meant a lot of changes from the book. Like, there are no computers in the book and no mobile phones, so it's a completely different ball game making it contemporary.

Christine Madafferri

- Read the quotes above, then work with a partner to respond to the following questions:
 - Do you agree with the writer that it was necessary for the

script of the film to depart from the novel? Explain why you agree or disagree.

- Do you agree with the Executive Producer/Producer that the 'essential emotional strains of the book' were present in the film? What do you believe are these essential emotional strains?
- Why do you think the filmmakers wanted to broaden the appeal of the film to a larger audience? Do you think the decision to change the age of the main characters was a wise decision? Why or why not?
- Do you think the film would have been successful or unsuccessful if it had been set in the 1970s or 1980s like the novel? Why do you think this? What difficulties would this pose for the filmmakers?

- Debate as a class: The film version of *Hating Alison Ashley* should closely match the book version of the story. Justify ideas by comparing scenes or events from the book with the film.

Characterization

The success of a film almost always depends upon believable characters. Although most viewers understand that characters in a fictional film are not



real people, while viewing they need to suspend disbelief, to identify with one or more of the characters, or to have some reactions to or feelings about the actions or motives of characters.

The following section explores how filmmakers draw upon a different set of codes and conventions from those used by authors to create characters.

Erica and Alison

Christine Madafferi (writer) and Chris Anatassiades (co-writer) believe they remained as faithful as possible to Robin Klein's two lead characters, Erica and Alison. Madafferi says, 'She's such a wonderful character, I'd say I've taken the Yuk from the book and hopefully made her older and funnier, I hope.'

- Do you think the two main characters in the film (Erica and Alison) are faithful to Robin Klein's portrayal of them? Explain your ideas.
- Do you agree with Madafferi that she got Yuk from the book but made her older and funnier? Why do you agree or disagree? Give examples from the book and film to support your ideas.

Producer, Elizabeth Howatt-Jackman was concerned that the adaptation of the character from page to screen would be difficult for any actor, and needed to be convincing, especially

for devotees of the original book. Whilst the novel has the luxury of developing the character over the length of the story, the film would not be as forgiving. She says Yuk is 'quite an arrogant little girl and you feel like wringing her neck, unless you actually understand where she's coming from.'

Director Geoff Bennett adds,

We auditioned a lot of potential Yuks and Saskia [Burmeister] just absolutely stood out and she's turned out to be such a find. It's a difficult role. In the book, you are able to get in behind the character, because you have 200 pages to explain what's going on in her head. In the film you have ninety-five minutes and you just don't have the luxury of being able to do that. Saskia has the ability, that in ten seconds, she can go through as many emotions and they all show on her face and so she's able to reach the audience and the audience accepts her vulnerability. She's able to make the film work, because that main character has to be lovable.

- In what ways does Saskia Burmeister's uniqueness capture the character of the awkward misfit, Erica (or not)? You might refer to a range of qualities, for example: her appearance, voice, body language, gestures, facial expressions, mannerisms or acting ability to explain your ideas.

Madafferi (writer) found the Alison character more difficult to adapt to screen. She says:

Alison's character has been one of the most contentious, because in the book she's an angel and she's one dimensionally an angel and it works really well on the page but there's been a lot of discussion whether she should show a bit more activity and spark and another side and get impatient with Yuk, or whether she should be perfection all the time. That was a constant discussion during the whole of the scripting process. So she was probably the character that was most difficult to put on film.

- Provide some examples of how the scripting process for the film modified Alison's character compared with her characterization in the book by Robin Klein.
- Refer to the characters of Erica and Alison to explain how casting contributes to characterization.

Casting—use of stars

- Read the press release (below) with a partner, then answer the questions.

20 February 2004: Delta To Star In The New Flick *Hating Alison Ashley*

HAA Films are pleased to announce that Delta Goodrem will be heading

People/organizations	Why would they want the film to be successful?
Producers	
Investors	
Distributors	
The Movie Network	
Lead Actors	



TABLE 01

up the cast for Australian feature film *Hating Alison Ashley*. Produced by John Brousek (*Wog Boy*) and Elizabeth Howatt-Jackman, written by Christine Madaffer and based on the much loved young adult's novel by Robin Klein, *Hating Alison Ashley* is a comedy about the trials and tribulations of being a teenager, peer rivalry and discovering the value of true friendship.

