

BEYOND CAROUSEL

BRENDAN RITCHIE

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YEAR LEVEL: Y10–12

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY: Sustainability

ABOUT THE BOOK

All of us wanted to survive whatever was happening. Maybe even escape it somehow. But more than that – we wanted to know what it was.

Nox, Taylor and Lizzy have just escaped a nightmare. After months of being trapped inside a shopping centre they are finally free. Free to roam the streets of Perth and free to solve the mystery of what happened outside the doors of Carousel.

But the city is not like it once was, and the dangers are far from over. Loots lurk in the empty streets and packs of dogs are never far behind. Saving those they love will mean risking everything – and time is running out.

This is the thrilling sequel to *Carousel*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brendan Ritchie is a writer and filmmaker from Fremantle, Western Australia. In 2015 he published his Inky Award nominated debut novel, *Carousel*, and was awarded a PhD in Creative Writing. In addition to writing, Brendan spends his time lecturing across a range of creative disciplines.

THEMES

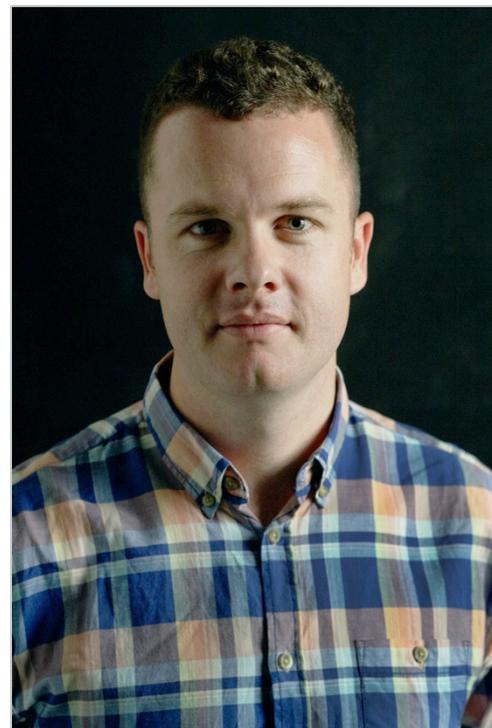
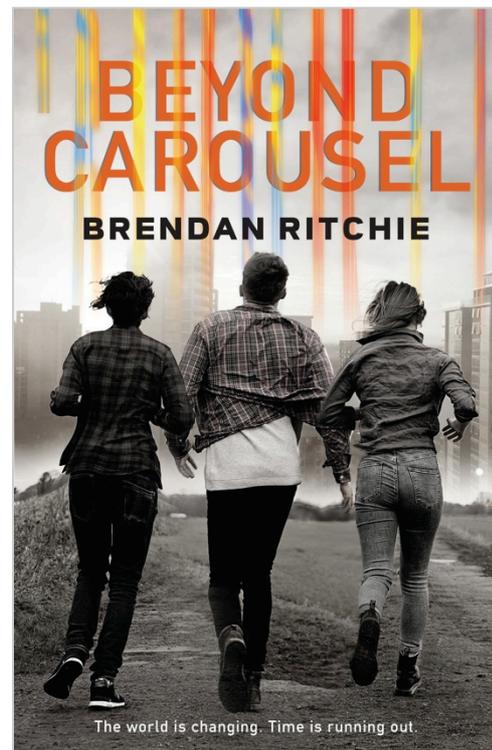
- Art and creativity
- Personal identity
- Popular culture
- Youth
- Consumerism
- Post-apocalyptic future
- Survival
- Fate
- Memory
- Friendship
- Family

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y10–12 English

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: www.brendanritchie.com
- Author's twitter: twitter.com/brendanritchie



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Before commencing *Beyond Carousel*, discuss with a partner what you imagine Nox, Lizzy and Taylor might find now that they are finally free of the shopping centre. Write a one-page explanation of why you think they were trapped in Carousel (e.g. alien invasion, natural disaster, nuclear war etc.). Share predictions as a class.
2. How do Nox, Taylor and Lizzy each react to their newfound freedom in the opening chapters? Compare and contrast their mentality and coping mechanisms during their stay in the Perth hills.
3. How is an atmosphere of tension and unease created as the trio explore post-Carousel Perth? What literary devices does Ritchie utilise to build suspense and a sense of foreboding?
4. ‘... people project a lot ... onto famous people. In their minds they twist them from what they are, into what they need them to be.’ (p. 93) What do you think Lizzy means? Give an example.
5. Do you think Nox is a ‘Patron’ or an ‘Artist’? Are these labels important? Why/why not?
6. *Henry called himself an inventor rather than an artist – if the two things were separable.* (p. 311)
 - a. How are the two interrelated?
 - b. How is the ‘creative impulse’ represented throughout this novel?
 - c. In what conditions does creativity appear to germinate?
7. For each of the characters listed below, answer the following:
 - a. What creative medium does the character choose?
 - b. What are the stages of this character’s creative process? Consider when and where they find inspiration, how they let their ideas incubate, their moments of revelation, and finally – their creative output.

