

# MY SISTER LIVES ON THE MANTELPIECE

## Thematic connections

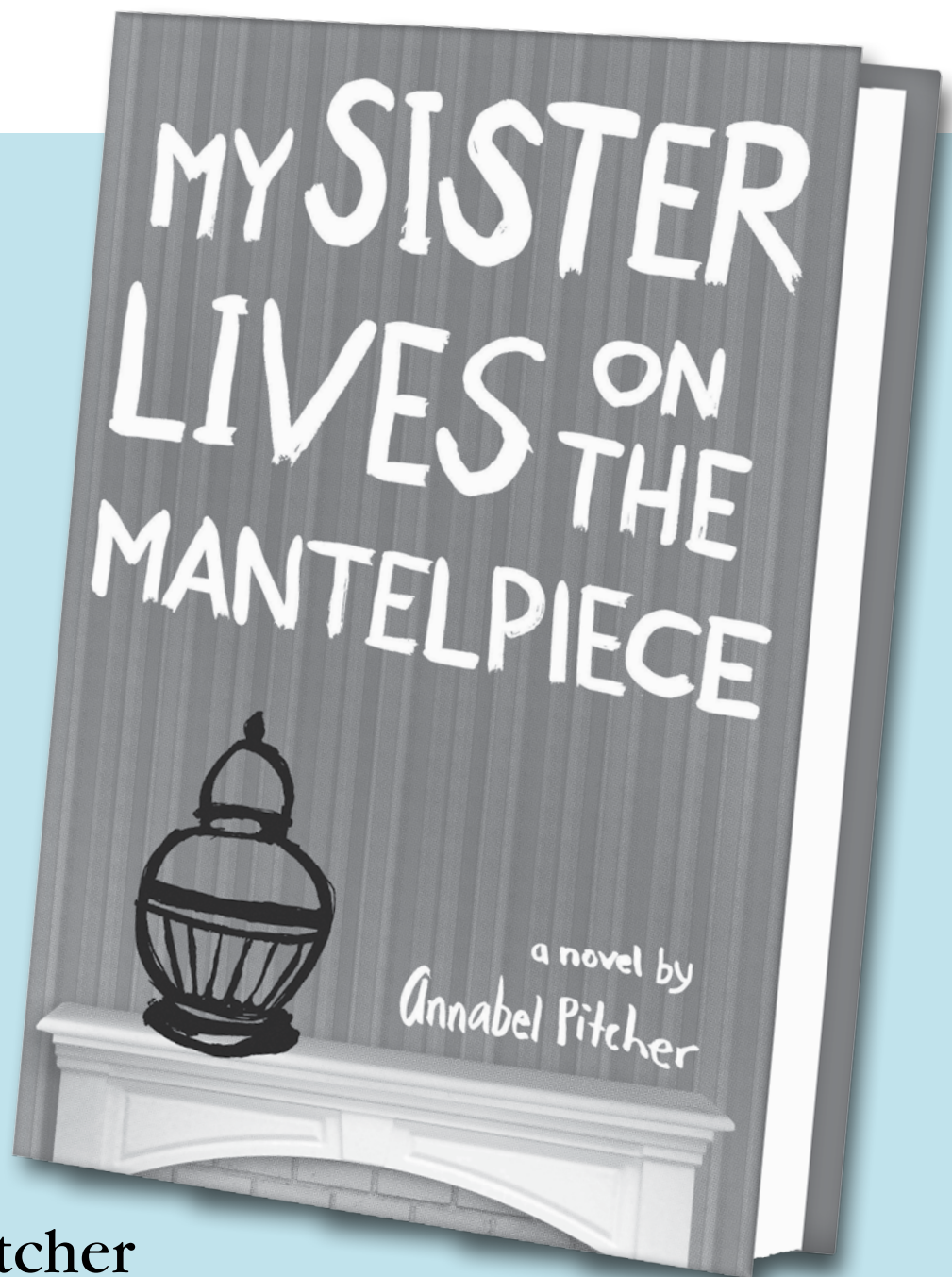
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Friendship
- ❖ Grief

