

## CAROUSEL

BRENDAN RITCHIE

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YEAR LEVEL: Y10–12

### ABOUT THE BOOK

They all came to the shopping centre for different reasons. And now, they're trapped inside together.

Nox is an Arts graduate wondering what to do with his life. Taylor and Lizzy are famous indie musicians, and Rocky works the checkouts at Target.

Unable to find out what has happened outside, they eat fast food, watch bad TV and wait for the mess to be sorted. But when days turn into weeks and the novelty of their situation wears off, a sense of menace grows. Like some bad dystopian binge-watch that never ends, the horror of isolation breeds paranoia and mistrust. As supplies and sanity run ever lower, will they work out what's happened to the world? Or will these four young adults grow old while stuck inside forever?

The debut YA novel from award-winning author Brendan Ritchie is an apocalyptic adventure full of action, suspense and survival.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

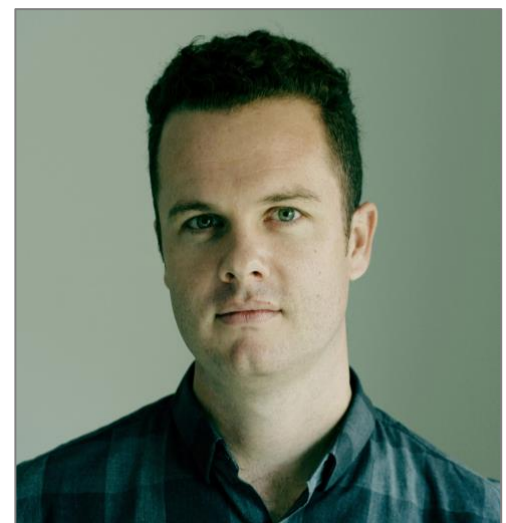
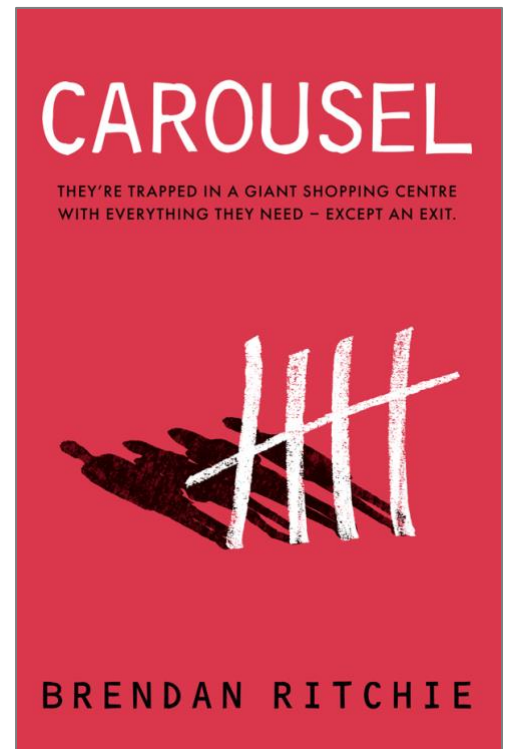
Brendan Ritchie is a novelist and academic from the south coast of WA. He is the winner of the 2022 Dorothy Hewett Award for an unpublished manuscript and author of novels including *Carousel* (2015), *Beyond Carousel* (2016) and *Eta Draconis* (2023). Brendan has a PhD in Creative Writing and has also published poetry and non-fiction in several notable journals and collections. He lives on Wadandi land with his wife and two young daughters.

### THEMES

- Friendship
- Identity
- Adolescence
- Art
- Technology
- Consumerism
- Post-apocalyptic Future

### USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: [brendanritchie.com](http://brendanritchie.com)
- Beyond Blue: [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### Discussion questions

