

That's Why I wrote This Song

by Susanne Gervay with lyrics & music by Tory Gervay

That's Why I Wrote This Song has application to English curricula studies over a number of years and areas:-

- A unit of novel study for years 9-10 which includes study of themes, literary style, book cover design, interlinking of music and text.
A unit has been developed. See below.
 - Senior English studies exploring the integration of a multiplicity of mediums within the story, inviting multiplicity of approaches within story and an extension of story into a broader world. See www.sgervay.com
 - Composer's Story – see Readers Notes on author website <http://www.sgervay.com/readingnotes.php>
 - Relating to other subject areas
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English curricula is embracing multi media, new technologies, visual literacy, music, performance and the varied forms of creative expression. Graphic novels, multi media packs with technological components, CDs and DVDs, films, performance, art, invite students to test, analyse, contextualise, explore, shape values and ideologies through a variety of mediums in their English studies.

In addition English is no longer a separate, limited study of literature. A wide range of texts are placed in varied contexts, times and places, making English part of a living and relevant world to students.

That's Why I Wrote This Song integrates mediums through:-

- the book
- lyrics
- music
- sheet music
- film script
- film clip

It crosses subjects:-

- IT
 - Music
 - Art (film)
 - Design through the cover
 - English
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Download through publisher and author websites:-

www.harpercollins.com.au - songs

www.sgervay.com

- Songs - *Psycho Dad* and *I Wanna Be Found*
- Sheet music for *Psycho Dad*
- Film script for *Psycho Dad*
- Film clip or directly through - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ess-R0dHtX8>

my space: www.myspace.com/thatswhyiwrotethissong

OVERVIEW of *That's Why I Wrote This Song*

That's Why I Wrote This Song is the journey of four sixteen-seventeen year old girls and their relationships with their fathers and how that impacts on their relationship with boys, each other and who they are. *That's Why I Wrote This Song* also reveals the issues of identity from dependence-independence, sexuality, boys, friendship, sexuality, mother-daughter, brother-sister relationships to fears and hopes for the future, set against the real youth rock music scene. Rock concerts, BIG DAY OUT, weekend music festivals are integral to the story. The four girls connect through their music at school, eventually uniting into a rock band, bonding, finding new insights and directions.

That's Why I Wrote This Song is a unique collaboration of music, lyrics and text where Tory's songs, *Psycho Dad* and *I Wanna Be Found* are the driving force in a book which integrates music and text as additional representations of the text. The songs drive the narrative, characters and themes. The songs and the sheet score for *Psycho Dad* are freely available for download from the author website: www.sgervay.com and the publisher website: www.harpercollins.com.au

That's Why I Wrote This Song took another leap forward into intertextuality when a young film producer-script writer became engaged in the music and text. She interpreted both to write and produce a three minute film script in collaboration with the author and lyricist-songwriter, of *Psycho Dad*. The video can be freely downloaded from the author website: www.sgervay.com or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ess-R0dHtX8>

Literary and Stylistic Techniques in *That's Why I Wrote This Song*

- Prologue at the start with 'Insomniac Road Concert' and epilogue, 'Postcards' at the end, act as book ends for the story.
- First person - Pip's point of view – interspersed with third person segments.
- Tory Gervay's song lyrics drive themes and character developments.
- Sheet music and songs enrich the theme and emotions

- Film script and clip widens interpretation of father-daughter theme and important of music as communication
- Other elements of style include:
 - dialogue
 - postcards
 - emails
 - descriptive passages
 - poetry
 - flashbacks to the past
 - humorous incidents
 - dramatic scenes
 - symbolism, notably the woolly lamb, white bandannas, mermaids.

UNIT OF NOVEL STUDY – YEARS 9-10

This novel is about four girls (and a brother), seen through the eyes of the central character, Pip. The relationships are the family, father-daughter relationships, friends and developing sexuality. The love of music bonds the girls and is their way of expression.