Delta Goodrem, who is known internationally as a multi-award-winning and multi-platinum-selling recording artist, is no stranger to acting having begun performing at the age of seven. Her acting career has included a diverse range of roles for both TV and theatre including 'A Country Practice', 'Hey Dad', 'GP', 'Neighbours' and 'The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe'. Having achieved such a rich and varied career at such a young age she can well relate to the script that has enticed her back to the acting world.

'I have been offered quite a few roles over the past two years and whilst the timing for this movie is not ideal, I really felt a strong desire to accept the part of Alison Ashley. I adore the novel and have an enormous respect for both John and Elizabeth, both of whom I am very much looking forward to working with. The movie will be shot over a six week period and as I am well on the road to recovery this will be

a great way to ease myself back into work after such a long time away, who knows, perhaps Alison will inspire a song for the future as well! I am really looking forward to further expanding my experiences and moving into the unknown world of movies.'

Currently in pre-production *Hating Alison Ashley* will commence filming later this year in Melbourne. Producers John Brousek and Elizabeth Howatt-Jackman are pleased to welcome such a tremendous talent to what will be a great ensemble cast. 'As producers our aim is to turn this classic Australian novel into a contemporary film for today's youth while remaining true to the characters and story which made the novel so popular. With Delta in the title role we are well on the way to achieving this.'

On the announcement of the casting, CEO of the Australian Film Financing Corporation, Brian Rosen, said 'As the financier behind the project the FFC is very happy that the producers have secured one of Australia's most popular music talents to be in the film. This undoubtedly increases the chance of the film finding a wide audience, and is also an interesting cross-pollination between the film and music industries.'

Hating Alison Ashley has been acquired for Australia and the UK by Universal Pictures and will be distrib-

uted theatrically in Australia by Hoyts Distribution. Pay TV rights for Australia have been secured by The Movie Network while other investors include Film Victoria, The Australian Children's Television Foundation and the NSW Film and Television Office.

from: <http://www.allstarz.org/~deltagoodrem/archives/feb.php>

- What clues are provided in the press release (above) about the target market for the film version of *Hating Alison Ashley*? How does this compare with the target audience for the book?
- Make a table like Table 01 (above) listing all the people and organizations with some sort of interest in the success of the film, *Hating Alison Ashley*.
- Why do you think Delta Goodrem was selected to play the role of Alison Ashley?
- Explain how Delta Goodrem does or does not meet expectations in portraying Alison Ashley.

Erica's family

From Yuk's point of view her family is dysfunctional and most embarrassing. Yuk's older sister, Valjoy (Rachael Carpani), dresses in outrageous clothing, her brother Harley (Anthony Cleave) attempts to make contact with aliens,



while her younger sister Jedda (Abigail Gudgeon) spends most of her time believing she is a horse!

Carpani found the role of the outrageously dressed, loud character of Valjoy a real challenge, especially as it is so different from her character on *McLeod's Daughters*. She says,

Valjoy is a very full-on character. She's basically your typical rebellious teenager with the added thing that she's also quite violent, she knows karate and she takes great pleasure in tormenting her sister both emotionally and physically—she likes to slam her up against the walls. The three main things in her life are herself, of course, boys and her fashion.

- Do you agree with Carpani that Valjoy is a 'typical rebellious teenager'?
- Are the three main things in Valjoy's life (self, boys, fashion) typical of today's teenagers? Provide evidence to support why you agree or disagree. You might gather evidence from classmates or refer to media advertisements, or to content in teenage magazines or chat rooms.
- What is your opinion about the way Valjoy's character might encourage adults to generalize about the behaviour and attitudes of today's young people?
- As a class, arrange to watch the

television news on several different TV stations for a week and notice how each one portrays the youth of today. Discuss whether the portrayals are accurate and fair.