## Curriculum connections

- ❖ English
- ❖ Religion
- ❖ World Events

Ages 12 & up

★ “Realistic, gritty and uplifting.”  
—Kirkus

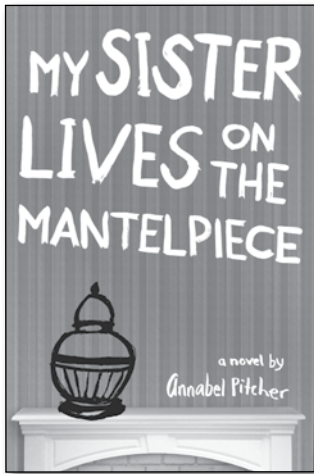


By Annabel Pitcher

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. October 7<sup>th</sup> was the day when Rose Matthews was killed instantly by a terrorist bombing but was it also the date that the rest of her family began to die slowly? Why or why not?
  2. Why did Jamie's mother leave? What else could she have done? What else should she have done?
  3. The attacks depicted in this novel are fictional but London has long been a target for terrorism. Discuss some of the aims of terrorists. Discuss their tactics. What are the short effects of terrorism? What are the long terms effects?
  4. Notice the usual way that dialogue is treated in this novel. Why do you think the author used this method? In what way does it help readers get inside Jamie's head?
  5. Why don't Jamie and Jas talk about their mother's affair or their father's drinking?
  6. "We're the same," Sunya says to Jamie (page 32). What does she mean by this? Do you agree? What are the important similarities in their lives? What are the significant differences?
  7. Rose is remembered as the perfect child by her parents, but how does Jas remember her twin sister? How does Jamie?
  8. Jamie was accustomed to be being told, "You must miss Rose or I bet you miss Rose" (page 99), but Sunya was the first to ask him if he missed Rose. How does he reply? How does she respond? Why does he feel so relieved?
  9. Every year Jamie's father tries to sprinkle Rose's ashes into the sea. Why does he always fail? When is he finally able to let go of her remains? Why won't Jamie let his father bury all of them?
  10. Jamie's father blames all Muslims for his daughter's death. Why? How much does he know about Islam? What does he know about Sunya and her family? What does Jamie know about them?
  11. Jamie studies the Ten Commandments at Ambleside Church of England Primary School, where religious education is an important part of the curriculum. What is the fifth commandment? What is the ninth commandment? Why does Jamie find it difficult to honor them both?
  12. When Jamie tells Sunya about Rose's death, he doesn't cry, and neither does Sunya. What do they do instead? Why?
  13. Jas normally dresses in black and dyes her hair pink, but she changes her look before going to Manchester. How does she alter her appearance? Why does she? What song does she sing? To whom does she sing it?
  14. Roger is Jamie's cat, but he originally belonged to Rose. What happens to Roger? How does Jamie respond? Why?
  15. Sunya usually covers her hair with a hajib. Why does she pull it down at the end of the novel?
  16. Jamie won't take off his Spider Man t-shirt, even after it tears and starts to smell. Why? What does he find out about the shirt in Manchester? When does he stop wearing the t-shirt? Who does he become without it?
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## about the book

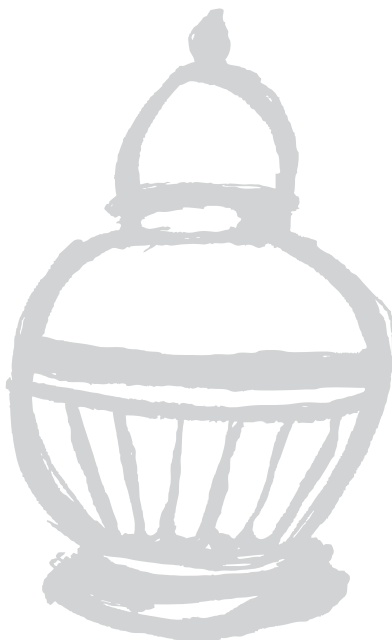


**MY SISTER LIVES ON  
THE MANTELPIECE**  
by Annabel Pitcher

978-0-316-17689-7

Jamie was only five when his sister Rose was killed in a London terrorist bombing. He barely remembers her, but she's still up on the mantelpiece—at least, most of her ashes are—and his family is still torn apart by grief. When Jamie's mother runs off with another man, his father takes his two surviving children to the countryside for a “fresh start.” Jamie is as miserable as ever, at least at first. Then he is befriended by Sunya, another outsider with a wide open imagination. Trouble is, she's a Muslim, and Jamie's father blames all Muslims for the death of Rose.

Told with a pitch perfect blend of innocence and insight, this timely debut novel is the story of a young boy's struggle to make sense of a tragedy that keeps tearing his family apart.



## about the author



Photo @ Kate Christer

Annabel Pitcher was traveling with her husband when the idea for this novel came to her in the middle of the night, and she spent the rest of the trip writing it down on notepads in one country after another. A graduate of Oxford University, she lives in England.



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