

SHUTTERSPEED

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Themes: Friendship, romance, family, tragedy, home, school

Year Level: Y10 to Y12

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I've always been curious. As a youngster in Tully, Far North Queensland, my house was surrounded by sugar cane. There was a highway nearby which (I was told) led to cities, but my world was filled with small things: ladybugs and grasshoppers; Allamandas and hibiscuses; worms, toads and snakes. I loved to uncover such delights, along with the many inanimate treasures hidden in gardens or under staircases: coins, buttons and parts of old toys from long-gone tenants. I made my own stories about these, so it's not surprising I was drawn to other people's stories, especially those set in exciting and exotic places.

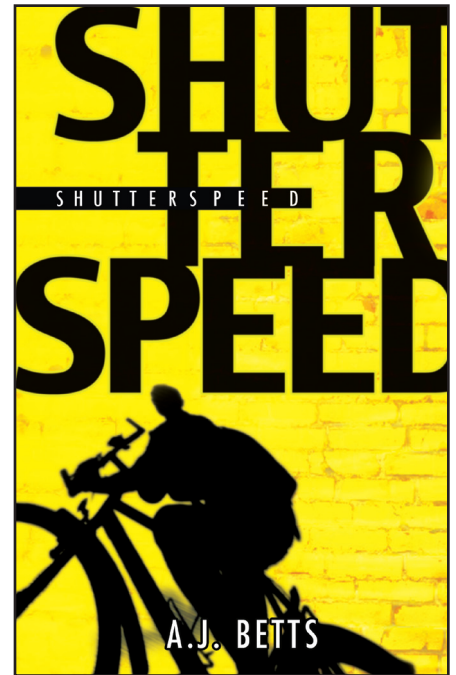
I was a good reader from an early age, impressing (then confounding) the Tully Primary School librarian as I consumed all she could offer. I remember stories of silly kings, lonely dragons, and rebellious princesses — all of which had very strong morals I faithfully adopted. As I grew through primary school and moved north to Innisfail (more cane, but also more people) I developed favourites: Enid Blyton, L.M. Montgomery, Johanna Spyri, Robin Klein and Roald Dahl.

It wasn't until Year Seven that I discovered I too could write — it was a masterpiece! My poem *'Another Day at School'* was published in the first edition of *'Kids Only'*, and it brought me fame and a \$5 cheque. My name in print! I was gobsmacked.

I recall high school English as an opportunity to indulge and develop my love of language. Importantly, I kept reading, discovering Douglas Adams, David Gemmell, and Spike Milligan, amongst others. Publicly, I was a dancer and actor, but in the privacy of my bedroom, I was a poet, experimenting with style and teenage philosophy.

A lecturer at uni became a mentor, and poetry evolved from a means of personal expression to a refined art form, capturing single moments of human intensity. I joined a poetry group: I performed, I co-edited a journal, and I was published. I became a teacher and loved it. I still do.

But my curiosity got the better of me and I was driven to travel. I craved the United Kingdom; to go to castles where cold walls hum with old secrets. I wanted to see where Shakespeare came from, to be in the Globe, to see my breath in front of me, and to imagine. I travelled for three years through Europe and parts of America and Asia. I loved to sit and watch strangers in foreign places. I wrote about them, I talked to them, but mostly, just to witness their reality was enough. I often felt invisible, as though I were a spectator, rather than a participator in the world. I filled notebooks with the energy and sadness of people's lives.



I remember the day *ShutterSpeed* occurred to me. I was at a photo lab in London, waiting for my photos to be processed, and I noticed the teenage boy sitting at the processor. He was bored, and I sensed his frustration and apathy. I wondered then, 'what if? ... What if one of the photos became stuck in the machine, forcing him to look at it? And what if that photo was of something/someone he was drawn to?' The first scene of *ShutterSpeed* was written that afternoon, and the ideas were fleshed out years later when I returned to Queensland. I only really committed myself to this story after my itchy feet drove me across the country to Perth in 2004. I was relief teaching to sixteen-year-old boys who were entirely uninspired by the novels in front of them and I decided that *ShutterSpeed* had the potential to really grab these students and keep them engaged in a story that was local, exciting and relevant. I also recognised that Perth — the most isolated city in the world — would be the perfect setting for a character as likeable, but lonely, as Dustin.

