



Butterflies celebrates the fighter in all of us

STUDY GUIDE: *Butterflies* by Susanne

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Susanne Gervay Talks about Writing 'Butterflies'

I was asked by a girl to write about growing up with burns. I initially said *no*.



I felt inadequate. Eventually I became drawn into writing *Butterflies*. It was a rocky journey of 18 months that challenged my values, taking me into relationships and experiences that would change me.

How to begin? We all understand challenges because life gets rocky. However I had to understand the challenge of burns to seriously grapple with *Butterflies*. Initially I trawled through second-hand bookshops in Sydney's student area and emerged with heavy medical books. The graphic nature of burns, grafts and scarring was hard. To cope, I covered the photos with my hand as I read. Doubts about my ability to understand the medical process continued to undermine my confidence. I sought the help of Dr Hugh Martin, Head of the Burn Unit at the Children's Hospital, Westmead. It was a beginning.

I investigated the Burn Unit in The Children's Hospital with its routines of bandages, heat lamps, dressing and undressing wounds, the creams, the pressure suits, and processes of healing. At times, human relationships were under extreme stress. An outlet was the Burn Support Foundation, where parents created a community for their children and the families. The highlight was the burn camps sponsored by the Fire Brigades, where children in pressure suits and splints, with their scars and restrictions played without the fear of being socially ostracized.

I interviewed children and parents extensively until I felt that I understood the experience of burns - the medical facts and socialisation, the viewpoint of the victim and survivor, the family's perspective, the role of health workers and community. When the emotional experience of burns was internalized and melded into my own personal experience of growing up, only then did I put away the research and begin the year long journey of writing *Butterflies*.

I had a definite agenda. *Butterflies* would be medically accurate, but it would not be a medical book. It would be psychologically accurate, but not a didactic textbook. It would reflect the stories of young people and families whom I had interviewed. I wanted to write a book where disability and challenge are part of the fabric of life, but not life itself. The main character Katherine would be burnt but never be a one-dimensional stereotype. Katherine would be complex like all human beings with a real family, a background and a personality that reaches from the page into the lives of readers. Katherine's life would show that disability does not separate survivors from the community, but unites them in the common bond of humanity.

Butterflies would be good literature and a powerful tool in understanding our differences, meeting challenges and understanding the commonality of us all.

What is Butterflies about?

It's about a girl, her family, love, hopes, dreams, friendships, finding who you are.

Katherine is 17 nearly 18, brought up in a close-knit family. There is her mother, older sister Rachel and Katherine herself. Katherine's mother migrated from Italy with an Australian backpacker. However Katherine's father left unable to cope with Katherine's accident. Katherine was three when she was burnt. She dreams that one day her life will be different. No more operations and pain. She'll become like a butterfly – beautiful, free to flutter in the wind and explore her world.

She wants to be like everyone else. As Katherine searches for identity, she is angry at being torn between the world of patient and schoolgirl, angry at the accident and meeting challenges. She's also happy. She loves her girlfriend as they race out on their shopping trips and study together. She loves her sister who has to take second place in a family where Katherine dominates. She loves her mother. Katherine's life is full. There are friends, schoolwork, study, hopes, dreams, boys and William.



Katherine is never an 'invalid', although she gets very sick. Katherine is funny but never laughable. She does wicked things but is never wicked. There is violence, but Katherine is not its object. At times Katherine is a 'burden' especially on her mother

and sister, but then she gives back love and humour so magnificently. Katherine is a vibrant young adult participating fully in everyday life.

The trauma of burns and the following challenges are a total life experience involving the whole family. The following segment from *Butterflies* is a retelling of one mother's experience as she sat beside her baby.

Swollen eyelids shut tight. Head shaven bare. The woman strokes the baby's face. A seven-year-old girl holds onto the woman's skirt. A plastic tube feeds into the baby's nose and a drip is taped onto her arm. A catheter empties urine into a bag. Her arms are in splints. Her small body wrapped in gauze. Her hands are in mittens also tied to splints. She tries to open her eyes, searching through the swelling,

The nurse comes to check tubes and vital signs.

The woman brushes back her dark wispy hair and looks up at the nurse. "What is wrong with that baby? Where is her hair?... Her face? ... Her body?"

"Remember the doctor spoke to you about it?" The nurse's voice gently persists. "Remember? Remember?"

"No. Spoke to me? No."

"About her body, her face." Pulling a chair close, the nurse sits next to her. "The baby will she will look a little different."

The woman stares confused at the nurse in her white uniform. "Where is Katherine? Where is my baby? My little girl?"

The nurse answers softly. "This is Katherine. You can see her."

"But I can't. I can't see her. I can't see her."

Within the hospital there are conflicting needs and roles of all the characters as they seek to make life better for Katherine and all the children.