The following questions will let you focus briefly on each of those relationships.

Prologue: Insomniac Road Concert

The purpose of a **prologue** is to introduce a work, in this case, a novel about Pip, her family and friends and Music.

1. Make a list of the lyrics sung by Billy that are quoted in this chapter.
2. When you have read the book, gauge the relevance of Billy's lyrics to the concerns of the novel.

Lyrics	Example the lyric's relevance to the novel

3. Why has Susanne Gervay chosen to open her novel with this description of a rock concert?

Music

Music is the common passion for Pip and her friends. Their studies and their concert at the end of the year form the backbone to the novel.

Chapter 1

The focus has changed in this Chapter from Billy to Pip and her friends, although he is the subject of some of their conversation.

1. Describe the appeal of Billy and his music for Pip?
2. What does music mean to Pip? Karen? Irina? Angie?
3. What does Pip want most and what are the obstacles to her achieving this?

Chapter 8

1. Eddie takes his sister to the *Black Bullets* concert. In what ways is the author's focus different in the description of this concert compared to the *Insomniac Road* concert? What reasons can you give for this change of focus?
2. Although Pip is not a fan of this band, she admires one quality which she reflects on when she is heading home with Eddie. What is that quality? What goal does she also reveal?
3. After the concert she has vivid dreams. What do the dreams reveal about Pip: her friendships; her family; her beliefs and aspirations?
4. What conclusion does she come to?

Chapter 22

1. Pip and her friends get the opportunity to perform publicly at the Breakers Festival. What goals have been fulfilled for Pip? And her friends?
2. In what ways does this performance signify a coming to terms with issues Pip has wrestled with throughout the novel?

Friendship

Friendship is a central theme. Pip's friends are all very different and it their music and Pip's loyalty that ties them together.

Chapter 11

1. Karen's seventeenth birthday is a day of highs and lows.
What is the high point? Give reasons for your answer
What is the low point? Give reasons for your answer.
2. How does Pip respond to Karen's crisis on the night of her seventeenth birthday?
The next day?
The day after that?
3. Explain why Pip plays 'Passages of the Living and the Dead'?

Chapter 15

1. Why is Pip's birthday so special for Irina?
2. How was Irina's life in Russia different to her life now?
3. What particular contribution has Irina made to Pip's day and why is it of significance to Irina?

Chapter 16

1. Describe Eddie and Pip's relationship based on the evidence in this chapter.

2. Pip is surprised by the reaction of one her friend's to her brother. What is that reaction? What problems does it raise for Pip?
3. What additional pressures are Karen and Irina putting on Pip in the run up to their concert?

Sexuality

Some of Pip's friends are more sexually aware than others: Angie seeks romance and Karen uses sex as a substitute for the things missing in her life. Pip herself has to come to terms with the importance of boyfriends and what it is she wants from a boyfriend.

Chapter 5

1. Oliver takes Pip to the movies, giving her a necklace. The date is not a success however for either of them. Pip takes drastic action before the movie is over.
What does she do?
Do you agree with her action? Why? Why not?
2. Why does Pip say, 'Relationships. They change everything. Oliver. I'm not having sex with him. I don't ever want to have sex.'
3. In what ways does Karen contrast with Pip on the issue of their sexuality? You need only to use this chapter to answer the question.

Chapter 11

1. Karen sees herself as unwanted. What evidence is there for this belief in this chapter?
2. Karen's retaliation worries Pip. Is she right to worry about Karen? Why?
3. Does Karen get satisfaction from her act of retaliation?

Chapter 22

1. Pip trusts Max. What about Max makes her feel this way about him? How is he different from Oliver?
2. 'I can't study the way things are.' Why can't Karen study and how does she resolve this problem? Do you agree with her decision? Why? Why not?
3. Why has the author chosen to end her novel at this point?

