



# Seventeen & Gone Teacher's Notes

Written by Nova Ren Suma

Published by Hardie Grant Egmont, 2013

## Summary:

Seventeen-year-old Lauren has discovered an unusual, disturbing skill: the ability to connect with missing girls.

When Lauren finds the missing poster for Abigail Sinclair, Lauren subsequently finds herself haunted by Abigail's presence. She grows obsessed with finding out what has happened to the missing girl. Guided by Abigail's voice, Lauren returns to the camp where Abigail was last seen missing, and despite the warnings of a man who introduces himself as Officer Heaney, begins an investigation of her own into the girl's disappearance.

But Abigail's isn't the only voice that Lauren begins to hear. She finds herself haunted by a cacophony of voices and memories, all of them belonging to seventeen-year-old girls who have gone missing under a range of different circumstances; one of these is her erstwhile neighbour and babysitter Fiona, who went missing when Lauren was a small child. Lauren begins to struggle under the responsibility that she feels for these girls—all of whom could very easily be her—and becomes increasingly consumed by the idea that she must find out what has happened to them.

Her obsession sees her withdrawing into herself, pushing away her boyfriend Jamie and her mother, with whom she's always been very close. However, things reach a crescendo when Lauren begins to suspect that her mother is not who she claims to be; not long after, Lauren, overwhelmed by a vision of the missing girls, finds herself coming to in a mess of blood and broken glass.

Lauren's mother rushes her to a psychiatric hospital, where Lauren, having had a likely psychotic break, is taken in for treatment. Given Lauren's recent experiences and her father's history of mental illness, the possibility that Lauren might be suffering from schizophrenia is raised. Though on medication for her condition, Lauren continues to be guided by visions of Fiona, whom she believes will help her find the missing Abigail at long last.



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Compelled by her visions of Fiona, Lauren escapes from the hospital and returns to the campground from where she believes Abigail went missing. Upon Fiona's command, she lights a fire, believing that this will help entice out the missing girls. Lauren and Jamie see a man, the same man who has earlier introduced himself as Officer Heaney, enter the nearby maintenance shed. Lauren later finds Abby's wallet in the shed, and this piece of evidence is key to helping crack upon Abigail's missing person case. Lauren is subsequently arrested for arson and put into care in the psychiatric hospital; meanwhile, the police find Abigail and arrest for kidnapping the man who has been pretending to be Officer Heaney.

Three months later, Lauren returns home. Her mother speaks to her about her actions involving contacting the friends and families of the missing girls, telling her that although the girls' voices in her head weren't real, their lives and situations are, and that she mustn't interfere any further. Nevertheless, Jamie has been helping Lauren find out what has happened to the other missing girls, giving her closure on the situation. Fiona, however, remains a part of Lauren's consciousness: Lauren accepts that she'll never leave, that her condition will never be entirely under control.



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## Style of telling:

The novel is for the most part written in the first person and the past tense—although it shifts to the present tense on page 256, upon Lauren's hospitalisation—but in a quiet, measured manner rather than the heavily colloquial style that is usual for contemporary YA. The relatively sober style lends weight and credence to Lauren's experience, making us trust her and believe her version of events; this narrative style helps to lend additional weight and impact to Lauren's account of her psychotic break.

The text's close first person narration means that initially Lauren's experiences appear to have paranormal/supernatural origins: we get the sense that she's channelling spirits and voices in the manner of a psychic medium. Although certain actions, such as her withdrawing from her mother and boyfriend, raise questions about her behaviour, it's only later on in the text that we begin to realise that Lauren's experiences may be, to at least some degree, explained by an onset of mental illness.

The text is interspersed with dossiers of the missing girls whose voices Lauren hears in her head, as well as detailed descriptions of who these girls are and the circumstances behind their disappearances. These are written in a matter-of-fact, third-person manner; these facts are used by Lauren as a basis for creating the imaginary scenarios regarding the girls' lives and their subsequent disappearances.

