

## DESTROYING AVALON

KATE McCAFFREY

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YEAR LEVEL: Y9–12

### ABOUT THE BOOK

When Avalon moves to the city her life is turned upside down. Starting at a new high school, she finds herself at the centre of a brutal cyberbullying campaign. She is inundated with obscene text messages, and subject to increasingly vicious website postings, as things spiral out of control. Miserable and isolated, Avalon relies on a small group of new friends. But as the threats escalate, is anyone safe?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate grew up in Perth's northern suburbs. She has a degree in English and Art and a diploma in Education.

### THEMES

- Cyberbullying
- Self-esteem
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Adolescence
- Family
- Friendship

### AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y9–12 English

Y9–12 Health and Physical Education (mental health and well being)

Y9–12 Digital Technologies

### USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: <https://katemccaffrey.wordpress.com>
- ReachOut: <http://au.reachout.com>
- eheadspace: [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)
- Bullying No Way: [www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)
- Beyond Blue: [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### Discussion questions

1. Compare and contrast the characters of Avalon and Alice in the opening chapters – how are they similar/different?
2. Why do you think Avalon quickly becomes the target of such a vicious hate campaign? Who do you think Dragon Girl is? What clues seem to indicate this?
3. What does the term ‘popular’ mean to you? Why do you think it is important to Avalon to be popular at her new school, making her initially reluctant to settle with Sukey and her friends? Do you think it is important to be ‘popular’? Why/why not?
4. Even though Avalon knows the messages appearing about her online are nasty and untrue, she becomes addicted to reading them each day after school.
  - a. Why do you think she does this?
  - b. If you were in her position, would you continue to read the blogs, or ignore them? Would you tell a parent or teacher?
  - c. If Avalon had confided in her parents or teacher earlier, do you think things may have worked out differently for her and Marshall?
5. What is homophobia? Why does this discrimination still exist in Australia? What other forms of discrimination exist? What can you do to help combat intolerance in your community?
6. In *Destroying Avalon* we see many examples of blogs and chat rooms used to spread vicious lies. However, the internet can also be used to spread positive messages, such as the anti-bullying chat room Avalon initiates at her school after Marshall’s death. Discuss examples you’ve seen of the internet and social media being used to spread a positive message.

### Creative writing

1. Rewrite the experience of Avalon’s first week at her new school from the point of view of either Alice, Sukey, Tamara or Marshall. How does your character feel about the new student?
2. Write two diary entries from the point of view of Sukey – the first set during the height of her bullying campaign against Avalon, and the second set after she learns of Marshall’s death. Compare and contrast Sukey’s feelings, attitudes and motivations at these two critical points.
3. Continue the story: write the next two chapters of *Destroying Avalon* from the point of view of one of the following characters: Sukey, Tamara, Alice, Jeremy, Avalon. Brainstorm a list of events that could unfold in their lives following Marshall’s funeral. What might their feelings, hopes, regrets and ambitions be?
4. Write a critical book review of *Destroying Avalon* for your school website. In your opinion, what were the strengths and weaknesses of the novel? To whom would you recommend this book and why?

### Mental health and wellbeing

1. Have you or someone you know ever been bullied? How did this make you feel? Write a 500-word personal reflection for your eyes only.
2. What is the difference between a bully and a bystander? What is a bystander’s responsibility?
3. What is cyberbullying? How is it similar/different to physical bullying or verbal bullying?
4. What is your school’s bullying policy?
5. What are some actions you can take if you or someone you know are being bullied? Discuss as a class.
6. Paper chains activity: each student randomly selects the name of a class member. They then write a positive note to that student on a strip of paper describing something they admire about them. Connect all the strips to make a class paper chain.

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