Father-daughter relationships; Mother-daughter relationships; Issues of dependence-independence are pivotal to the story. There is a focus on father-daughter relationships which have deep impacts on girls' relationships with boys, their self esteem and who they are.

Chapter 4

1. What impact does Dad's presence have on Pip's family?
What simile does she use to describe her father's presence on page 56? Is it an effective simile?
2. What things does Pip's mother do to keep the peace between father and children?

How does Pip feel about her mother's strategies?

3. Why does Pip ask herself, 'Does Mum love Dad?'
4. What insights does Karen share with Pip about her own mother and her relationship with Karen's father?

Chapter 16

1. When her father puts his hand on her shoulder at her birthday, Pip says, 'I don't want to love him.'
Why does she say this?
What does it reveal about her feelings for her father?
2. Pip's parents are going to counselling and have asked Pip and Eddie to participate as well. Pip's response is, 'So what's their counselling got to do with me?' What answer would you give to Pip?
3. Irina asks Pip to go to the synagogue with her. How important is family to Irina and why?

Chapter 20

1. How does each father respond to the performance of 'Psycho Dad'?

Dad	Reaction
Angie's father	
Irina's father	
Karen's father	
Pip's father	

2. Why does Pip's mother ask her, 'Is that really how you feel about your father?'
3. Why does Pip respond later with, 'Singing it was incredible. Shouting it was even more incredible. It was like being totally free.'
4. Explain the significance of the snatch of song that runs through her head that night.

Book Cover Design



Sara Jinga, a graphic designer, was interviewed for background material.

"Well we all know that a book cover is the first thing that attracts the reader to the text. So what should it do? A good book cover should reflect its character, **mood** and **focus**. It can do this in a number of ways such as **font**, **imagery**, and colour and finish of the cover and of course its title!

The more decorative the font the more suggestive of frivolity or youth issues whereas alternatively the plainer or finer the font the more suggestive of a reflective text. Just look at Tom Clancy or Jacqueline Collins book covers.

They are usually bold, chunky type face often with a gold finish. We immediately think, “action”, “love” big time! Check to see if the cover is matt or shiny. Usually a [reflective novel](#) such as Kate Grenville’s “The Secret River” or Arundhati Roy’s “The God of Small Things” uses fine, serif font and ethereal imagery which might be natural or symbolic to convey that the issues run deep here.

To see a copy of the cover for *The Secret River* follow the link (or copy it into you browser address bar):

<http://www.dymocks.com.au/search/results.aspx?N=0&Ntk=All&Ntx=mode+m atchallpartial&Nty=1&Ntt=The%20Secret%20River>

To see a copy of *The God of Small Things* follow this link and scroll:

<http://www.dymocks.com.au/search/results.aspx?N=0&Ntk=All&Ntx=mode+m atchallpartial&Nty=1&Ntt=The%20God%20of%20small%20things>

[Ethereal imagery](#) suggests an ideas based book whereas a cover depicting people or a person steers the audience into an understanding what age or social group will be addressed. Of course colour plays a huge role. If the cover is bright it will usually be uplifting or upbeat whereas a dark, murky cover may suggest mystery or despair. You’ve also got to look carefully at the expression and stance of characters on covers. Are they happy, are they sad? Are they slouched, is there movement suggested? These features work together to convey the tome of the text. These ideas are not peculiar to book covers but all sorts of cover advertising.

If a character is placed in the [foreground](#) then you can bet that that’s the central person and the others in the mid or background are ones that he/she relates to. Look and see what the relationship is with the characters on the covers. It tells you a great deal!

And then of course there’s the [blurb](#) at the back of the book which can be a few paragraphs of content [synopsis](#) or some pithy [credits](#), acclaim from a recognised authority or a mixture of both with some impressive information about the author thrown in...all designed to arouse interest.

Information like cost and publisher is also contained on the cover.

So in all when looking at the cover design think:

- Colour
- Image
- Font and size
- Cover finish
- Blurb

Remember the designer can agonize over what you might consider to be minute details in order to convey just the right message.”