Yuk uses her imagination to escape day-to-day life. Erica's escapism is a concern for her Mum (Tracey Mann), who says that Yuk

... lives in her head. She's got a great imagination. I think that probably causes her more sadness because she can see how things can be better and she wants things to be better but it can't be better and they make the best of their circumstances. I think [Yuk] is probably her greatest problem child because she just doesn't fit in and Erica is the one who is really embarrassed about her family and Mum would like her not to be.

- How do you think Erica views her mum at the start of the film and then at the end of the film? Why does she change her view?
- Describe the mum presented by the filmmakers. How have they created this character? Consider the use of the camera, setting, her appearance (wardrobe, make-up and hair), props, voice, dialogue and other sound, action including body language, gestures, facial expressions and mannerisms, casting and acting

ability to explain your ideas.

- What do you think are the key roles of Yuk's mum in this film? In other words how is her part important to the story?
- Why is it important to her Mum that Erica learns to accept her family?

Mum met Lennie (Richard Carter) through *Parents Without Partners*. Although he is not actually a parent and despite Yuk's antagonism, Lennie becomes the father figure in the Yurkin household. Carter describes Lennie as a lonely, quiet character in search of love and family and someone who can provide the love and support that the Yurkin family seek. Carter says, 'He's going to do a job—that's keep that family together, as long as they want him to. If he's kind of heart, kind of spirit, looks after their mum and treats them with respect, he shouldn't have a rough ride of it.'

- Describe how the filmmakers present Lennie. How have they created this character? Consider use of the camera, setting, appearance (wardrobe, make-up, hair), props, voice, dialogue and other sound, action including body language, gestures, facial expressions and mannerisms, casting and acting ability to explain your ideas.
- How do you think Erica views

Character comparisons	Posture	Facial expressions	Body language
Miss Belmont			
Mr Kennard			
Barry Hollis			
Lennie			

TABLE 02

Lennie at the start of the film and then at the end of the film? Provide examples to support your ideas.

- Why does she change her view?
- What do you think are the key roles performed by Lennie in this film? In other words, how is his part important to the story?
- As a class, debate the following: Yuk initially despises her Mum's truck driving boyfriend, but Lennie turns out to provide the understanding and support that Yuk is searching for.
- Explain how stereotype is used to portray each member of Erica's family.

Miss Belmont and Mr Kennard

Leading the class 9C misfits is the strict but soft-hearted teacher, Miss Belmont (Jean Kittson). Kittson sees Miss Belmont as someone Erica looks up to and regards herself as a cohort in Erica's complicated world. As the new teacher at the school, Erica quickly sets about winning over Miss Belmont. However, when Alison Ashley arrives, Erica's plans are thrown into disarray.

Kittson explains:

Erica Yurkin ... lives in her own fantasy world and feels that she's alone in this school and neighborhood until Miss

Belmont arrives and then she feels that she's a woman after her own heart—dignified elegance, obvious intelligence and my role really is to recognize Erica's brilliance and nurture it and encourage her and be an ally for Erica, but it doesn't sort of work out like that once Alison Ashley arrives. Things change a bit because no longer is Erica the best student in the class Alison is pretty good too, so she takes Miss Belmont's attention away from Erica a bit.

Developing characters to have a greater screen presence became one of the focuses of the script editing stage. Christine Madafferi (writer) comments:

What works on the page and what you love on the page, doesn't always work on the screen. For instance, someone like Miss Belmont is a fabulous character in the book. The criticism that people had of her was that she was a bit one note, and she needed a bit of lightening up for the screen, letting you know that there was more to her.

- Do you agree with Madafferi that Miss Belmont needed 'lightening up'? Why or why not?
- How do you think the filmmakers set about 'lightening up' the character of Miss Belmont? Give some examples from the film to highlight your ideas.
- Was the on-screen characteriza-

tion of Miss Belmont successful or not? Justify your opinion.

Craig McLachlan worked closely with Director, Geoff Bennett to develop the antics of his character, Mr Kennard. He says:

It's great fun. Geoff Bennett and John (Brousek) have really given me license to exorcise all of these slapstick demons, all the things that I loved watching as a kid—the Three Stooges, The Marx Brothers, all that great classic stuff, they've allowed me to incorporate into Mr Kennard.