1. Have students make notes in a journal on the following:
  - a. Characterisation – of the narrator (Nox), the other main characters (Lizzy, Taylor, Rocky) and any minor characters they feel are significant (e.g. Rachel).
  - b. Setting – of Perth, and of the shopping centre itself.
  - c. Narration – the narrator's point of view; the narrator's reliability; issues of bias.
  - d. Plot structure
  - e. Literary devices
  - f. Symbolism
  - g. Dialogue – have students compile a list of important quotes for each character, noting how they may change/grow over the course of the novel.
2. Consider the following setting descriptions. What kind of atmosphere is established?
  - a. **'The place was weird without music. Normally I would be blasted with some crappy dance track standing this close to Cotton On. But not today'** (p. 6).
  - b. **'The light down there seemed blue and artificial. From where I stood next to Bags R Us it was impossible to know if it were day or night'** (p. 7).
  - c. **'It was empty. Not just of customers, which I might have expected, but seemingly of staff too'** (p. 7).
3. Create a class definition of the term 'foreshadowing'. Find two examples of foreshadowing in Chapter 1.
4. The story is narrated in the first person from the point of view of the character Nox. How would you describe his character based on the opening chapter?
  - a. Use at least three adjectives to describe Nox.
  - b. Create a list of the benefits and limitations of first-person narration.
  - c. What is meant by the term 'unreliable narrator'?
  - d. Do you predict that Nox will prove a reliable or unreliable narrator? What gives you this impression?
5. How are the characters Taylor and Lizzy introduced to the reader?
  - a. Find two quotes to describe each of their personalities.
  - b. In what ways are the sisters similar/different?
6. **'Lizzy was cross-legged, still glancing through her static X feed as if her flight was delayed, or her doctor was running late'** (pp. 16–17). Discuss the role of social media in your life. How does it affect your daily communication with others? What are the advantages/disadvantages?
7. The characters are trapped inside the shopping centre for a long time. What do you think has happened outside? What would you have done in this situation?
8. **'Being in there alone, with the long line of silent cubicles, could be pretty creepy. A while ago I decided to prop the doors open with garden gnomes from Backyard Bonanza'** (pp. 22–23).
  - a. What makes the situation 'creepy' for Nox? Do you think this might be different for each character?
  - b. A shopping mall is a familiar location for most people – not one that is ordinarily described as 'creepy'. Find three quotes that hint there is something sinister about the setting.
9. How are stereotypes of masculinity and femininity supported and/or subverted by the characterisation of Nox, Lizzy, Taylor and Rocky throughout the book? Show evidence from the text.
10. How are the themes of entrapment and confinement portrayed throughout the novel?
11. How does each of the characters in *Carousel* find daily purpose? How do they create meaning in their lives? Give examples from the text and discuss why you think this is important to them.
12. Do you think the group are under surveillance, in the same way that Nox and the others monitored the security cameras inside the mall? If so, who could be watching? And why?
13. Research/create a list of the conventions for each of the following genres:
  - a. Science fiction
  - b. Dystopian fiction
  - c. Speculative fiction

Which of these labels (if any) feels like it most accurately describes *Carousel*? Why?

## Creative Writing

1. **'I was writing regularly. Churning out poetry full of thinly veiled explorations of entrapment and confinement'** (p. 95). Create a free verse poem exploring the themes of 'entrapment' and 'confinement' as Nox does in the novel.
2. Write a critical review of *Carousel* for your school newspaper. What, in your opinion, were the strengths and the weaknesses of the novel? To which readership/s would you recommend the book and why?
3. **'For a while Carousel was like some giant grown-up playground. Rocky and I would pull the cash drawers out of shops and carry them up to the arcade games in the foyer of the cinema'** (p. 39). Plan and draft a short story about your own adventure when locked inside a shopping centre.
4. Write an alternative blurb for *Carousel*.
5. Write either a prologue or an epilogue for the novel. Set your prologue five years into the past, or your epilogue five years into the future. You may do this from any character's point of view.
6. Rewrite your favourite moment in the novel from another character's point of view (i.e. not Nox's).

## Science

1. Recycling and growing food becomes extremely important to Nox, Lizzy, Taylor and Rocky in their struggle to survive within *Carousel*. Research ways to become involved in sustainable living.
2. Create a poster or pamphlet advertising this information to your school community. Suggested topics include:
  - a. Recycling
  - b. Sustainable shopping
  - c. Transport – car and air travel and offsetting
  - d. Saving water
  - e. Reducing energy consumption
  - f. Green building design
  - g. Ethical and responsible investment.

## Health and Physical Education

1. In conjunction with reading *Carousel*, have students conduct research on mental health using websites such as [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)
2. Have students create a list of positive coping strategies and resources for young people suffering from depression and/or anxiety.

## Art

1. Design the cover art for the album that Taylor and Lizzy create while trapped inside *Carousel*.
2. Research indie rock as a music genre, including its origins and history, subgenres, style and instruments.
3. In groups of four, write (and record, if possible) an indie rock–inspired song. Lyrics should draw on your own imagined experience of being trapped inside *Carousel*. Depending on musical proficiency, students may wish to use copyright-free music available online as the backing music for their lyrics, or to experiment with playing their own instruments.

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