So I grounded myself in Western Australia and enrolled in a creative writing course at uni. By this stage, the story was fully grown in my consciousness, so I really had no choice. I finished the novel in May 2005, in time to enter it in The Australian/Vogel Award — an unusual destination for a young adult novel, but a timely deadline. When the judges' letter arrived, I cried. *ShutterSpeed* had been longlisted, but more importantly, the judges believed in its worth and encouraged me to edit and publish the manuscript.

Fremantle Press worked with me through the extensive editing process and offered me a contract in 2007. Early in 2008, the advance copies arrived. It was a bit like seeing my poem in print in Year Seven — I was gobsmacked all over again.

I'm working as an English teacher at Hospital School Services, based at Princess Margaret Hospital. It's a privilege to work one-on-one with students. English is a great way for them to develop an understanding of their world, as well as escape into another.

I have endless notebooks and scraps of paper, filled with ideas. I never suffer from writers' block — it's the lack of time that causes me grief. I'm passionate about cycling and adventure triathlon, which means I have trouble sitting still. Luckily, riding a bike is actually helpful in clearing the mind and giving me perspective. I do a lot of character development while pedalling around the suburbs. I've started working on another young adult novel, and I can't wait to find out what happens.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Dustin's aim is to 'slip under the radar' — to draw no attention to himself and get through school in an unremarkable fashion. For this lanky sixteen year old, education is useful only as a distraction from the rest of his life. At home, Dustin's relationship with his taciturn father grows increasingly strained. Tensions between them are further magnified in the confines of Ken's Fremantle photo lab, where Dustin reluctantly works on a part-time basis. Fortunately, Dustin has his mates Jasmine and Nugget to keep his sanity in check, not to mention the Avanti mountain bike that grants him hits of speed and glimpses of freedom.

When the lab's processor breaks partway through a film, it's Dustin's job to retrieve the photograph that is lodged and crumpled within. His attention snags on the motorbike in the image — a Ducati Monster 620, cherry red — but the woman standing beside it is incidental. As the week unfolds, however, and chance encounters seem more than just coincidence, Terri Pavish begins to occupy more and more of Dustin's headspace, until she is not simply a curiosity, but an obsession.

A school photography assignment gives Dustin the perfect opportunity to discover more about the obscure woman who fascinates him. In his pursuit of Terri Pavish, Dustin makes choices that will redefine his moral parameters, and test his relationships with those closest to him. In the process, old secrets will surface and the truth will affect them all.

ShutterSpeed consists of six chapters, divided into thirty-six numbered sections to coincide with the number of shots on the film in Dustin's camera. The numbers count down, from 36 to 1. This was chosen to give a sense of inevitability; that each choice of Dustin's is leading to an unavoidable outcome.

The last scene (number 1) however, has been moved from the end of the novel to the beginning. It serves therefore as a 'flash forward', to foreshadow what is to come.

Themes & Characters

ShutterSpeed is narrative-driven rather than theme-based. Its aim is to communicate a story about interesting and believable characters. Importantly, it attempts to capture and challenge the minds of its teenaged readers. A number of themes develop as a result of the characters' situations and choices, particularly: loneliness; masculinity and male relationships; apathy; danger; obsession; control; and friendships.

Even before the novel begins, there is an underlying loneliness in Dustin. He appears to spend much time on his own — on his bike, at home, and watching films — which he finds comfort in. It's Jasmine who questions him about this:

'Who'd you go with?'

'No one.'

'Dustin, you know you don't have to do that.'

