



These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

The Impossible Story of Olive in love

by Tonya Alexandra

I get that I'm impossible.
I get that I'm mad and rude — perhaps even a drama queen at times.
But you'd be impossible if you lived my life ... You'd be impossible if you were invisible.
Shakespeare was an idiot. Love is not blind. Love is being seen.

Plagued by a gypsy curse that she'll be invisible to all but her true love, seventeen-year-old Olive is understandably bitter. Her mother is dead; her father has taken off. Her sister, Rose, is insufferably perfect. Her one friend, Felix, is blind and thinks she's making it all up for attention.

Olive spends her days writing articles for her gossip column and stalking her childhood friend, Jordan, whom she had to abandon when she was ten because Jordan's parents would no longer tolerate an 'imaginary friend'. Nobody has seen her — until she meets Tom: the poster boy for normal and the absolute opposite of Olive.

But how do you date a boy who doesn't know you're invisible? Worse still, what happens when Mr Right feels wrong? Has destiny screwed up? In typical Olive fashion, the course is set for destruction. And because we're talking Olive here, the ride is funny, passionate and way, way, way, way dramatic.

This story is for anyone who's ever felt invisible.

This story is for anyone who sees the possible in the impossible.

Suitable for YA Readers 14+

ISBN 9781489220479 RRP 19.99 e-book 9781489220448

About the Author

I've always valued imagination and creativity over reality. (Although I love reality TV. Hello. The Bachelor - best TV show ever!) As soon as I was old enough, I read fairy stories compulsively and wrote them on my typewriter. Yep. Typewriter. Damn. I must be old.

When I wasn't reading or writing I'd make up stories, plays, movies with my sisters and best friends. A lot of us moved into creative industries, I did my time with the corporates in marketing, PR, web producing, travel writing. But it was never creative enough. It KILLED me.

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Before Reading

1. What forms can invisibility take? It might include feeling passed over in an opportunity at school, or not being included in 'adult conversations'. Write a personal account of when you have felt invisible in your own life and the emotional effect it had on you.
2. There are references to Irish Folklore in the book. Below are websites for you to research. Pick two examples of folklore and explain it in your own words, and include a visual representation.

<http://www.theemeraldisle.org/irish-myths-legends/>

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/>

<http://www.leprechaunmuseum.ie/folklore-and-mythology/otherworld/>

3. As the novel has an unrealistic element, the main character being invisible, it falls under the genre magic realism.

Magic Realism is defined as a literary genre or style associated especially with Latin America that incorporates fantastic or mythical elements into otherwise realistic fiction. (Merriam-Webster dictionary definition)

Why do you think a writer might employ this genre, rather than making the whole novel realistic?

4. One of the ways Olive stands out from other teenagers her age is living without her parents. Argue for and against this living arrangement from the perspective of a teenager.

While Reading

1. What effect does intertextuality (referring to another text) have in Chapter 1? *'Of course I'm talking Virginia Woolf!'*
2. Explain the use of personification in Chapter 2: *'The windows face the pavement like hooded eyes, their reinforced bars like rusty eyelashes.'*
3. Olive likes to think of herself as a writer. Find another example that shows this, such as the alliteration she uses in her first person narrative, *'It's got a caustic crustiness that suits me.'* (Chapter 2)
4. Intertextuality is used again in Chapter 3 to reveal her clear desperation to hear Tom's visual description of her. *'I'm Lady Macbeth, the blood won't wash away.'* After learning Olive feels responsible for her mother's death, how is this reference even more meaningful?
5. Gaelic references are scattered throughout the text. Find examples of these Irish references, starting with the curse at the book's opening, and keep adding to your list throughout your reading.
6. The only use of intertextuality used by another character is Tom's declaration of love through the poem by John Clare. 'First Love' is inscribed in pen on his torso for Olive to discover. Only one line of the poem is quoted in the novel in Chapter 27.

Use the link to review the whole poem and explain what parallels Olive and Tom share with the feelings described in the poem.