The latter part of the book and its shift from the ostensibly supernatural to the often hallucinatory undermines much of the prior narrative, making the reader question much of what Lauren, who is revealed to be an unreliable narrator, has told us. However, the fact that Lauren finds Abby's wallet-- not to mention finds out that, as in her visions, Abby is still alive--offers a further ambiguity: despite her mental illness, Lauren knows more about Abby's situation than should be possible if everything that has happened is merely a hallucination.



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## Characters:

**Lauren:** Conscientious and deeply empathetic, Lauren comes across as popular and well-rounded. However, an onset of what is revealed to be psychosis sees her hearing voices and “channelling” the spirits of missing girls, whom she begins to feel responsible for. The psychosis sees her pushing away her mother and boyfriend and mistrusting those around her; her single-minded focus on the missing girls also affects her participation at school.

**Abigail Sinclair:** A seventeen-year-old girl reported missing from a summer camp, Abigail appears to Lauren as a hallucination, and becomes the driving force in Lauren’s psychosis.

**Jamie:** Lauren’s boyfriend and a generally kind and generous individual, Jamie is willing to set aside his misgivings to support Lauren. There are a handful of occasions in the book where Jamie is painted as impatient and passive aggressive, but as we learn more about Lauren and her psychosis, it’s difficult to tell whether this is truly the case, or whether Lauren’s paranoia is influencing her perception of Jamie. Notably, Jamie continues to be supportive of Lauren even after her extended stay in the psychiatric ward.

**Lauren’s mother:** Lauren’s mother is incredibly open with her daughter, treating her more like a friend than a child. A single mother, she is currently juggling work and study, having gone back to university to study psychology.

**Fiona:** Lauren’s childhood babysitter and neighbour. Lauren was in Fiona’s care when the latter was taken away by two men; Fiona has not been seen since. A sometimes cruel, bullying individual, Fiona appears to Lauren as a somewhat malevolent hallucination.

**Rain:** a schoolmate of Lauren’s, Rain is intrigued by the paranormal and the supernatural, and is drawn to Lauren, perhaps seeing her as some sort of mystical individual. Where Lauren’s boyfriend Jamie provides a rational voice, Rain’s offers a pro-supernatural counterpoint.



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## Before reading:

The book's premise involves the disappearances of teenage girls and the different circumstances in which girls go missing. There have been many such cases in the news recently, and very often the blame around these disappearances/crimes is shifted on to the victims.

- \* Why might a seventeen-year-old girl such as Lauren feel empathy towards these missing girls?
- \* Why does the idea of girls going missing consume her?
- \* How are disappearances and kidnappings/abductions reported in the media?
- \* What kind of euphemisms are used to describe these events? (e.g. "gone missing") Why are these euphemisms used?
- \* Are there certain types of victims upon whom the media seems to focus to a greater degree?





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## While reading:

**Page 2:** *"There are girls like Abby, who rode off into the night. And girls like Shyann, who ran, literally, from her tormentors and kept running. Girls like Madison, who took the bus down to the city with a phone number snug in her pocket and stars in her eyes. Girls like Isabeth, who got into the car even when everything in her was warning her to walk away. And there are girls like Trina, who no-one bothered looking for; girls the police will never hear about because no-one cared enough to report them missing."*

-What kind of personalities/backgrounds do these descriptions evoke? Do you think that people would view the circumstances behind the different girls' disappearances in a different way? Why do you think this is? Why do you think the author has presented us with such an array of different people (e.g., to show that these disappearances are not the result of any one thing that a particular girl is doing, but rather that these disappearances occur outside an individual's agency)

**Page 3:** *"And I'm pretty sure that's how it will happen to me."*

-This sentence implies widespread, systemic violence against women.