'It's dark. I don't need friends in the dark.' (p. 30)

Jasmine's closeness and involvement in Dustin's life disconcerts him at times; he'd rather be left alone. Dustin is a teenager who keeps his cards close to his chest. At times, it could be interpreted that Dustin is sad. 'He wonders what it might be like to be swallowed by the sea on a night such as this.' (p. 14)

Dustin's isolation can be traced back to the way in which he and his father communicate at home. There is little evidence of a happy and meaningful father-son relationship.

'He feels his face burn as his father speaks to him like a child.' (p. 38)

'(Ken)...could use some extra help but won't ask for it.' (p. 35)

The theme of ineffectual male relationships is evident with Dustin and his father. The reader is witness to the negative consequences of a father-son relationship that is devoid of overt emotion and love. The two men do indeed love each other, but unfortunately it's unspoken, and therefore seemingly non-existent. It isn't until the end of the novel that Ken feels compelled to tell Dustin the secrets he's been withholding, but by then it is almost too late. 'I need to talk to you, Dustin. There are things you should know,' (p. 142). By keeping guard of secrets, walls have built up between them. Similarly, the secrets that Terri Pavish, Dustin and Nugget individually possess, all contribute to the unravelling of truth and resulting harmful consequences.

There is also an apathy in Dustin that seeps through to all aspects of his life: effort in school; his job at the lab; planning for the future. Jasmine is more proactive, however, with an interest in art and a joy in looking ahead to the future. She tries to encourage Dustin to commit himself to different ideas/projects, and she sometimes succeeds. Dustin's apathy is shared by other members of his year twelve cohort.

The inability to communicate one's feelings is a key concept through the novel, shared by Ken, Dustin, and other minor characters. As a key male figure, Nugget is somewhat more successful in communicating his feelings, both physically and verbally, to Dustin and Jasmine. He's also aware of the importance of using physical activity, such as football and boxing, to get out his aggressions. '...Sometimes you just gotta hit someone.' (p. 78)

Nugget is able to use exercise to get out his tension and experiment with danger, which is something that is lacking in Dustin's life. By not taking real risks in life, Dustin exists in a safe and unfulfilling world. Terri Pavish brings a sense of danger into his life.

But of course, the key idea that *ShutterSpeed* is built on is that of obsession. Dustin's obsession with Terri Pavish is shaped by all of the themes already mentioned: loneliness, apathy, poor communication, and secrecy. She seems to possess everything that he's lacking, and everything he thinks will make him happy. '... He sees everything he wants. Speed. Independence. Freedom ... He admires the impermanency of this woman — blink and she's gone.' (p. 84)

Dustin's life to this point has been devoid of inspiration — there has been nothing to make him want to get out of bed each morning. He has no real goals, and no hobby to make his pulse quicken and feel what it is to be alive. The appearance of Terri Pavish in his life fuels him, providing him with something to finally chase; to get out of bed for.

Obsession can be a healthy thing, resulting in a new passion for a sport or hobby. We all have the capacity for obsession (some more so than others), whether it is for exercise, eating, gambling, love, money, or thrill seeking. But at what point does it become an unhealthy addiction? At what point do we lose perspective/balance, and let the obsession lead us to places we never thought we'd go? And then how do we escape from its hold?

Obsession takes hold of Dustin. Terri Pavish is all he can think about, but his interest in her isn't restricted to just thought. His actions overstep moral boundaries, and all the while he tries to rationalise and justify his behaviour.

Part of what confounds Dustin is how he's starting to lose control: over his physical responses, his thoughts, and his actions. Dustin begins to use this as an excuse for his behaviour. 'There is no choice.' (p. 116)

Jasmine's attraction to Dustin is influenced by more genuine feelings: friendship, and perhaps even love. Their relationship is genuine, comfortable and loyal. Jasmine stands by him and sees the beauty within. Because of this, the reader also sees beauty. Dustin is caring, funny, observant and playful, first with Jasmine and Nugget, then with the camera when he learns more about photography. He is gentle and sincere — even when he doesn't communicate these qualities verbally, they are demonstrated in his hands, his smiles and his banter.

Dustin: 'Why does bird food have to be so bloody noisy?'