Book Cover questions

Pre-reading

- Look at the book cover...what do you think the novel is going to be about?

Post-reading

- After you've read the book. Look at the cover again. Think about what Sara said about the elements of a good book cover. Evaluate its effectiveness.
 - Colour
 - Image
 - Font and size
 - Cover finish
 - Blurb
- You have been asked to design a new cover for the book's second edition. How would you represent it? You might even like to change the title. (What would you call it?)
Explain why you have chosen the images, font etc

The Inside Story of the Book Cover Design for *That's Why I Wrote This Song*

- [Diary of a cover photo shoot](#)
- [Location photo shoot](#)
- [The photographer](#)
- [The concepts behind the design of the cover of 'That's Why I Wrote This Song'](#)

For full details see Reading Notes for *That's Why I Wrote This Song* - Book Cover on author website:- <http://www.sgervay.com/readingnotes.php>

Video clip of *Psycho Dad*

From Susanne Gervay, author

The film script explores the father-daughter relationships in the book and the role of music for the main characters in *That's Why I Wrote This Song*.

The film shows Karen drowning because of her 'psycho dad'. She wants to join the mermaids, where she feels it will be safe and peaceful. The filmic interpretation of Karen swimming as a mermaid is beautiful, as she turns freely, without the pressure of her father and life.

In the school assembly scene, the band NOT PERFECT wears white bandannas around their heads representing their unity, power and hope. Their performance of 'Psycho Dad' on stage becomes their declaration of independence.

I felt Rachel Guerry understood the book and music. She interpreted the friendship of the girls, pressure of the father, the feeling of drowning and that final celebration of freedom.

The film visually interprets Tory's song, 'Psycho Dad', capturing the anger, the despair and celebration. It also captures, the humour, friendship, mother's support and father's eventual loss.

The collaborative process of producers, editors, directors, actors and the many people bringing their talents into the film making was fraught with drama, near disasters and fun. It was creative on so many levels, from the make up artist ensuring it was the right make up for the character, to the Director of Photography who took those beautiful films of the glass tears dropping into the water, to the lighting person. Of course, the mother in the video was very creative. That was me.

This video clip united with Tory's lyrics and music of 'Psycho Dad' and my novel, bringing more dimensions to *That's Why I Wrote This Song*.

Readers can now enter *That's Why I Wrote This Song* via Tory's songs or the film clip via the internet, youtube, myspace, the sheet music, film script, lyrics or directly through the book.



Rachel Guerry, film maker, was interviewed for background material. She kindly gave permission to use stills from her video clip.

'When I make a film clip I attempt to create a [visual representation](#) of what I've read, heard or thought ...it's like trying to allow people see what I see. One of the first things I do is either write a script or do a [story board](#) which depending on how I can best express my ideas...story boarding is when you draw up what the audience sees. In this case I wrote a script, where I described what the audience sees as well as the back story. Video clips vary in length from 2 to 5 minutes and can be incredibly elaborate with every trick in the book or minimalist focusing on the music and the band. I saw this clip as focusing on the main elements of the song whilst including snippets of the story

The composer's first job –whether it be the concept designer or the director is to listen to the song carefully and see how it's going to translate on screen and then naturally read the book. Obviously I can't use all of the material from the book so I have to make choices...what will represent ideas in the best possible way. I need to identify the main issues and develop them.

You have to establish place. It can be 'real' or suggested. Some clips for example, have blurred locations which can suggest a great deal about what's

going on in the character's mind. **Props** are another important element in clips...you have to look carefully and question why they're used...there's always a good reason...in film clip I use a particular prop as a **symbol** right at the beginning of the clip ..it establishes a history and memory to be drawn upon as a theme later in the clip. In this way, props can create a mood and a sense of history. In the video I used postcards and **frames** snapshots as a way of referring to the book and establishing relationships

Camera shots are vital devices ...**wide or distance shots** can show alienation or disempowerment...**shots from above** show vulnerability, **over the shoulder shots** allow you to see the world from someone else's perspective and **extreme close ups** can show emotion or highlight something very important ...