**Page 7:** *"Her photocopied picture had been duplicated too many times for much detail to show through the ink on ink, so with all those layers smudging away her face, and with the snow spatter and the fade, she could have been anybody really, any girl."*

- This sentence highlights how easily the girl in the image could be Lauren, or any other girls; it also highlights how easily victims can blur into each other, and how readily we dehumanise people into mere statistics and "cases"/"incidents". (The flip side is that this also applies to "wanted" posters—very generic descriptions are often used, often to detrimental, scaremongering effect.)

**Page 8:** *"packing tape that had been wound and wound around the pole to keep her from falling face-first into the snow, or from getting carried away on a gust of exhaust and escaping into the traffic leading to the New York State Thruway"*

-Why does Lauren use the word "her" to describe the poster? Also, later, Lauren constructs a lengthy, personal character sketch of Abby. How does this contrast with the basic descriptive text (age, physical appearance etc) on a "missing" poster?



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**Page 8:** *"I saw that some Good Samaritan (or a creeper disguising himself as a Good Samaritan)"*

-What does it say about Lauren that she immediately reconsiders her description of a person as a "Good Samaritan", turning her thoughts to the worst?

**Page 13:** *"Nothing she could have worn on that night would have made a difference. Not these shorts or another pair that were longer or less red. Not a bathing suit. Not a bear costume. Not a short skirt. Not a burqa."*

-Very often people blame victims for the crimes committed against them, using their clothing or state of mind as a reason for this blame. What is the narrator saying here about blame and responsibility?

**Page 29:** *"I'd been the girl Jamie had fallen for. Whoever that was. It wasn't so long ago, but she and I were different people now. He and I were different, too, but I don't want to forget all the good things about him."*

-Jamie is one of the few males that is portrayed in a (generally) positive light in this book: most men are cast as potential perpetrators of violence. However, compare this description with Lauren's eventual break-up with Jamie, where he behaves coldly and cruelly; as well as the point in the book where he drives off and leaves Lauren on her own.

**Page 31:** *"It was starting then, my need for distance...Something so much more important was crowding out all thoughts of him."*

-This is Lauren's first acknowledgement that something is not quite right with her.

**Page 36:** *"'Hey, c'mere, hey, Lauren.' He was grabbing for my arm, or my hip, or some part of my body, to pull me closer. But he missed me in the dark, and I made it past him and away from the fire pit and headed down the hill. The decline forced speed on me, and I started running."*

-The dynamics here recall that of a kidnapping/assault. Why is Lauren running? Why do you think she feels scared and threatened?



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**Page 46:** *"All those stars: the very same ones I was seeing almost five months later. This was what Abby remembered. She liked returning to it to keep herself from thinking of what came after."*

-How is the stars imaged used to link Lauren and Abby together? What does it imply about the universality of human experience? In addition, does it say something about the way that people try to cope with horrible events?

**Page 51:** *"It was Abby's grandparents, her legal guardians, who said she ran away – that's what they told camp officials and the police – and that's why there was no urgency to propel anyone to keep searching"*

-How might Abby's circumstances have been different if her grandparents had come to different conclusions? What does this imply about the danger of jumping to conclusions or making assumptions without knowing the whole truth?

**Page 52:** *"He [the police officer] shook his head like there was nothing that could be done. She'd done it to herself"*

-What do you think about the implication that Abby is at fault for her own disappearance?

**Page 54:** *"Only a few days ago, I would have fought it, leaped to close the distance, said I was sorry. Yet I did no such thing...Something told me not to believe him. And that something was irrational, and that something was unexplainable, and that something had never entered my mind before this night, and yet it was there, related to everyone and anyone."*

-This sort of response is sometimes known as "gut instinct". Do you think that it's important to listen to your gut instinct? Or is it better to apply logic/rationality in a response? Have you ever been in a situation where listening to your gut instinct has helped or hindered you? Why do you think that this instinct exists?

**Page 55:** *"I didn't have him when I needed him, which meant I didn't need him at all. He left me alone so I could be free to find what came next."*

-What do you think about this statement? Do you agree?