• Nox	• Tommy	• Kink & Kink
• Taylor	• Georgia	• Cara Winters
• Lizzy	• Henry	• Kirk
8. Why do you think Georgia had left the Collective despite describing it as amazing (pp. 140–1)?
9. What does Cara Winters’s entrapment (p. 206) suggest about the relationship between fame and creativity?
10. Do you identify as an artist? If so, what mediums do you like to use? What appeals to you about these particular mediums? What does your own creative process look like?
11. What do you believe is the value of art in our society? Consider Ed Carrington’s speech on pp. 162–4.
12. *I smiled at the thought ... that amid all of the pompous talk of Artists and Residencies, there were simple, defining events like a fisherman and a cleaner having a drink in a fancy bar. I was convinced that these things kept the earth spinning more than anything.* (p. 178) What do you think Nox means?
13. What do we learn about Nox from his memories at the Auroraport (p. 233, p. 235)?
14. What do you think Nox’s novel might be about? What makes you think this? Discuss in pairs.
15. What recurring symbols or motifs do you notice in *Beyond Carousel* and what might they represent?
16. *A kid was flipping a skateboard around a ramp outside Target.* (p. 357)
 - a. Who is the kid on the book’s final page? How does this revelation make you feel?
 - b. What do you think happened to the Artists that didn’t make it back to their portals by September second with their Residency work?
 - c. What do you think happened to people like Georgia’s friends on the boat, who perished during the Prix de Perth? Did they really die or will they return too?

Creative writing

1. Write a short story of 2000–3000 words that is set in a *futuristic artist utopia* (p. 171) where *anarchy reigns and self-expression is regarded above all else.* (p. 83)
2. Write a diary entry from the point of view of either Taylor or Lizzy reflecting upon their first few days at the Collective. What experiences and first impressions might they have?
3. *Our callings can be aloof and mysterious, but they always call.* (p. 201) Write a personal essay about what you think your vocation may be. What calls to you? Where do you see yourself in ten years? Create an action plan of steps you could take to reach this goal.
4. Rewrite your favourite chapter in the novel from another character’s point of view (i.e. not Nox’s).
5. Write the first three chapters of a potential third novel about Nox and his friends. Set your story two years after the ending of *Beyond Carousel*. You may do this from any character’s point of view.

6. Research the Prix de Rome and write a 2000–3000 word piece of historical fiction from the point of view of a French artist competing in this event in the mid 1800s.
7. Write a critical book review of *Beyond Carousel* 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?

Essay questions / oral presentation topics

1. Evaluate the validity of the following claim: 'Each of the characters in *Beyond Carousel* faces a crisis of personal identity.'
2. Critically analyse how the theme of fate is portrayed in the novel.
3. Critically analyse how 'the creative process' is depicted in the novel.
4. Evaluate the validity of the following claim: '*Beyond Carousel* can most accurately be labelled as science fiction.'
5. Consider representations of masculinity and femininity in *Beyond Carousel*. Does the novel challenge or reinforce traditional gender stereotypes?
6. Why is creativity important to you? How do you find ways to be creative in your everyday life? Write a personal essay.

Creative arts

1. Create your own artwork inspired by Brendan Ritchie's *Beyond Carousel*. You may use whichever medium/s call to you. You may like to explore some of the key themes of the novel through this artwork (e.g. fate, survival, friendship, creativity, imagination, identity, resilience). Hold a class exhibition inviting family, friends and the wider community.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Your books, Carousel and Beyond Carousel, both have a dark edge. They contemplate a post-apocalyptic world where only artists survive. What inspired these stories? And why artists?

I've always been a fan of post-apocalyptic literature. As well as being tense and engaging, books in this genre can tell us a lot about our society: what we value; who we can rely upon; where we're headed. What I wanted to do within *Carousel* and *Beyond Carousel* is explore the genre in a new way. Instead of the fighters we often see as the central characters within post-apocalyptic literature, my books focus on artists. I have always found artists pretty fascinating – particularly the famous and established ones.

Wise and brooding songwriter Ed Carrington, aka the Curator, is a brilliant character. So is manic Hollywood actress Cara Winters. Do they draw on real people?

Ed is probably my favourite character in *Beyond Carousel*. He's the focal point for a lot of frustration and anger within the characters, but also a lot of hope. I like the way that Ed eventually does become a saviour, but maybe not in the way you might have expected.

I always imagined Ed in the Paul Kelly mould. An everyday kind of guy, but with an ability to cut through to the masses. I find his music so simple and elegant, but also very true. I think Paul Kelly is almost the unofficial voice of our nation, as is Ed in this fictional world.

As for Cara, she's kind of an amalgamation of a few Hollywood actresses. I'm really interested to hear who people happen to see in her.

Beyond Carousel has a strong cinematic quality. To what degree does your experience as a filmmaker inform your writing?

I think that filmmaking and screenwriting reinforce the importance of economy – the ability to communicate a lot in a small amount of time. There is no doubt that this often finds its way into my prose. I'll catch myself trying to describe a setting or character in a single sentence, then reminding myself to relax and be expansive where necessary.

My filmmaking experience does help when it comes to transitioning from scene to scene. The ability to know when to end a scene, and begin another, and also how to execute this transition, can be difficult. Done well, it really helps keep the reader engaged.

What do you hope your readers will take away from Beyond Carousel?

I think *Beyond Carousel* contains a positive message about hope and identity. The idea that figuring out who we are in life, and what we're supposed to be doing, can occur in a random and unexpected way. This was certainly the case for Nox.

I also hope it will trigger readers to consider the importance of art within our society. *Beyond Carousel* suggests that when it comes to the crunch, art is as integral to our survival as anything within society.

What's next for Brendan Ritchie?

I have a few ideas floating around for future novels. I would like to write about Esperance, where I spent my childhood. Also about the life of an indie filmmaker struggling to build a career. And then there are a few more unusual stories nagging away at me, in the vein of *Carousel*.

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