- How do you think Craig McLachlan incorporated the slapstick he watched during his childhood into the character of Mr Kennard? Give examples from the film to highlight your ideas.
- Write letters of application to a new school as Miss Belmont and Mr Kennard describing the attributes, qualities and teaching skills you could each bring to the school.
- Use Table 02 (above) to compare several characters.

Caricature

A caricature could be described as an exaggerated version, often a drawing, of a person. Caricatures may also be portrayed through claymation,

Before school camp	
Characters Erica likes	Characters Erica does not like
Mum	Lennie

After school camp	
Characters Erica likes	Characters Erica does not like



TABLES 03 AND 04

puppetry and live action. Physical and sometimes personality characteristics can be highlighted and enlarged upon to create a comic effect.

- Investigate how cartoonists create caricatures. Use what you discover to create a caricature (using drawing, clay models or puppets) for several of the characters analysed above, focusing where appropriate on:
 - physical features
 - style or items of clothing
 - hairstyle or colour
 - commonly used phrases or sayings
 - role or status in the film
 - speech or other mannerisms.
- Create a short comic strip (or storyboard a scene) that incorporates your caricature.

Character development

Generally a film will introduce a character in such a way that viewers can quickly recognize his or her personality type. Various codes and conventions are used to help viewers, for example, traditional gangster films would often portray the hero wearing white while the gangster would wear black.

As characters are introduced, viewers are given visual and auditory cues, for example:

- casting (typecasting)
- accents or other distinguishing features
- wardrobe (types of clothing, hair, make-up, colours)
- posture, mannerisms, gestures
- attitudes
- reactions to situations and other characters.

These cues encourage us to begin to identify with and feel some sympathy for a particular character/s. However, our initial responses will often change as the narrative progresses and the characters develop.

- Use Table 03 and 04 (above) to classify characters in the film according to whether Erica likes them or not.
- At the end of *Hating Alison Ashley*, are your perceptions of Erica, Alison, Barry, Lennie and Mum any different from those you had at the beginning of the film?
- Describe how key characters change during the film, *Hating Alison Ashley*.
- Select one character you think changed during the film. Analyse how the change was portrayed. Did the character change in appearance? Behaviour? Attitudes? Did he or she do something unexpected?

Production design and characterization

Burmeister remarks that wearing her costume was an instantaneous transformation into Yuk's world.

Walking in I had very long hair for the auditions and they chopped it off for the role and that automatically gave me the movement of the head and the way that I kind of sat. And the wardrobe, the fact that she's a writer and she's very much in her head a lot, so she's kind of hunching her shoulders. The props that I hold are just brilliant, so it's a whole huge collaborative team that bring together this character and give her the look and give her the way that she holds herself because ultimately the clothes are the person.

- Work in small groups to locate several paragraphs in the book *Hating Alison Ashley* that describe the clothing worn by Erica, Valjoy and Alison. How does the author convey this information?
- Describe the clothing worn by Erica, Valjoy and Alison in the film *Hating Alison Ashley*. How does the costuming selected for each one contribute to the construction of their character?



Soundtrack

The selection of appropriate music is of critical importance to most films, but especially for a film having youth as its target audience. Brousek (Executive Producer) 'wanted to combine a lush and modern orchestral score with source music that was hip and contemporary, but also unusual'. He brought Cezary Skubiszewski on board from pre-production. He was in charge of all the music in the film, not just the score. Brousek says: 'This is unusual, but I believe it gives the film a beautiful musical unity. Watching and listening to the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra perform the film's score was amazing.'

- In what ways do you think Cezary's compositions and selections of music do or do not support the film?
- If you had the opportunity to select music or other sound for this film, which three choices would you make and why?

Production design

In creating the looks for the Alison and Yuk characters Paul Warren (Costume Designer) considered the vastly different backgrounds of the characters. Set against the glossy, middle class neighbourhood of Barringa Heights, Alison had to embody a perceived perfection. Warren says, 'I wanted to go with more conservative but not

boring so I took it back to a classic look. I'm calling it 'twin set and pearls gone wrong'. There are no twin sets in sight and no pearls in sight, but we've layered it like that with beautiful knits that we've put beading on.'