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**Page 70:** *"But something changed the last year I knew her, around the time she turned seventeen. I know because my mom said, "Don't take it personally, honey, she's seventeen – that's just how girls are at that age." But were they?"*

-What does Lauren's mother mean by this statement? Do you think that she's right? In addition, do you think that Lauren's mother, who is a generally progressive woman, meant this statement in the way that Lauren interprets it?

-Why do you think that the focus of this book is on girls aged seventeen? Why is seventeen an important age?

**Page 71:** *"But my sometimes-babysitter and longtime next-door neighbour Fiona Burke appeared as innocent as she ever would in the photograph her parents selected for her Missing poster. In it, she had straight teeth and straighter hair, not yet dyed. Her shirt buttons were done all the way up to her neck and there were two pearl earrings fastened in her ears. She wore a blameless smile and sat there on a stool with her hands folded."*

-Fiona is described as "innocent" and as having a "blameless smile" in her missing poster. Why do you think that this photograph of Fiona, and not a photograph featuring her usual goth clothing and makeup, was used on her missing poster?

**Page 84:** *"I could put myself in place of either girl: the witness, willing her not to go, or Abby herself, the wind in her hair, the blur of the road, those last moments of gorgeous freedom."*

-Lauren is demonstrating her huge capacity for empathy here, but at the same time she seems to be creating her own stories/narrative around Abby's disappearance. Do you think there's a danger in making up these sorts of stories—even if it's with good intentions? In addition, have you ever seen this sort of "story-telling" occur in newspaper reporting or journalism? Why do you think that journalists might be tempted to add a personal/storytelling element to their reportage?

**Page 86:** *"I realised he didn't exactly look like he had in Abby's memories...He was less glowy than I remembered, the shimmer of Abby's gaze noticeably absent, making him just some guy standing in a driveway in broad daylight...I found myself wondering about Abby then, about what kind of girl she was..."*

-We begin to see a disconnect between reality and memory here. Is memory ever truly reliable? (See also: Page 94: "Maybe I'd been wrong, I told myself. Maybe the bike had been blue.")



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**Page 90:** *"I questioned all of it, everything about her, for the first time since all this started. And then as quick as the doubt had come, anger replaced it. My insides flipped and seethed. Oh, it had been Abby, haunting me ever since I found her picture on the side of the road. [But] she wasn't communicating with me because I was meant to help her, because out of everyone in the town of Pinecliff, in all of Dutchess County, in this state, in this country, in this world, it had to be me. No. She was fucking with me."*

-Why does Lauren begin to question her "mission"? Do you think that she's right to question it?

**Page 90:** *"ghost or not a ghost, a villain or a victim or a messed-up teenage girl."*

-What does this say about the complexity of human identity, and about our need to put people into simple categories?

**Page 97:** *"But he had a point to make. He entered these terms into the search field: current age: seventeen; sex: female. Then he scrolled through face after face and name after name, to show me. Here was a seventeen-year-old girl who had also run away. Another seventeen-year-old runaway. Another, another, another, all seventeen, all runaways...I was seventeen. I was a girl. Didn't we matter?" See also page 98: police officer: "How old are you, miss? Shouldn't you be in school?"*

-Do you think that Lauren has a point about girls not mattering? Why do these missing girls seem to go unquestioned?

-What is implied by the police officer's question here?

**Page 102:** *"I began to worry for her. Where were her parents?"*

-Why is Lauren worried for the girl? Do you think it's dangerous that Lauren is continually putting herself in a protector role? Why do you think that she's doing this?

**Page 116:** *"The last words Fiona Burke had said to me were Stay quiet, okay? And I think I took that command too literally, as if something would happen if I spoke up or even uttered her name."*

-Failure to speak up for someone is a recurring theme in this book. Do you think that people too often fail to speak up? Why do you think this is?



