

WILDLIFE

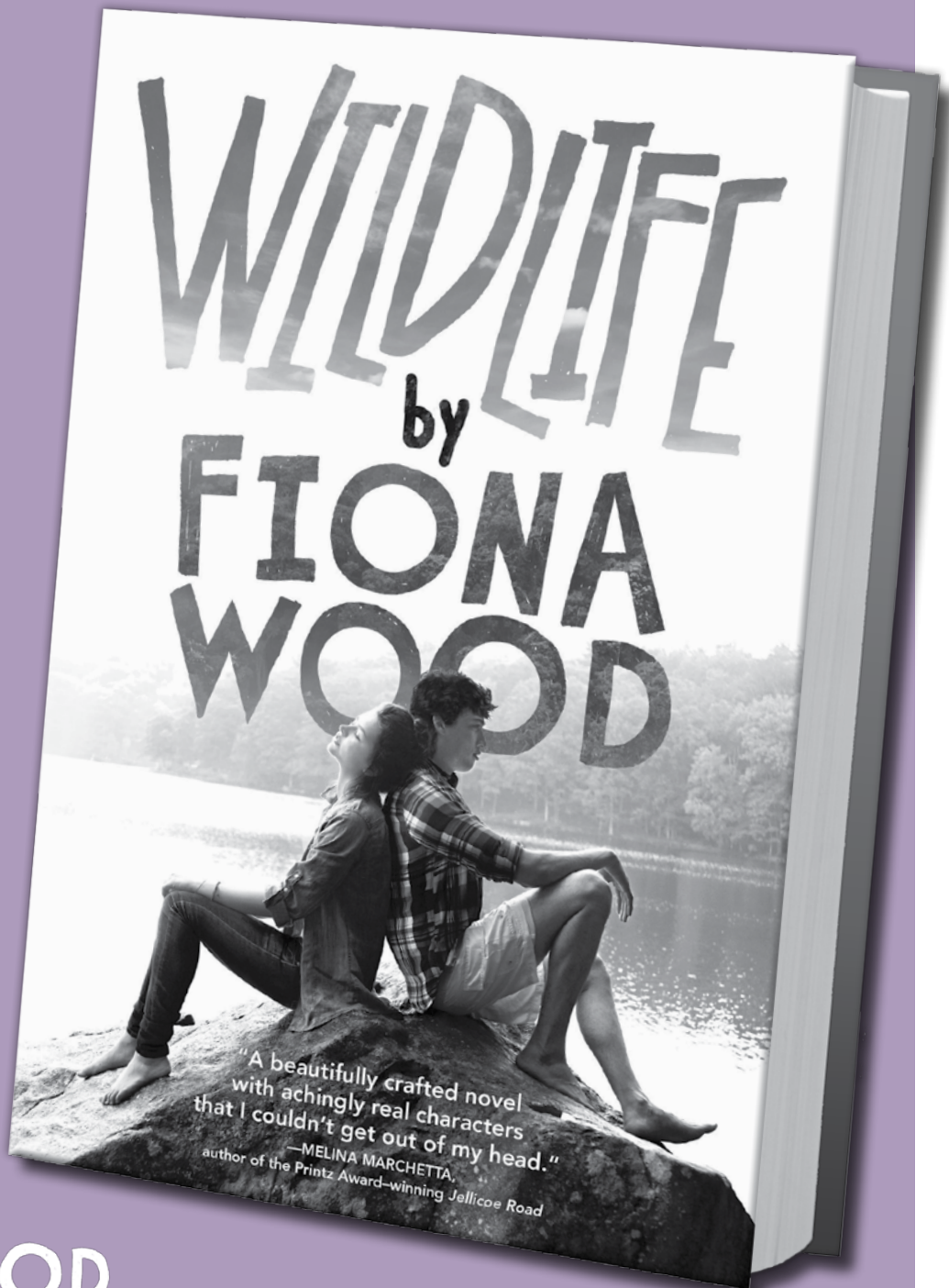
Curriculum connections

- ❖ English
- ❖ Psychology

Ages: 15 & Up

Thematic connections

- ❖ Romance
- ❖ Friendship
- ❖ Betrayal
- ❖ Grief

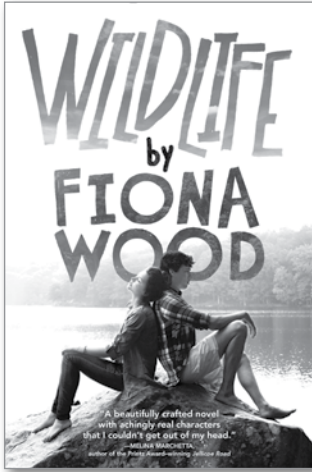


by
FIONA WOOD

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What was Sib's self-image before she appeared on a billboard? How does the billboard transform her status at school? Why is Holly so excited about her friend's new reputation?
2. Neither Lou nor Sib is enthusiastic about attending the outdoor education program. What are Lou's major reservations about going into the wilderness? What are Sib's? How does the experience end up transforming both of their lives?
3. "My heart is its own fierce country," Lou writes in one of her first journal entries, "where nobody else is welcome." (Page 9.) Who is she excluding from her heart? Why?
4. Fred is already dead when *Wildlife* begins. What do you learn about his life? Would you have wanted him for a friend? Why or why not?
5. Lou keeps a journal and she also writes letters to Fred. Why does she do both? How do her journal entries differ from her letters?
6. In a letter to Fred, Lou asks: "If I don't always keep you in my mind, won't memory walk away? Or starve to death? Don't memories need maintenance?" (Page 248.) How would you answer her questions? What is the danger of holding on too tightly to memories?
7. Why does Lou resent the psychological counseling she has been given? Should she? How has she benefited from it?
8. Sib is fully aware of Holly's cruel streak, and so are her mother and her friend Michael. Yet she tends to shrug off Holly's nastiness and think of her as a best friend. Why? Would you?
9. What makes Holly so mean? What responsibility do you think her mother bears for Holly's behavior? How would you answer Sib's question: "People aren't their parents, are they?" (Page 206.)
10. Sib and Lou narrate this novel in more or less alternating chapters. Why do you think the author chose this narrative style? How does it deepen your understanding of the characters and their experiences?
11. According to Lou, Ben "is pretty much a sociopath.... You could definitely see him as a CEO or Prime Minister, any job that requires a truly bloodless heart." (Page 192.) What do you think? Is Lou being too hard on Ben? Is she being too hard on CEOs and Prime Ministers?
12. *Wildlife* is set in Australia, but could it just as easily been set in America? Why or why not?
13. "Being a virgin," Sib writes, "makes me feel inexperienced, childish, gauche, uncool." (Page 29.) Why do you think she feels that way? After she has sex, does her self-image change?