Jasmine: 'Louder than cold dead cow, you mean?'

Dustin: 'Be quiet, vegan.'

She punches him and grins. (p. 25)

Setting

Dustin lives in Swanbourne, one of the western suburbs of Perth. His house is in an area well away from the beach. The house he shares with his father is significant in establishing the relationship between them. '... nothing is out of place. Surfaces and walls are bare and clean.' (p. 15)

Jasmine notices what is missing from the house when she visits for the first time, '... a female influence ... Nothing here is meant for comfort or touch ...' (p. 99). There are no photos on the wall, no souvenirs or ornaments. Nothing homely. The bedroom doors remain closed.

Similarly, the photo lab also has a claustrophobic effect as Dustin feels trapped in his role there. The objects within the lab also infuriate him. 'It's as though the lab were a time capsule, incapable of evolving with the outside world.' (p. 34)

In stark contrast, the major setting of the novel is the outdoors in Fremantle. Here, Dustin goes to school, rides his bike, and wastes time. It's a place of colour, movement, and often discovery. Dustin enjoys the anonymity that crowds allow; he likes to disappear and be inconsequential. Riding alongside the cafe strip — with its overlapping noises, smells and sights — gives Dustin a reality to lose himself in; a reality that contrasts with the rigid silence of his house and the photo lab. Fremantle is seen almost as a character in itself: 'Last night's storm is long forgotten. The Fremantle sky has the ability to do that: forgive and forget.' (p. 25)

Fremantle becomes his photographic backdrop as he experiments on people. And Fremantle is where he sees Terri Pavish, at first incidentally, then deliberately. In his pursuit of Terri, he comes to view Fremantle differently.

School is a place filled with tolerable (and often entertaining) distractions. Dustin doesn't mind the routine of school, as long as he can 'slip under the radar' and not bring attention to himself. The teachers and students are idiosyncratic, providing Dustin with opportunities to both flourish and rebel.

The most intimate setting is Terri Pavish's house. Dustin visits her house, mostly to sit outside, to watch and to imagine. Here, he feels serenity and assuredness. The townhouse is nothing special — it's the desirable reality inside that lures him.

The weather is important in either helping or hindering Dustin's journey. When he's frustrated, it's raining outside and windy, making the ride home hard work. The wind pushes him to Terri Pavish's house when he's determined to get there. The sky is blue and clear when Dustin is relaxed and seeing things clearly.

Style

Present tense was chosen to create a sense of momentum and urgency. It allows the reader to feel more involved in the action, as though it's unfolding before them. 'He cycles north to Terri Pavish's house with a tailwind that suddenly sweeps up and ushers him faster.' (p. 67)

Third person limited allows the reader to follow Dustin's actions and thoughts, while being able to maintain a distance and (slightly more) objectivity than third person allows.

The tension lies in the outer and inner struggles Dustin faces. Initially there is tension in the relationships — between Dustin and his father; Jasmine and Dustin — but the inner tension comes from the choices Dustin is making, and the ethical problems these pose. How far will his obsession lead him? How will it end? There is a lot at stake, but also much to be gained from the decisions he makes.

The tone used is fast-paced and punchy to resonate with the motor biking references, and to appeal to the target audience. The dialogue is quick, rhythmical and natural.

The dialogue is colloquial, but the language choice is deliberate and evocative. Description has been used carefully to create effective and poignant meaning. Special moments are 'weighted' and given significance through the use of figurative language: simile, metaphor, alliteration, assonance, and personification.