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/first-love/>

7. Having grown accustomed to Olive identifying herself through fictional characters, we can learn more about her. In Chapter 28 upon seeing her father's car parked in the drive she compares herself to Eliza Doolittle, playing with the line *'The rain, in vain, falls gently on my pain.'* What other attributes does she share with Eliza?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Fair_Lady

After Reading

Characterisation

1. Olive identifies herself as a writer. Her love of words is revealed in the diction she uses. This sets her apart from the other characters in the novel. *'I'm a writer—I can detect better cadence when I hear it, bucko.'* Identify and list other words Olive uses that may be uncommon to the average teenager.
2. Olive is often dramatic. In Chapter 5 she remembers being ill and thinking she would die tragically like other young writers. Explain the use of humour in her dramatisation.
3. In a close parallel, she confesses her hero was Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Another female writer, a recluse who feels trapped, repressed and only breaks free when she meets the love of her life. Describe the reasons why Olive feels trapped by her situation.
4. Like many young adults Olive battles feelings of depression. In Chapter 10 she describes an overwhelming sense that encroaches on her reality, which she calls *'the darkness'*. In typically figurative style she describes feeling paralysed. *'The darkness, I can feel it moving in. My hands cover my face.'* Despite her unusual circumstances, how do you think instances like these make her character more relatable?
5. Olive struggles in developing her relationship with Tom due to her inexperience. Her isolation seems to have allowed her to be selfish. Tom challenges this personality trait in Chapter 10: *'...not that you bother to ask.'* He rebukes her lack of interest in his problems. What other characteristics make it difficult for Olive to be in a healthy relationship?
6. Olive is conveyed as a deeply flawed character. Do you believe she is redeemed at any point in the novel? Take note of her developing self-awareness, evident in her recognition that *'...I'm cruel to the ones I love.'* In Chapter 31 she is specifically referring to her ghosting of Jordan when she was younger.

Style and Structure

Style

1. Olive's tone is often sarcastic, such as when meeting Tom in Chapter 3: '*Fear not, my brave knight.*' Find another example of her sarcasm.
2. One motif in the novel is the ocean. It is part of the opening scene, the Irish shore. When Olive contrives to bump into Tom at Newwater where he surfs, he describes it as a magical place. How then is the ocean symbolic?
3. Another motif is Irish mysticism. In Chapter 10, Olive refers to a man braiding his hair in a bracelet for his beloved, as a gift of trust. Why does she find trusting Tom difficult?
4. The style of this first person narrative is often figurative. The painful collision of Olive's private romance and the reality of her curse and family are described using imagery. '*A ribcage is no armour for a heart; it protects nothing. I need something stronger... My heart is so heavy it's about to drop out of its useless cage onto the wet cement.*' How does the imagery emotionally involve the reader in Chapter 31?
5. The style is sometimes referential. Olive uses classical references that convey her interests and wider reading. An example is when Jordan's mum is worried the imaginary friend has returned in Chapter 31: '*Sandy's brain looks like it is squirming with Medusa snakes of worry.*' Perhaps Olive's isolation has removed her from the contemporary world. Why else might her character be referential?

Structure

6. The developing romance takes Olive on a journey of maturation. In attempting to pursue her romantic relationship she also encounters opportunities to work on broader relationships. In this way her relationship with Tom acts a catalyst. How do her relationships with family and friends change as a result?
7. A device used to structure the novel is the building of suspense surrounding the mystery of Olive's mother. Olive blames herself for her mother's death. Later in the novel we discover what really happened when the father retells the event, absolving Olive of guilt. Why was it more effective to establish a mystery rather than reveal the truth straight away?

8. The turning point in Olive's romantic journey with Tom comes with her father's warning. The price of loving Olive may mean losing everyone else Tom cares for. This is when their relationship unravels. Up to this point did you believe their relationship could continue happily?
9. In Chapter 32 Olive's father fully explains the family curse underlining Olive's lack of trust in Tom. It also highlights the betrayal Olive feels at the hands of her father. The only positive seems to be that Olive can live without the guilt of having caused her mother's death. How would this change her view of herself?
10. Olive plans her trip to Ireland in Chapter 38. As the novel began in Ireland it has a cyclical structure. Travelling to Ireland, the home of her Nan and the beginning of the family curse, signals an acceptance of identity. This is the first time Olive shifts from insular and self-protective, concealing her identity as a gossip columnist under a pseudonym, to a young woman exploring the world. What effect does the cyclical structure have on the novel?

Themes

Alienation

By Chapter 9 Olive's isolation is clear on many levels. She does not know what she looks like. She has no mother and her father has deserted her. The movie date with Tom emphasises the limitations on her invisible life. The description of her navigating public transport and even simply visiting a department store are pitiable and evoke the readers' empathy.

Question:

Olive cannot live a normal life and things most take for granted are riddled with problems for Olive. How does she deal with these issues? After reading the above paragraph itemise her solutions for tackling each problem.

Avoidance

Rather than wait for Tom to come to terms with the chance he may never be able to see anyone in future, aside from Olive, she rejects him first. This shows her immaturity. She imposes '33 days of solitude' to cope, where she confines herself to her room denying contact with the outside world. As a result Tom writes her a letter ending their relationship, as he can't take the lack of communication. She prioritised protecting herself rather than caring for his needs.