Yuk's rougher surroundings in Barringa East gave much of the inspiration for the character's look. Warren explains: 'The Yuk character was very complex, because we wanted her to be a little bit grungy, a little bit daggy, but not too daggy. We wanted everybody to be able to relate to her on some level, so we didn't want to go too grimy.' Yuk's costuming was mostly sourced from contemporary streetwear, but Warren created Yuk's fantasy costuming, such as evening gowns and red carpet looks to capture her many imaginary scenarios.

- If you were the Production Designer, what changes (if any) would you make to the 'looks' of Alison and Yuk? Why?

Tracey Mann (Mum) says costume and production design were important in establishing her character.

I loved getting to my house. It's this run down, almost about to be demolished, weatherboard house in Richmond. Ralph [Moser] has created such a fantastic environment. I just had to walk into that backyard and

there she was, there was Mum. It just said so much about her. It was like a surreal country home, with the shed, it was just hysterical, what he'd come up with. And the same thing with Paul Warren, who's done the costumes, just fantastic designs, you just plonk these leopard skin tights on and these boots that he's made for Mum, these little things that have been so wonderful to work with. So basically I've had to do nothing—just put my costume on and stand on set, all done.

- Did you find the portrayal of Mum believable or not so believable? Would you make any changes to her 'look'? Why or why not?
- As a class discuss the importance of clothing, homes and appearance as elements in this film story.

Themes

Delta Goodrem believes that at the heart of the film is a story about friendship and about finding yourself:

Hating Alison Ashley is a wonderful story about two different characters from two different parts of town, from different lifestyles, that by the end find some sort of connection between them ... they're both fish out of water and it's a really beautiful story of the two characters.

Alison Ashley is a character that you can go, wow, she's got everything —she's good at sport, she's getting A pluses in everything, but at the same time, she's a very lonely character and she's a very independent person. It's interesting to have another look and see that everyone's got their own insecurities.

Friendship

- Describe Erica's main problem/s in relating to other kids. Suggest solutions.
- Describe Alison's main problem/s in relating to other kids. Suggest solutions.
- Conduct a role-play between Erica and a classmate, with the classmate explaining, demonstrating and discussing with Erica how she might make and keep friends.
- Think of a time where you felt different to other kids. How did you



feel? How did you handle the situation? In what other ways could you have managed the situation?

- In groups of three or four create an advertising campaign to promote the concept, 'It's OK to be an individual'.
- How would you handle moving to a new school? Describe how you think you would handle your first day at a new school. List strategies that might help you to cope.

Family relationships

- Find evidence from the film to support the idea that Alison has a better home life than Erica. Then find evidence from the film to support the idea that Erica has a better home life than Alison. Make a chart showing the evidence to support each case.
- If you could select two things about Erica's family and two things

about Alison's family to incorporate into your life, what would you choose and why?

- As a class, debate: 'It is better to have material things than the love



and devotion of your family'.

Feelings, emotions and relationships

- Discuss the significance of lies in Erica's life. Why does she tell lies? What does it tell you about her? How could you help someone to feel they don't need to tell lies?
- Select six key events that occur during the film, including an event from the beginning and the end of the film. For each event describe Erica's feelings for Alison. How do her feelings change during the film and how do you know?
- Write four emails from Alison to a friend from her old school, the first describing Alison's first day at her new school, the second describing her relationship with Erica before the camp, the third describing her feelings about camp and the fourth her feelings at the end of the film.
- As a class, debate: First impressions tell you exactly what a person is like.
- If Erica could have a wish granted what would it be? If Alison could have one wish what would it be? Write wishes in star shapes, and



then pin them up in your classroom and compare ideas.

Hating Alison Ashley and Civics and Citizenship

Every one of us lives in a society. We are members, or citizens, in that society. Being in a society gives us rights, and responsibilities. One responsibility is to be aware that while we might have the right to do whatever we want personally, as soon as our actions have an effect or impact on others, then we have to act in a reasonable, fair and responsible way. That's what citizenship is—behaving in a way that takes the rights of others whom we are in contact with into account. The sort of society we create is up to us—it depends on how we behave.