Some examples of these include:

Similes:

'Without proof, people can disappear like vapour.' (p. 5)

'Memories are shifty like ghosts.' (p. 28)

'Her hair was like black seaweed swishing thickly...' (p. 41)

Metaphor:

'The wind is a bitch ...' (p. 13)

'... he senses how close she is, and feels the pull of an invisible force — a rubber band wrapped around the both of them, holding them in place.' (p. 38)

'... love is the disease of the masses.' (p. 44)

Alliteration:

'... but the fish jerks free and flips and falls ...' (p. 57)

'... clean crockery into the correct places.' (p. 83)

Assonance:

'..how coolly she'd unscrewed the caps...' (p. 5)

'He twists his wrist...' (p. 11)

'Sudden gusts...' (p. 13)

'...skin shimmers silver...' (p. 17)

Personification:

'... the machine ... grunts ... then locks itself into its own clunky rhythm.' (p. 11)

'... the smell of tomato paste meets him.' (p. 15)

Onomatopoeia:

'A photograph crackles ...' (p. 11)

'... clip-clopping heels on pavements, squeals of braking CAT buses ...' (p. 33)

Symbolism is used deliberately, particularly in establishing character. It's sometimes said that water is a symbol of emotion (particularly in dreams), so Dustin's name was chosen to reflect his poor connection with his emotions. He's often thirsty, and has a fear of water sports and the sea in general — he can't swim. Similarly, when Ken becomes emotional later in the story, it's as if there is 'driftwood floating up ...' (p. 142)

Dustin therefore represents the element of 'Earth'. When he is observing Terri Pavish, he feels 'grounded'. To complement him, Jasmine is 'all air'. She's an Air sign, often looking up, laughing. Her small stature and name suggest her lightness. Nugget, despite his earthy name, represents Water. He is fluid and confident, and able to communicate his feelings. He loves the sea and the dangers within it. To complete the four elements, Terri Pavish represents Fire. She is often associated with red, and often moving and creating danger. She's too hot to touch.

STUDY NOTES

A. Before Reading

1. Look at the cover: whose shadow do you think it is? Brainstorm what might be in the bag? Is he/she coming or going? Where to/from?
2. Look up what 'shutter speed' means. Why is it useful? Who is it useful to?
3. What other references might the word 'shutter' have? How about 'speed'?

B. During Reading

1. Where does this first scene take place? What colours are being used in this scene?
2. What physical features of Jasmine does this section emphasise? What personality traits of Jasmine's does it suggest?
3. What physical features of Dustin does this section emphasise?
4. 'She's all air, Jasmine.' What might this suggest about her character?
5. Besides sight, what two other senses are referred to?
6. Who is the 'her' in the photo?

Chapter 1 (p. 9)

36

7. This chapter starts with the number '36'. Why might this be so?
8. What is the location of the first scene? How is this so different from the setting of the previous scene?
9. What is annoying Dustin so much?
10. Find two examples of the machine's personification.
11. '... but tonight, without good reason, he pushes the crumpled photo into his jacket pocket.' Why do you think he did this?

35

12. Does Dustin enjoy or dislike the ride home? How do you know?
13. Find an example of alliteration, assonance and simile in the description of the motorbikes.
14. What is unusual about Dustin's lounge/kitchen?

34

15. What does Dustin do after waking from the dream?
16. When Dustin looks at his reflection, he sees 'tendons rippling beneath the surface ... bones and knots, knuckles and angles.' Do you think this is a positive view of himself?
17. What is it that causes Dustin to grin?

Chapter 2 (p. 18)

33

18. Mr Jose has 'an apathy Dustin admires'. Define apathy. Do you know anyone who is 'apathetic'?
19. What does Dustin usually do on athletics day?
20. Name two objects associated with Shania. What do they convey about her character?
21. In what ways is Nugget's dad different to Dustin's dad?
22. Why does Nugget slap Dustin on the back?

32

23. Is the representation of Mr Ramsay a positive or negative one?
24. What does 'slip under the radar' mean? Where do you think the expression came from?

31

25. How are Jasmine's eating habits different to Dustin's? What do these things say about each of them?
26. Personification is used to describe the Fremantle sky — do you think this is an accurate description?

30

- This section has flashbacks to develop back story. It talks about Dustin's memory of his mother, and how it's fragmented. What smells does he associate with memories of his mother? What smells do you associate with your mum?
- Why do you think there are no photos of Dustin's mum in his house?
- The flashback to Dustin's grandfather is also influenced by memory of senses. Name two of the senses used and what images they create.
- Why did the grandfather shake?
- What is the significance of the barley sugar?
- Find a definition of 'phantom limb'.

