

IN ECSTASY

KATE McCAFFREY

ISBN (PB): 9781921361166

YEAR LEVEL: Y9–12

ABOUT THE BOOK

Mia and Sophie have been best friends forever – but that's all about to change. Experimenting with alcohol, flirting with boys and dabbling in drugs, their lives quickly spiral out of control.

There is little currently available for young readers – and their parents – that accurately reflects both the appeal and the consequences of drug use from a teenage perspective, making this an important and valuable novel.

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

- Friendship
- Self-esteem
- Drug addiction
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Family
- Love
- Adolescent sexual health

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y9–12 English

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

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: <https://katemccaffrey.wordpress.com>
- Youth Beyond Blue – depression and anxiety resources: www.youthbeyondblue.com
- ReachOut – youth drug awareness resources: <http://au.reachout.com/tough-times/alcohol-and-other-drugs>



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Compare and contrast the main characters, Sophie and Mia.
2. Why do you think Mia and Sophie react so differently to their experimentation with ecstasy? Consider their family life, self-esteem and desire to belong.
3. Create a class definition for the term 'self-perception'.
4. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast how Sophie sees Mia with how Mia sees herself.
5. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast how Mia sees Sophie with how Sophie sees herself. Give evidence from the novel and page references to support your claims.
6. How do you see yourself? Do you feel your friends/teachers/family really know you?
7. If Sophie and Mia had been honest with each other and their families earlier in the story, how might the plot have developed differently? If you were Sophie, would you have told Mia's family about her drug abuse sooner? Why/why not?
8. The story is structured through alternating chapters narrated by the two central characters. How are the two narrative components different? Why did the author make this choice? What is the effect?
9. Do you think Mia will really be in recovery forever? Why might this be a scary prospect for her to face?
10. How are traditional gender stereotypes subverted and/or reinforced by the central characters in the novel?
11. Discuss the ways in which peer-pressure is represented in the novel.
12. Discuss each of the following quotes from the novel. Who says it? As the narrative progresses, does the story prove them right or wrong?
 - a. *Ecstasy was like anything else. If you did it safely, you'd be fine. The people who died were the ones who took stupid risks – or way too much.* (p. 27)
 - b. *You can't be held responsible if you're so out of it you don't know what you're doing.* (pp. 41–2)
 - c. *You can't help those who won't help themselves.* (p. 195)

Creative writing

1. Change the plot! Rewrite two chapters surrounding the night that Tower died to reflect one of the changes below. How might things work out differently for each main character?
 - a. Sophie forgives Mia for not listening to her after she tried to confide in her about Glenn at Lewis's party. She is glad when Mia reaches out to her at school on Monday to apologise. They are both grief-stricken about Tower's death and tentatively begin to reconnect.
 - b. Mia, Lewis and Roger decide to wait with Tower in the emergency room. They provide information to staff about the substances he abused at the party. The police are notified, as are their parents.
 - c. After her altercation with Glenn at Lewis's party (and the lack of support from Mia), Sophie decides to report that he spiked her drink and was sexually abusive. With the help of Dom and the police, she is determined to prove to Mia that she is telling the truth.
2. Write an imaginative diary entry from the point of view of one of the following characters after they learn that Mia must be sent to a rehabilitation clinic: Jordie, Mia's mum, Mia's dad, Kylie, Glenn.
3. Write a critical book review of *In Ecstasy* 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. Why do you think some people are more susceptible to drug use than others?
2. Is all drug use abuse? Why are some drugs legal and others are not?
3. Consider how drug abuse might be linked to each of the following issues: violence, unsafe sex, overdose, drink driving (or being the passenger of a drunk driver).
4. How do you think governments could target teens more effectively when they create anti-drug campaigns?
5. Create your own school anti-drug campaign. This can be a role-play or performance, short film, poster, song, pamphlet, blog or social media campaign.