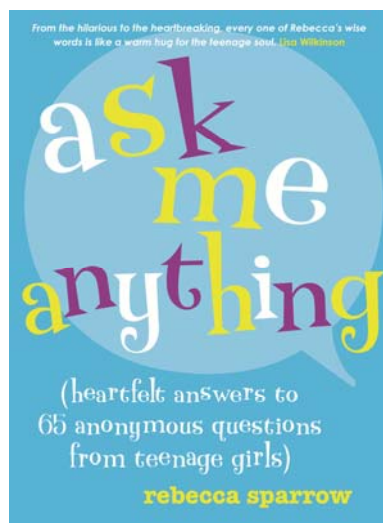


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ASK ME ANYTHING

(HEARTFELT ANSWERS TO 65 ANONYMOUS QUESTIONS FROM TEENAGE GIRLS)

Rebecca Sparrow



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian
in context with the Australian curriculum
(English)

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SYNOPSIS

Ask Me Anything is a tell-all series of questions and answers about everything from friendship to life, love and family. After visiting high schools for many years and answering questions from hundreds of teenagers, Rebecca Sparrow decided to collect anonymous questions from teenage girls – questions they were not willing to ask or share in public. The end result is an honest, sincere and often humorous book that contains some spot-on advice and much wisdom. Most importantly, it reminds readers that they're not alone.

THEMES

- Friendship
- Love
- Family
- Confidence
- Honesty
- Resilience
- Growing Up
- Relationships

WRITING STYLE

Ask Me Anything follows a question-and-answer style. Rebecca Sparrow uses humour and honesty to provide valuable advice to teenage girls. She sometimes refers questions to experts in a particular field, giving collective wisdom about some very common problems. The text is accessible and its authenticity will broadly appeal to readers.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the text, allow students time to write their own anonymous questions and place in a box. Discuss that everyone feels isolated and unsure at times, and that the advice in *Ask Me Anything* will help reassure them.
- Many of the questions in the text are about friendship. Before reading, discuss the hallmarks of a true friend. What are indications that someone is not really your friend? As you read the 'Friendship' section of the text, compile a list or 'What Friendship Is/What Friendship Isn't'. See p14-17 to help this process.
- The book often refers to the film *Mean Girls*. View this film in order to make connections to the *Mean Girls* references in the text. See the notes at the following link for discussion points and activities for this film. www.filmclub.org/assets/pdf/Mean-Girls-Dept-Of-Health-Resource.pdf
- What role does social media play in friendship? How can it ruin friendships? What are some non-negotiable rules about friendship when

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it comes to social media? Visit the eSmart website for tips on managing social media. esmart.org.au

- Why is forgiveness an important part of friendship? Write a journal entry reflecting on a time you forgave a friend, or they forgave you. How did you feel afterwards?
- Popularity is mentioned in *Ask Me Anything*. What is Rebecca Sparrow's advice about being popular?
- Create a brochure about how to be a genuine friend, using advice from *Ask Me Anything* to provide material for your publication.
- What advice would you give a younger student about transitioning to a new friendship group?
- Why does Rebecca Sparrow give advice about knowing when to let a friendship go? Discuss ways in which to do so. Why might you need to let some friendships go?
- As recommended by Rebecca Sparrow, google the movies *Miss Representation* (film and curriculum materials available at therepresentationproject.org/films/miss-representation) and *Killing Us Softly*. Likewise, start following Amy Poehler's *Smart Girls* Facebook page (facebook.com/amypoehlersmartgirls).
- Discuss what it means to be media smart, particularly when it comes to the way in which the mainstream media represents women (p30).
- Why is it important to allow your friends to show their individuality? Do you feel that you have a voice in your friendship group? If not, how can you assert yourself more so that you feel that you're an equal contributor to your group?
- Read excerpts from Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. What are some key lessons from this book? See the following link for a PDF extract: www.yourcoach.be/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Dale-Carnegie-How-to-win-friends-and-influence-people.pdf
- What does Caroline Caldwell mean when she says 'In a society that profits from your self-doubt, liking yourself is a rebellious act' (p31)?
- Does it surprise you to learn that some girls 'are allowed to not want to hang out with you' (p39)? Discuss this statement. How will this actually help you when friendship gets tricky down the track?
- Create a 'Book of Love' for yourself, as mentioned on p42. What are the positive things that you like about yourself? Why is it important to recognise these attributes? Leave pages for others to write what they like about you. Write positive affirmations in their books too.
- What are your avenues for help, either for yourself or for your friends, should they begin to self-harm or change their eating habits?