Colour is also important ... it gives you the mood ...and that mood can change...in this clip mine changed from red to blue to yellow...can you guess why?(Watch it carefully and see when you believe the colour changes).

Making a video isn't an easy task ... there are so many people involved and so many constraints. For instance, on the film set itself much depends on the weather, the light...you really need to be tightly organised.'

Video Clip Questions

Pre- viewing

If you were making a video clip of the song what would you focus on? Story board your idea...draw a picture of psycho dad.

Post –viewing

You have now watched the video clip.

1. To what extent did it concur or conflict with your expectations ?

Watch the clip again

2. Red and pink are dominant colour in the bedroom scene. What does this suggest and how else is this conveyed? The mermaid scene is blue. What mood is being suggested? The last section is filmed in bright light which compliment the actions of the characters and the words of the song. What do you understand by the change of colour here?
3. Is 'psycho' dad as you imagined him? (why or why not)In this representation of the book, whose dad is 'psycho dad' ?
4. The composer of the clip spoke about recurring motifs and symbols. What is the impact of the framed photos at the beginning of the clip? How are they used at the end of the clip? How do they link to the book?
5. What mood does the last scene of the clip create? How does it do it? (think of camera angles, colour, body language, symbols)
6. Did you notice that the girls in the film are different to the band on the front cover? Did that bother you? Which representation do you prefer?

Evaluation

You are a publisher with Harper Collins. You have commissioned the book and are looking to invest in a film clip as another form of conveying meaning. The writer/director of this clip shows you her product. You must evaluate it and send your report to your superior. Write a 300-400 word report on clip you viewed.

Think about:

- how you're going to lay it out
- what is important to focus on
- the justification for your recommendation

Music

Tory Gervay's Lyrics and Songs in *That's Why I Wrote This Song* From Tory Gervay - the lyricist, songwriter and singer

Everyone writes their songs in their own way. I start with an emotion that drives my music. I always write a chord progression and experiment to find a pattern that works well. Then I work on developing a basic drum beat. Only then do I tap into the other emotions and write the lyrics. I then create a melody that fits in with the chord progression and lyrics.

For my song 'Psycho Dad', I accessed my anger and fears, wanting to scream a declaration that I'm stronger than any 'psycho dad'. I felt really powerful when I wrote the middle 8 here – 'I really don't know how, but I know I hate you so much now.'

I was shouting to the world that I don't want you or need you. I'm strong.

Writing 'Psycho Dad' was very different to writing 'I Wanna Be Found' which was based on my insecurities and fears. It was harder to come up with the lyrics, than for 'Psycho Dad'. Basically I felt like a nobody and a nothing. Suddenly the lyrics came to me, out of no where. The chorus just was there. – 'Why do I feel so alone, like I'm standing here all by myself. When there are people all around. I am lost but I want to be found.'

It felt like no one noticed me or cared. Not that I wanted to be noticed, but I wanted to feel worthy and worthwhile. The rest of the lyrics came from these emotions. I thought of other things that made me feel like nothing. Like 'No one hears me screaming. No one hears my pain.' It's like I was standing there screaming and whatever I said, no one would ever hear me.

When I shared this with Mum, she was really upset. It made her write about Karen in the book, where Karen wanted to die, because her father was a 'psycho dad' and her mother was powerless. It made her write about Pip, when her father refused to care about what she wanted to do in her life. When he thought she was a failure.

My favourite part in 'I Wanna Be Found' is the middle 8 – 'Everything is blurred between what's real and your head. Will I wake from this nightmare or continue to be dead.'

I felt like I was dead, stuck in this nightmare where I couldn't escape.