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**Page 125:** *"The haircut was DIY, it was daring, and it brought out my eyes. Someone else's eyes."*

- Why does Lauren cut her hair? What does this signify? (See also her ending her relationship with Jamie a few pages later)

**Page 128:** *"Of course I wouldn't tell my mom. Once you tuck one secret inside yourself, digging out a little pocket to hold it, you'll find the pocket can be stretched to fit another. And another, and another ... until you've got yourself a whole collection."*

-Do you think that it's dangerous to keep important secrets from your loved ones? Why do you think that people keep secrets?

-Do you think that Lauren's personality is beginning to change? How so? (see also: Page 129: "My skin was tightening against intrusions. My body was pulling in on itself like a knot tied over a knot tied over a knot that would never come undone.")

**Page 130:** *"I saw them for an extended moment, unable to react, as if my mind had been shoved full of socks. Then I blinked and the tub was empty and clean and the lost girls were gone and my mom was calling from the kitchen that I'd have to eat breakfast, now, or I'd be late for school."*

-A chilling contrast of the mundane and the macabre.

**Page 130:** Other girls only engage with Lauren from afar: they talk to her randomly and comment on her. Do you think that this offers a parallel between the girls in the photos and how people judge/assess them at a distance and based on very little information?

**Page 132:** *"The stall was as green as a lime left to grow mould in a fridge drawer. It was cold, not warm."*

- We begin to see an increase in death-themed similes and descriptions as the book progresses.



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**Page 137:** *"He told me how his dad used to hit him until one day, when he was thirteen, he hit him back and got lucky with his aim and bloodied his lip. I told him how my dad disappeared when I was three and a few years ago we thought he was in a homeless shelter down in Texas, but when we called to talk to him he wouldn't come to the phone. Jamie told me how he used to think of suicide sometimes, when he was reading a lot of Camus."*

-Further negative characterisation of the male characters in the book. Note, though, that we read about Jamie "hitting back"--the girls in the book are rarely able to do this.

**Page 139:** *"But he was also a pretty typical seventeen-year-old boy, and you can't expect so much from them."*

-What do you think about Lauren's description of Jamie here? How does this contrast with how boys are often painted as saviours/heroes in much of today's YA fiction?

**Page 142:** *"She told me how none of this would have happened if not for Lila's party, one Natalie wasn't even technically invited to, seeing as she and Lila weren't what could be called friends," says Natalie to Lauren.*

-Is it really the fault of Lila and her party?...or the fault of Paul? Why do we try to place the blame on the victims and their circumstances rather than on the perpetrator.

**Page 157:** *Shyann: "There were enough bad names swirling through her mind that some mornings she looked in a mirror and saw what they saw. How could she not?"*

-Do you agree with Lauren here?

**Page 164:** *"What did Shyann want from me? Only this. Only to tell me her story and be heard."*

-What does this say about the voicelessness/powerlessness of victims?





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**Page 173:** *"At first she ignored him. Then he pulled the car closer, and she happened to take a peek and realised – a glimmer of relief – that it was only someone she knew. Well, sort of. The man's face was familiar; he was from around the neighbourhood. He knew her dad, or was it her brothers? He worked in a store in town, or was he a member of her church? Either way, she'd seen him before, somewhere."*

-The majority of violent personal crimes are committed by people known to the victim—often a close family member or friend. Have students reflect on the fallacy of "stranger danger" vs the much more likely issue of "known dangers".

**Page 174:** *"Only then did she waver. She hadn't done the wrong thing, had she? Did she really know this man? Should she ask his name to be sure? Would that be rude? That would be. So rude. She didn't want to be rude. That's what she was thinking moments before she realised the door had been locked automatically."*

-Elegantly highlights how we (and especially women) are taught to override our gut instincts/worries in the name of social face and politeness. (For a further reflection on "public face", see also: Page 191: "...Abby had made her [Cass] look bad. No other counsellor in the history of Lady-of-the-Pines Summer Camp for Girls had one of her trainees flee in the night like that.")

**Page 188:** *"Making a run for it once a hall monitor spotted you would get you ISS, or in-school suspension. I don't know what never coming back would get you. The chance to never come back?"*

-What do you think Lauren means by this?