29

- Dustin doesn't mind watching films alone. What does this say about him? What is Jasmine's opinion?
- Use one or two words to describe how Dustin feels riding through Fremantle. How does thinking about Terri Pavish make him feel?
- Why do you think Dustin continues to refer to the woman as 'Terri Pavish', and not as 'Terri'?

28

- Why do the enlargements in the photo lab annoy Dustin so much?
- Why does Dustin go to the photo lab?
- Use two examples (words or phrases) that show a sense of urgency in the scene in the photo lab with Terri Pavish?
- What parts of Terri Pavish's body are significant to Dustin in this scene?
- One of the photos has Terri Pavish gardening. What is your interpretation of this image?
- When Dustin looks at the photos of Terri Pavish on his corkboard, there are references to hands. Name two. What might hands be symbolic of?

27

- Give two reasons to explain why the dream upsets Dustin so much.
- Why does Dustin decide to grow his hair?

Chapter 3 (p. 43)

26

- Dustin is quick to be defensive about his relationship with Jasmine. What do you think is really getting to him?
- Where did the friendship between Jasmine, Dustin and Nugget originate?
- What did Jasmine do to deserve detention? What does this say about her character?
- What does the peppermint tree symbolise?

25

- Why does Dustin adjust Jasmine's skirt?
- What kind of atmosphere is in the classroom during the dissection?

24

- Why do you think Mrs Blackler gives Dustin so much attention?
- What does Mrs Blackler tell Dustin about photography etiquette?

23

- What animal does the boy on the pier resemble?
- Taking photos makes Dustin more aware of light and shade. Later, he considers everything can be put into one of two categories — what are these? Do you think this is a depressing or enlightening way to see the world? Discuss.

22

- Do you think Jasmine's reaction to the turtle incident is justified? Explain.
- 'I couldn't leave it without a mum. It wouldn't survive.' The conversation that follows is awkward — who do you think is to blame for this?

21

- What makes Dustin think it's Terri Pavish in the cinema? What parts of her does he focus on?
- Dustin believes he's attracted to Terri Pavish's 'liberating speed' and thinks 'she's as slippery and anonymous as he wishes he could become'. Do you believe this is what Dustin is drawn to? Or is there something else?
- '... like a rival in a game of hide-and-seek': what does this suggest about Terri Pavish?
- Dustin likens Terri Pavish to a phantom. Are there any other phantoms in Dustin's life?
- 'He knows the sensible thing would be ...' Why doesn't Dustin do what is sensible?

20

- How does the wind affect Dustin in this scene?
- Why are there so many numbers in paragraph 2?
- What effect does seeing his reflection have on Dustin?
- The closing paragraph tells us how he feels. Put this into your own words.

Chapter 4 (p. 69)

19

- What does 'perspective' have to do with photography? What other meaning might it have in the novel?
- Do you think Shania is a comical or villainous character?
- 'Something's beginning to make sense.' What's making sense to Dustin?
- List five words to describe Jasmine's character in this scene. Do you know anyone who has these traits?
- Choose a line of dialogue that shows Jasmine cares for Dustin.
- Choose a line of dialogue that shows Dustin's respect for Jasmine.

18

- Why is Dustin surprised to find Nugget in the phys rec room?
- '... sometimes you just gotta hit something,' says Nugget. In your experience do you think this is true?
- Why is Nugget nervous about meeting the German exchange student?
- When Nugget calls Dustin a 'ladies' man', do you think Dustin is more surprised or insulted?
- Why do you think Jasmine is so interested in Ms Clark's pregnancy?
- Are Dustin's actions in the cinema unusual? Explain your reaction to his behaviour.

17

- What does 'superfluous' mean?
- What is Dustin realising about photography in this scene?
- '... there is a woman who's waiting for him to find her.' What does this imply?