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- Rebecca Sparrow talks about a 'friendship radar' (p40). What does she mean by this and why is it important that your friendship radar functions well?
- Define bullying (p55). Discuss what it *is* and *isn't*.
- Re-read Adele Blair's tips for becoming more organised (p58-61)? Which of these tips could you actively try in the next few weeks? Track how these help you feel less stressed.
- Turia Pitt shares some of her advice and experience on courage (p65). What can you take from Turia's words? Visit her website for more information. turiapitt.com
- Practise role-playing ways to say no to alcohol, using some of the tips on p79. How important is having a plan beforehand?
- Discuss the explanation of the teenage brain on p83 and why taking drugs or drinking alcohol at a young age is so dangerous.
- On p90-91, Rebecca Sparrow suggests thinking about your strengths and interests when it comes to choosing career paths after school. Read *Go Put Your Strengths to Work* by Marcus Buckingham to help give yourself courage and ideas.
- Invite a guest speaker to your school to address issues of friendship, self-esteem and the impact of drugs and alcohol on the lives of teenagers.
- Compile a list of what 'Love IS' and what 'Love IS NOT'. Compare your list with Rebecca Sparrow's list (p132-134). Why is it important to know the difference?
- Re-read Nina Funnell's advice on saying no to guys (p137-140). Choose your top 5 pointers from this section. Why are these your favourite pieces of advice? Share with a friend.
- Write a journal piece on a time you were not a very good friend to someone. What would you change if you could turn back time?
- Reflect on a time you felt isolated or excluded. How did you handle this situation?
- Choose a question from the book. What advice would you give on this question?
- Choose an aspect from the book – friendship, life, love or family – and write a reflection of your experience in that area. How would you apply Rebecca Sparrow's advice to your own experiences?
- Open the question box with your own class's questions. Read these questions. Were they answered in *Ask Me Anything*? If not, consider contacting Rebecca Sparrow and seeking her advice, or inviting Rebecca for a school visit. Contact details can be found on her website: rebeccasparrow.com.

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- Read Rebecca Sparrow's other books, *Find Your Tribe* and *Find Your Feet*, which offer fabulous advice about navigating high school and the first few years after high school.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

There are some questions nobody is game to ask. Those deeply personal questions that eat you up inside and that you can't bear to say out loud because you're worried about what everyone else will think. So that's why I decided to write this book. I started collecting anonymous questions from teenage girls.

'Get out a piece of paper,' I'd say at the end of my talks. 'Write down the one secret question you wish I would answer for you. Don't let the person next to you see what you're writing. And DON'T put your name on it.'

The point of this book is to remind you that you're not alone. And whatever question is keeping you up at night, chances are thousands of other teenagers are lying awake wondering the very same thing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For the past few years Rebecca Sparrow has been a weekly columnist at mamamia.com.au. Her first novel, *The Girl Most Likely* (2003), is in development to become a feature film. Her second, *The Year Nick McGowan Came to Stay* (2006), debuted as a stage play in 2007. Her most recent book, *Find Your Feet (the 8 things I wish I'd known before I left high school)*, is the companion guide to the bestselling *Find Your Tribe (and 9 other things I wish I'd known in high school)* (2009). Rebecca is an ambassador for givit.org.au and The Pyjama Foundation. She lives in Brisbane with her family. You can find Bec wasting time on Facebook at Rebecca Sparrow Online or at rebeccasparrow.com