14. Trying to get under Lou's skin, Holly says: "Oh, I get it, you're a zombie." (Page 167.) But instead of being rattled, Lou agrees, then adds: "You are insightful and perceptive." Is Holly insightful and perceptive? Is Lou a kind of zombie?
15. Michael loves Sib, but her feelings for him are more complicated. What does she like about him? What makes her uncomfortable? Could they be happy as a romantic couple? Why or why not?
16. Three other girls share Bennett House with Holly, Sib, and Lou. What role do they play in this novel? What is Lou's opinion of Pippa, Annie, and Eliza? What is Sib's?
17. Sib and Lou's friendship builds slowly. What are their initial impressions of each other? Over time, what strengths do they find in each other? What weaknesses?
18. All the students in the program are studying *Othello*, Shakespeare's tragedy about jealousy and betrayal. Desdemona is the play's innocent victim. Iago is its scheming manipulator. Who are their counterparts in *Wildlife*?

about the book



WILDLIFE

by Fiona Wood

HC 978-0-316-24209-7

Also available in downloadable audio and ebook formats

During a semester in the wilderness, 16-year-old Sib expects the tough outdoor education program and the horrors of dorm life, but friendship drama and an unexpected romance with popular Ben Capaldi? That will take some navigating.

New girl Lou has zero interest in fitting in, or joining in. Still reeling from a loss that occurred almost a year ago, she just wants to be left alone. But as she witnesses a betrayal unfolding around Sib and her best friend Holly, Lou can't help but be drawn back into the land of the living.

Fans of Melina Marchetta, Rainbow Rowell, and E. Lockhart will adore this endearing and poignant story of first love, true friendship, and going a little bit wild.

- ★ “With exceptional candor, honesty, and nuance, Wood tells a heartening and compelling story of the importance of agency, self-confidence, and true friendship.” —*Booklist*
- ★ “[Sib & Lou’s] voices reverberate with honesty, vulnerability, and deep emotions, and will leave a lasting impression on readers.” —*Publishers Weekly*
- ★ “Lou and Sib relate losing their virginity with such refreshing candor that *Wildlife* validates the sexuality and sexual needs of girls everywhere.” —*School Library Journal*

about the author



Photo © Giulia McGauran

Fiona Wood lives in Melbourne, Australia. *Wildlife* is her first novel to be published in the United States. She has worked as a screenwriter for more than 10 years, and her first novel, *Six Impossible Things*, was short-listed for the Children’s Book Council of Australia Book of the Year (Older Readers). Visit her online at www.FionaWood.com.



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