Question:

What other examples throughout the novel show Olive avoiding rather than confronting situations head on?

Vulnerability

Olive is in a precarious situation. She is completely dependent on her sister. She must construct a false identity in order to work. Once meeting Tom she then must hope that he is her true love as only that person can see her. It is nearly impossible for her to make friends so her social network is very limited. She is also effectively parentless.

Question:

How does Olive's vulnerability relate to a teenager's experience of growing up?

Trust

One of Olive's biggest learning curves is developing the ability to trust. After being left by her father she is programmed to expect disappointment in relationships. She had to say goodbye to her only friend Jordan as a child, as the mother believed an imaginary friend should be left behind. She is unable to trust herself while, though mistakenly, carrying the blame for her mother's death. The most devastating is her inability to trust her new boyfriend Tom. Olive was reluctant to share the story of her mother and unable to tell him what her father divulged about the curse. She did not trust him to be over his ex-girlfriend. Finally she did not trust that he loved her enough to risk never seeing anyone but her. The lack of trust eventually broke the relationship.

Question:

What occurrences in the novel encourage Olive to trust in people?

Responding

Paragraph responses

1. How does the author make an invisible character relatable for readers?
2. Outline the sacrifices that Rose makes to care for her sister.
3. How does Tom try to meet the challenges of dating an invisible girl?
4. What does Olive risk to try to live a normal life?
5. Do you believe that Olive develops as a character throughout the novel?
6. Is it possible to sympathise with Olive's father?
7. Write the next chapter in the story. You can skip ahead several months if you wish.
8. Complete a diary entry from the perspective of Rose. Think about how her tone of voice is different from Olive's.

Assessment Task Year 9

Strands: Literacy LY

Mode: Writing

Outcomes:

- ACELY1746 – Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that present a point of view and advance or illustrate arguments, including texts that integrate visual, print and/or audio features.
- ACELY1744 – Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse texts, comparing and evaluating representations of an event, issue, situation or character in different texts.

Task:

Diary Entry

1. From the perspective of Rose you are to complete **three diary entries** that will date from three distinct stages of the novel.
2. You will be expected to write **300 words** for each diary entry. Be mindful to write a brief synopsis of what event in the plot this diary entry follows.
3. It is to reflect Rose's point of view, so privilege her perspective. It must also reflect a distinct voice that is in keeping with the dialogue of this character.

Text type: Diary entries are emotive, use first person and are reflective. They are retrospective. They are confessional and analytical. Register is informal.

Hint: Remember to review the instances we hear directly from Rose in the novel.

Assessment Task Year 9

Strands: Literature LT and Literacy LY

Mode: Speaking

Outcomes:

- ACELT1635 – Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts.
- ACELY1811 – Use interaction skills to present and discuss an idea and to influence and engage an audience by selecting persuasive language, varying voice tone, pitch, and pace, and using elements such as music and sound effects.

Task:

Presentation

'The Effects of Isolation'

Students will be asked to speak for **3 minutes**

Only palm cards are permitted

- Define isolation
- Outline the ways Olive experiences isolation
- Describe the emotional, social and mental effects of isolation Olive suffers
- Show your personal relation to these issues using anecdotes
- Develop an action plan of coping strategies for teenagers experiencing similar emotions

Presentation text type: Speak directly to your audience using eye contact. Avoid reliance on your notes. Offer an engaging speech using examples. Vary your vocal register and speak clearly. Show direct and close reference to the novel. Convey a thorough understanding of isolation.

Assessment Task Year 9

Strands: Literacy LY

Mode: Writing

Outcomes:

- ACELY1742 – Interpret, analyse and evaluate how different perspectives of issue, event, situation, individuals or groups are constructed to serve specific purposes in texts.
- ACELY1744 – Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse texts, comparing and evaluating representations of an event, issue, situation or character in different texts.

Task:

Feature Article

Write a **500 word** article. Olive has decided to expose herself to the world and chooses to be interviewed for an article. The interviewer will be asking Olive questions.

- Olive will be asked about her ancestry and the family curse.
- She may be asked about her relationships.
- The article will investigate her challenges as an invisible person.
- Olive may be asked what she expects to change once she has been introduced to the world.
- Questions may be asked about what lessons she would like to share with other teenagers.
- Try to also think of your own areas of investigation.

Text type: Feature articles start by offering a blurb summarising the article. It presents objective facts and is not subjective. The interviewer should not use emotional or figurative language. Quotes and specific examples should be used. The register should be fairly formal.