16

- How does Dustin feel outside Terri's house? Use five of your own words to describe it.
- Dustin wonders if it's 'love' he's feeling. What do you think? How would you define it?

Chapter 5 (p. 89)

15

- Find a definition of 'narcotic'. How does Terri Pavish have a narcotic effect on Dustin?
- Why is Dustin's outburst so vulgar?
- List three things that lighten Dustin's mood.

14

- 'Trust me,' Jasmine tells Dustin. Does he? Refer to the text to explain your answer.
- Dustin's conscience doesn't stop him from following the surfer — what does?

13

- What might the desert landscape picture be symbolic of?
- Do you think any of the insults on p100/101 are offensive or hurtful? Which ones?

12

- List two examples of personification in the first paragraph.
- Why does Dustin feel shaky?
- Jasmine says, 'It what's supposed to happen.' What does this suggest?
- 'She's not the candy-striped Jasmine anymore.' What has she become?
- What is the effect of using a wave as a metaphor in this scene?
- 'Some objects are not meant to be found ... Jasmine reads the letter and it changes everything.' What do you think might be in the letter? Try writing the first paragraph.

11

- Guess the title of the Ben Lee song that's playing.
- The word 'stalker' is a whisper in Dustin's head. What is his reaction to this?
- The objects in a bedroom and/or kitchen say a lot about a person. List five personality traits Terri Pavish's house says about her.
- 'He knows Terri Pavish is telling lies behind that wine glass ...' What lie has she told?

10

- The water below him is 'speaking its own language'. How does Dustin view the water — with fear or desire? How does he view Terri Pavish — with fear or desire?
- Dustin watches the indicator on the Ducati. How does he internalise this?
- Select one sentence that tells you Dustin feels powerless.
- 'The river is wide here and dark...' How would you describe the atmosphere of this setting?
- 'He watches her float, and he sinks into the earth...' Explain the effect of this juxtaposition.
- Why is Dustin more confident now than at other times?
- What is Dustin afraid of? What is Terri Pavish afraid of?

9

- What is Dustin's mistake?
- What makes Dustin think of his own mother?

8

- Why is Dustin so determined to retrieve the photo from the machine? Explain his reasoning behind the actions that follow.
- 'He doesn't know why he bends to pick one up.' What is this echoing, from Chapter 1?
- What effect does the sea have on Dustin in this section? Why, do you think, it says 'shhh'?
- List two ways that Ken has shown his love for Dustin in this scene.

Chapter 6 (p. 140)

7

- Describe the imagery used to express Ken's emotions.
- 'She was sad too, Dustin.' Do you think Dustin is 'sad'? Discuss.
- Why do you think Jasmine is at Dustin's house?

6

- Why is Dustin so upset at seeing the photos of Jasmine?
- What is Nugget's confession?

5

- What effect does the Honda motorbike have on Dustin?

4

- One of Jasmine's phone messages says, 'It's not your fault...' What isn't Dustin's fault?

3

- What happened to Dustin's mother?

2

- What is Terri Pavish's reaction to the events? What is Dustin's?