Writing the lyrics and music as part of Mum's book, gave me a chance to tell the story behind my songs. It gave me a chance to declare that I can achieve my dreams.



Jeremy Dwyer, musician/songwriter, was interviewed for background material.

When I write songs I usually start with the lyrics first and then I think of the music. It's strange how often the words have a beat of their own and the music just happens...well, it does for me. Some people I know write the music first and then write the words...either way music and lyrics have to work together to give the piece textual integrity. You really have to think about what you're wanting to say and how you're going to say it. So when you're writing about a song it's just not enough to talk about the lyrics...if you're **deconstructing** a song then you're looking at as a whole so you have to be able to talk about the affect of the music too...how they work together.

Perhaps the main advice I can give you is for you to think about the genre and its implications, the **orchestration**...what instruments are used and why...think about the inclusion of saxophones or violins...they set a mood...think about pace and rhythm...is there a change in the rhythm ...if there is why? Is there a repetition of a musical theme , a **motif**? What is the impact? Does it get louder or softer...why?

Words and the music need to work together and as I said it won't work if they don't **complement** each other in terms of language, imagery, ideas. In Tory's songs in 'That's Why I Wrote This Song', they are emotional songs where lyrics and music work together with ideas and themes that are part of the book.

In 'Psycho Dad' Tory's lyrics and music reflect the anger of Pip and Karen towards their fathers. The beat is fast and the lyrics angry, as Pip decides to reject her father and make it.

Music questions

- 1) To what extent 'Psycho Dad' and 'I want to be Found' represent the ideas in the novel and/or the film clip?
- 2) Which song do you consider more affective? Why?

- 3) Look up Wikipedia and see the different sorts of 'rock' subsections there are. The link is provided for you: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_music
Where do you think these songs fit? How would you classify them and why?
 - 4) How is meaning conveyed in both songs?
 - 5) Do the lyrics and music work together and why?
 - 6) Are there any strong images?
 - 7) What is the effect of the chorus?
 - 8) Do the music and lyrics change during the song? If so, what is the impact?
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Group evaluation task

The book, the songs and the film clip are examples of a [multi media](#) package.

In small groups, imagine you are evaluating this package. You have been asked to determine:

- what works,
- what doesn't work and
- what is engaging?

Prepare a Powerpoint report to present to your class.

Individual creative task

- You are a journalist who has been commissioned to write a feature article for *Dolly* magazine on an exciting new girl band, 'Almost Perfect' whose song, 'Psycho Dad' has just topped the charts. Your article should include:
 - Reference to the girls' creative experience as shown in the novel
 - Personal anecdotes about the girls' lives at school and at home
 - Quotations from your interviews with the girls
 - Supporting photographs of the band at rehearsals
 - Include a brief reference to the making of the video clip.
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The Essay

To what extent do the concerns raised in *That's Why I Wrote This Song* reflect real issues for young adults? Make close reference to the text, the songs, the video clip and your own experience in your response.

Suggested extra activities

Activities

1. Research magazine/newspaper articles or search the internet or photographs or music or multimedia such as DVD's/film, plays, books about music festivals.

Select one of the following topics:

- Youth behaviour at concerts and its impact
- What music means
- Controversy and music.
- Music for causes such as Band Aid, Live 8 and Live Earth

2. Present your research to a youth forum. You have 2 minutes allocated to you.

You may choose to present your research as either:

- a display
- talk
- multi media
- music or
- any other communication

3. Choose a cause. Write an imaginative piece about a song, music or a concert that reflects your emotions or interests or concerns, such as:-

- Environment
- Youth suicide
- Love
- Freedom
- Any other

4. The songs and the film clip are representations of a specific theme in the novel. Select another theme from 'That's Why I Wrote This Song'. Write your own lyrics for a new song based on one of the following ideas:-

- music
- bands
- relationships
- friendship
- any other topic that you believe is a suitable addition to the multi-media package of 'That's Why I Wrote This Song'.