- 1 Think about the sort of society you would like to live in. List its characteristics. For example, you might want to live in a fair society. Or a caring one. Create your civics and citizenship list.
- 2 Now think about ways you help to create your society. Think about one thing you have done that has made your society a better place; and one thing that someone has done (it might be you, or it might be somebody else) that has made your society a worse place. For example, it might be bullying; or selfishness; or just a failure to do something that could have helped somebody else.
- 3 The world in *Hating Alison Ashley* is a society, and it is created by the characters who inhabit it. Have a group in your class take one of the characters, and gather evidence of the way that character's actions help create that society. Use a table like the one on page 15. As a class share the information on each character, and use it to create a summary of that society. Who are the good citizens in that society? Who are the ones whose behaviour compromises the values of that society? Would you like to live in the world of *Hating Alison Ashley*? Explain your reasons.

Character	Actions	Impact on the society

Reviewing

- Write a report for the school newspaper describing the outcome of the camp play.
- Did you enjoy the ending of the film? Do you think it had an appropriate ending? Were all the conflicts or problems resolved? If not, what was left unresolved?
- Explain how you *feel* about the ending of the film. Why do you feel this way?

Reading the Novel

Discussion points and activities to support and extend the reading of the novel, *Hating Alison Ashley*.

Chapter 3

- Read Erica's description of Alison Ashley. What impressions do you have about her? How does Erica feel about herself after Alison Ashley arrives?
- Compare and contrast Erica and Alison's lunch boxes. Select other aspects about which to compare and contrast, such as behaviour, clothing or dialogue.
- Alison Ashley says she doesn't like illness and Erica realizes she and Alison can never be friends. Why is this so?
- Discuss what it means to be a hypochondriac. Explain why Erica seems to develop so many injuries and illnesses.

Chapter 4

- Read the description of the car that collected Alison from school. What was the car like?
- Draw a picture of Erica's neighbourhood based on her descriptions.
- Find and re-read descriptions of Erica's house, including Jedda's horse float, the kitchen table and the fridge.
- Explain why Robin Klein (the author)

may have included these descriptions. Do you think the author used stereotyped ideas to portray Erica's neighbourhood as disadvantaged?

- Near the end of the chapter Erica says, 'Life was full of injustice'. What do you think she means?
- Why does Erica find herself wishing she were Alison Ashley?
- If you could become someone else, who would you become and why? Explain why the life of that person sounds appealing to you.

Chapter 5

- At the beginning of the chapter Miss Belmont hands their projects back to the class. Find the part that describes the project of Barry Hollis. What does this description tell you about Barry Hollis?
- Explain why Erica spent so much time showing her project to many people around the school.
- Do you think it is fair that the school has photographs showing Barry Hollis in exile? How would the photos make him feel? What impression do you think it might create when new teachers arrive and see these photos?
- Alison and Erica mention many positive things about their schools. Why do you think they each do this? List ten positive things about your school.

Chapter 6

- Compare how the teachers treat Alison and Erica. Give examples from the novel.
- In what way/s were Alison and Erica treated similarly by their classmates?
- Compare Erica and Valjoy's bedrooms. What are some of the differences between them? When Alison went to Erica's house, Erica took her into Valjoy's bedroom. Why do you think she did this? What do you think Alison's bedroom would look

like? What makes you think this?

- What does Erica tell Alison that her father used to be? Why do you think she tells her this story? What is the real story?

Chapter 7

- The children had to take photos for an interschool student photography competition. What is the problem with Erica's photograph? When Alison spoke to Erica at the rubbish bin about Erica's photo, do you think she was picking on Erica? Explain your opinion.
- What was it about the camp that Erica was looking forward to and why?
- When Erica completed the ballot to show who she'd like to share a room with on camp, whom did she select? Why do you think she wrote these names?