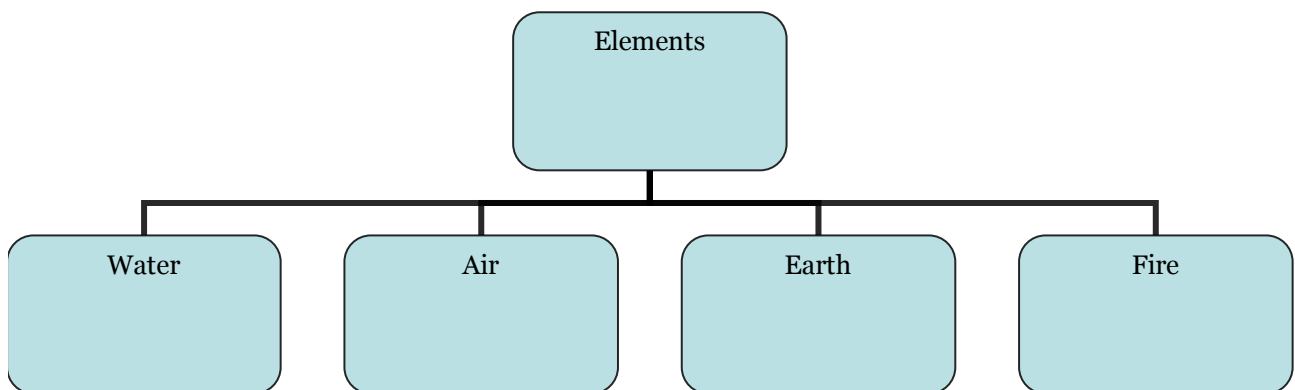
C. After Reading

The following questions can be used to stimulate debate, research and/or essay writing.

1. What is the novel saying about memory? Do you agree? Do you think photos help us to remember accurately, or do they alter our recollections?
2. How does the novel portray female characters?
3. The 4 key characters can be seen to represent each of the Elements below. Determine which character represents which, with a brief explanation in the boxes below.
4. Which character do you empathise with most? Why do you think this is so? Is this influenced by your context or the writing techniques?
5. List things that are 'dangerous' in the novel. Put them in (your) order of most to least dangerous. Prepare and present a persuasive speech on one of these dangers, warning students your age. Why do you think Dustin isn't attracted to Jasmine in the same way that she is to him? Research: where does attraction come from, and what causes it?
6. Through the course of the novel, Dustin's perception and understanding of photography transforms. Track this on a flowchart, annotating it with key scenes and naming who/what influences him.
7. *ShutterSpeed* is written in the present tense. What is the benefit (if any) of using this tense? Did it influence your reading of the novel? Have you read any other texts written in present tense? Discuss.
8. Are there any heroes or villains in the novel? If so, name them and explain how they fit their roles.
9. Is there a character that conforms to a particular stereotype? If yes, explain the stereotype and the benefit of using it in the story.
10. Do you think the writer is trying to convey a moral message to the reader? What might those morals be?
11. How do you think the writer's values differ from Dustin's values?
12. 'Twenty-four hours in a day is too much to dedicate to reality anyway.' Discuss the relevance of this quote to the themes of the novel, and your opinion on the advantages and disadvantages of escapism.
13. At what point (if any) do you think Dustin crosses a 'moral threshold'? Identify this turning point, and explain how it changes everything.
14. There are some things in life that we can control, and some things that are out of our hands. Like all of us, Dustin has control over some aspects of his life, but not all. Complete the boxes below, then explore this power and responsibility. Do you think Dustin gives up his control, or guards it too tightly?

Creative Writing Activities

1. Write a report card that Nugget, Dustin, Jasmine or Terri Pavish may have received in year 8.
2. Gaps and silences: Ken could be seen as a 'silent' character — there is much we don't know about him. Create a short flashback scene that further develops his character.
3. Personification: Try writing an extract (a page) from the perspective of an object (eg, motorbike, mountain-bike, photo processor, turtle, peppermint tree). Describe your account of what unfolds.
4. Using pictures from a magazine, create a collage/photo of what you think Dustin/Jasmine/Terri Pavish looks like.
5. On page 44 there is a reference to Jasmine causing trouble in a French class in Year 8, '... from telling Ms Tartufo exactly what she could do with the sautéed garden snails ...' Write the scene as a flashback or a drama script.
6. Also on page 44, there is a reference to the 'boys' spectacular punch-up.' Write this scene as a flashback or drama script.
7. Choose an event from the novel that could be turned into a news story in a local newspaper. Write the story, using quotes, facts and pictures. Use creative licence to add in any missing details.
8. Create a storyboard for a scene of your choosing.
9. Write a diary entry from Jasmine's perspective, at any time of the novel.
10. Write the entire letter that was found in Ken's bedside drawer.



	List of dangers

	Your order: most to least dangerous
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

Things Dustin *can* control:

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Things Dustin *can't* control:

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