**Page 195-6:** *"Within minutes, I could already tell she wasn't the kind of grandmother who'd open her arms to you, who'd remove the cigarette from her mouth to say sweet things and offer you a cookie. She'd let me inside the house, though. At least she'd let me in...She was smoking indoors, windows closed, slowly killing anyone who came near her, and as she tapped the ash I could see the similarity between this plastic-entombed room and the rooms in the house where my dream kept taking me. It was the air. The haze of it. A feathery, caustic mist of lavender-blue."*

-This scene parallels the dream-house with the lost girls that Lauren often dreams about: it suggests that Abby was already lost the moment she went missing because her family does not care enough to look for her.



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**Page 198:** *"Having brown hair wouldn't make it happen; having black hair or yellow hair or green-dyed hair or a shaved head wouldn't keep a girl here, in this world, if she was destined to go. Staying home every day or going out every night. Taking drugs or not taking them. Wearing that or wearing this. Talking to strangers or talking to nobody. Hooking up with boys or hooking up with other girls or saving herself for "the one." There was no way to know. If a girl was meant to go, she just did. I believed that."*

-This is a hugely problematic statement and one that should be challenged.. Although Lauren notes that it's not a girl's actions/looks that are to blame, she implies that it's "fate" at work here, not the actions of a perpetrator. What do you think about this? Do you agree with her? (For contrast, see: Page 320: "Like Isabeth, she got in the car. Even though, like Shyann, she wanted to run off and hide forever in the trees, because her heart was broken. Like Jannah, she went off with someone she thought she could trust. And like Hailey, she was assumed to have run away ... even though all this time she was really missing.")

**Page 212:** *"How heartless it was for a girl to be forgotten and buried before there was even anything of her to put in the ground."*

-Why is it that Lauren only ever refers to girls going missing, and never boys?

**Page 237-9:** *"There was the fact that I didn't know if I could trust my own mother. That was when I saw it on her chest. The hint of red. Bright and searing red. Like a patch of flames...I shouldn't have asked for help, should I? I shouldn't have trusted her. I should have done this on my own. With only myself. And the girls."*

-Lauren's visions start to turn to paranoia—we begin to see her descent into mental illness: the book begins to shift from something that is possibly paranormal over to something dealing with psychosis.

**Page 254:** *"What do you do with a girl who's slit her own wrist with the shards of a mirror? Ask my mother... She'd say you send that girl away. You send her away."*

-Do you agree with Lauren's assessment of her mother's actions?

**Page 256:** the novel shifts from past to present tense at this point. What impact does this have on the voice and feel of the book?



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**Page 275:** *"In another place, in another time, we'd be shamans," the woman whispers with shining, truth-telling eyes as blue as her head. "We'd be gods."*

-What do you think about this statement? Do you think that there's more to Lauren's visions than the doctors would have her believe?

**Page 294:** *"I'm seventeen now, I have been since last month, and I think it must have changed me like it changed Fiona all those years ago. It's made me shrink away from the people in this world who care about me, and obsess over people I've never met in real life."*

-Do you think that Lauren's age is to blame? Or is this further evidence of her mental illness?

**Page 295:** *"I think of the others, their gaping stories without any definable finish. It's better to know, I decide, than to never."*

-Do you agree?

**Page 314:** *"But then I have to answer the questions with more questions: What if that voice calling for help is real?"*

-What do you think about Lauren's assertion here?

**Page 321:** *"How easy it was for the man to get away with taking her and keeping her – because everyone so quickly believed she ran away. It was never questioned, not by anyone who knew her, not by friends or family, not by the girls she spent her summer with, not by the boy she kissed under the stars."*

-What does this say about the way that teenage girls are perceived? Do you think that people's perceptions of girls are different from those of boys?