Chapter 8

- Draw a picture of Alison's neighbourhood based on descriptions in chapter 8.
- Find descriptions of Alison's house and make a list of key images that seem different from Erica's house.
- How does Alison behave when she is in her own house? Why do you think she behaves this way?
- What were Erica's thoughts when Alison's mother told her off for making so much noise? How do you know this was what Erica thought?

Chapter 9

- One of the first camp activities was a long, healthy walk. Why wasn't this a very successful activity? Why do you think Erica decided to continue on the walk after most other kids decided to stop and rest?
- When Erica looked at Alison at the top of the hill, what were her thoughts? Why did she think this?

Chapter 10

- What does Barry Hollis tell Erica will happen on the first night of camp?
- What familiar, soothing ritual had Erica always taken for granted when she realizes she's never been away from home before?

- What does Alison say to Erica when she puts the salad on the table? Why does Erica get upset?
- How does Erica find out that Alison listed her name on the camp ballot paper?
- Why did Erica construct a booby trap under the bedroom window?
- Draw a picture to show the faces of Erica and Barry when they jumped into the telephone box at the sound of Miss Belmont's voice.

Chapter 11

- Near the beginning of chapter 11 Erica comments about Alison being an only child with a mother waiting on her hand and foot. She notices that Alison's facial expression is changing as she responds to Erica's criticism. Read the description comparing Alison's face to the surface of a pond. As a group, find another interesting description in this chapter and read it aloud to the class.
- What problems did the kids have in creating a play? List the problems.
- What was surprising about Barry Hollis rehearsing for the play?

Chapter 12

- More than anything Erica wanted to play the leading roles in the camp play. How do you think she felt when she found she was unable to perform?
- If you could perform in any play, what lead role would you like to have?

Chapter 13

- Find evidence that shows how Erica's mum feels about her daughter performing in the school camp play.
- List excuses Erica gives to convince her Mum not to come to the camp play.
- Who do you think Alison might have called on the telephone? Why do you think she made the call? After the phone call Erica realizes that Alison is very upset and notices that her face looks like 'someone finally had thrown a big rock into the still surface of her pool'. What do you think is meant by this?
- Why might Alison have been upset following the phone call?
- As a group, imagine you are Alison. Write a letter to your mother explaining how you feel about her

- not coming to the camp play.
- Where was it that Barry Hollis used to sleep when the truant officer was after him? Find something in this chapter that leads to the conclusion that Erica does not consider Barry Hollis to be poor.
- What comment does Barry make about Erica's face? He also makes a comment about her acting ability. Erica likens his comment to ripping off a band-aid. What does she say the band-aid was covering?
- Draw a picture of the outfit Erica thinks her mother will wear to the play.
- What does Erica's mother say that suggests she and Lennie are both very keen to come to the camp play?
- Why does Erica describe Alison as 'Princess Alison Ashley'?
- Why did Erica put her master copies of the play script into the rubbish bin?

Chapter 14

- As the time approaches for the play to begin, things begin to go wrong. List the things that go wrong.
- When does Erica's relationship with Lennie begin to change and why? What does Lennie do to help Erica get organized for the play?
- When does Erica's relationship with Alison begin to change and why? What does she do and say to help Erica?
- Erica runs to her dormitory when the play begins. What happens to make her decide to attend the opening night?
- What does Erica say to Alison when she sits beside her at the play? Why is this significant?
- Why does Lennie shout 'Author'? How does this change things for Erica?
- How did Erica feel when she glanced at her mum? Why did she feel this way?
- How does Erica respond when Margaret keeps asking Alison where her mother is? When Alison responds, what does she say about her mother?
- What does Erica offer to Alison? How does Alison respond to her offer?

- After Erica's mum says she and Lennie are to be married, what are the changes in the way Erica feels about Lennie? Why have her feelings changed?
- How did Erica feel when she realized her name would be Erica Grubb if she changed it when Lennie and her mum were married?
- Erica was so upset about her failure as an actor that she didn't realize at first that she was a successful writer. As a group, develop an entry in Erica's diary reflecting on what she found out about herself, her family, and Alison during the night of the camp play.

Acknowledgements

Hating Alison Ashley press kit

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