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**Page 326:** *““These are real girls,” she told me carefully. “Those girls you found online, they are real. With real lives. And real people at home wondering what happened to them. But the part about you knowing the girls, talking to them ... Lauren, sweetie, you know that’s not ...”*

-Do you think that it’s dangerous for people to act like vigilantes in society? Should justice be left to the authorities? Should Lauren have acted differently from how she did?

**Page 329:** *“shouldn’t be joking about it. She doesn’t even want me to say the word in front of her (schizophrenia), though doesn’t she know how an unsaid word (schizophrenia) holds more power the longer it’s kept from touching your tongue?...The concept of a ghost, I can understand; the misfiring synapses of my brain, I can’t. One is outside and apart from me and something I could run from, but the other is me.”*

-Mental illness continues to carry a stigma in our society. What do you think about Lauren’s efforts to come to terms with her psychosis? What kind of challenges do you think that she might face in the future? What does Lauren’s friend Rain’s desire to see her mental illness as some kind of mysticism say about mental illness?

**Page 340:** *“There are no voices. There is no flame-haired visitor on the windowsill waving an arm and giving the finger. There’s just a perfectly normal girl with a boy in her bed and a book on her lap and no hint of what’s kept hidden away in her mind where no-one can see it. There’s a girl. She’s seventeen, and she’s still here.”*

-What do you think is the meaning of this last night? Does it resonate with you? Who does it refer to (Fiona or Lauren)? What does Lauren mean by “still here”?





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## Extended discussion/Classroom activities:

**Page 312:** *"Setting the fires has led me to her, the real girl she is apart from her Missing poster..."*

**Page 320:** *"What was found in that maintenance shed, what I handed over to police, with my descriptions and Jamie's of the man we saw, led to uncover who he was, and where he lived, and what – who – he'd stolen."*

**Page 322:** *"It was my finding the wallet that broke open the case."*

\* Although Lauren's grip on reality seems tenuous at points, she clearly seems to have a connection with Abby: she believes, correctly, that Abby is still alive, even though everyone else has given Abby up for dead. How unreliable is Lauren as a narrator? How much "truth" is there to her visions? Can Abby's case be explained away as mere coincidence, luck or extreme optimism? Or is there more at work here?

\* Contrast the title of the book (Seventeen and Gone) with the final line: "She's seventeen, and she's still here". What do you think is meant by "and gone", and by "still here"? To whom does this apply? And in what sense?

### Activity 1:

Design a missing poster. What kind of information is usually put on a missing poster? What kind of information is usually left out? Is there information that you would exclude or add to your missing poster in order to get across an accurate, personal description of the missing person?

-Who do you think normally designs missing posters? What do you think is the purpose of a missing poster? Do you think that they're effective in the present day? What other channels today might be more effective than a missing poster?

### Activity 2:

*"There were more. So many more. There were more lost girls out there than I'd ever imagined," says Lauren. Contrast this to the line in Peter Pan about the "lost boys" and why there aren't any lost girls: "girls, you know, are much too clever to fall out of their prams."*



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How does Lauren's concept of the "lost girls" relate to that of the "lost boys" in Peter Pan? Discuss this in terms of

- immortality vs never growing up
- "falling out of a pram" vs being taken or kidnapped
- the fairly positive way that the circumstances of the Peter Pan lost boys are portrayed vs the way that the girls in the book are

### Activity 3:

Newspaper analysis. Select or have students select newspaper passages that deal with current crime cases and have them assess the pieces for certain types of language use. Eg: passive vs active constructions, euphemistic verbs, unequal gender/race/class reporting (e.g., describing someone as a "female victim" rather than a "victim"). Have students assess the degree to which certain cases receive far more attention than others and consider why this is.

### Related Reading:

-January First by Michael Schofield/Your Voice in my Head by Emma Forrest (both dealing with mental illness)

-My Happy Life by Lydia Millet (told from the perspective of an unreliable, mentally ill narrator who is systematically disenfranchised)

-Possessed by Niki Valentine (involves a similar ambiguity regarding supernatural possibilities/mental illness).

-The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro (contains an unreliable narrator)