In the morning the children's ward is always busy. Children who aren't critically ill, but aren't allowed out of bed, play board games with children who are allowed. Some have assignments set by the hospital teacher. Kids with tubes in their noses, kids with drips attached to mobile units, kids with cancer and diabetes and cystic fibrosis and spina bifida play because they feel better today. Eight-year-old Katherine with no hair is drawing a picture of her mother and Rachel. Posters of the children's work are hung throughout the ward.

The nurse's station in the middle of the ward has a view of everything. Parents, nurses, doctors, social workers and teachers centre on the children who are the focus of a private world within the ward. Visitors come in from time to time bringing presents and there are parties with balloons for birthdays. Mothers

come in all the time and the children get individual attention that their brothers and sisters don't receive.

Sometimes disturbing things happen there. Parents challenge the system. They argue with the doctors and nurses, guarding their children against decisions they question. The children are afraid then.

Sometimes terrible things happen there. Children get very sick. Some never go home.

Katherine cries after her surgery. The skin of her back has been cropped for her graft. It's red and throbs and she vomits from the anaesthetic drugs. She calls for Mamma who holds her and stays throughout the night and the nurses are kind and all the people in the ward are kind. Even though it hurts, she knows she's special and safe because they all look after her.

The ward is her home.

Disability exaggerates the challenges of growing up. While the medical needs of burns survivors are real, these can be dealt with medically. However the real challenges are the social consequences – finding the fighter within us all.

Dr Hugh Martin writes – “Like tempering steel, the process of passing through the fire helps make a person of exceptional quality.”

Butterflies is a celebration of burn survivors, their families and the people who are involved. It is also about how all of us meet and overcome challenges.

Writing *Butterflies* was an amazing journey.



Topic Discussions on the Author's Journey

1. The author's research, planning, investigating, interviewing those involved in burns, underpin *Butterflies*. Does this take away or add to the strength of this book.
2. The author is aware that *Butterflies* is a fictional, imaginative text, yet she openly admits her agenda is to explore universal themes of friendship, family, disability, identity. Is there any conflict here?
3. The author's journey was not only the writing of *Butterflies* but her personal journey in understanding disability. It challenged her own stereotypes. She sought to translate her personal growth into *Butterflies*.

The central question for her was: - Is a person a burn/ disability? Or is a person a human being with a challenge which can be called a disability?

4. The author developed a different view towards difference and disability through writing *Butterflies*. Does the reader?
5. *Butterflies* is a young adult novel about youth's search for identity. Is it just about disability? *Butterflies* is regarded as part of that new genre of writing about disability where the 'worthy' story with disability as its theme has been debunked. Successful literature is where disability or difference is part of the story, not the defining issue.

Activities

1. Research magazine/newspaper articles or search the web or photographs or music or multimedia such as DVD's/film, plays, books about disability which can include physical, mental health, social, emotional challenges.



“Butterflies shows that life is also full of many wonderful people and that those most important to each of us are our family and friends who are there with us through all our ‘challenges’”

Louise Sauvage OAM ~World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability

- Information on the disability

- Impact of disability on the survivor, family, friends or society
 - Living with disability
 - Attitude to those with disability
 - Any other
2. Presentation of research through a display or talk or multi media or music or multi platform communication
3. Choose a disability. Write an imaginative piece about how you would feel:-
- Living with this disability.
 - Living with a family member with this disability
 - Relating to a friend who has suddenly become disabled
 - Meeting someone with the disability
 - Supporting someone with a disability or their family
 - Any other

Butterflies: Youth Literature as a Powerful Tool in Understanding Disability
 Disability Studies Quarterly: Winter 2004 Volume 24 No. 1 ISSN 1041-5718
http://www.dsqsds.org/articles/html/2004/winter/dsq_w04_gervay.html

Issues & Themes in *Butterflies*



- Burns
 - Impact of burns on an individual and family
 - Survival
 - Disfigurement
 - Impact on growth and development
 - Prolonged hospitalization and surgery
 - Pressure on the family
 - Living in two worlds – the hospital and the outside world
 - Emotional, psychological and physical impact of burns on the family
 - The role of the Burn Unit team such as the Unit at the Children's Hospital, Westmead; the family; and support groups.
 - Rehabilitation and return to normal or near normal life
 - Role of the community in developing tolerance and understanding
 - Firefighters

- Disability
 - intellectual disability
 - physical disability
 - emotional illness
 - others

- Challenges

Life is meeting challenges. Disability is only one of those. There are challenges in areas such as:-

 - Family breakdown
 - Peer group acceptance/rejection.
 - Parental expectations
 - Health
 - Social justice – bullying
 - Migration, war, political upheaval
 - Poverty
 - Natural disasters
 - Climate change
 - Personal feelings – self esteem
 - Others

- Identity

Look beyond surface scars and find the person inside.

Butterflies explores young people's search for identity:-

- Independence
- Sexuality
- Family
- Friends
- Career
- Future
- Love
- Spirituality
- Values
- Place in the world

- Gender

Butterflies is told from 17-18 year old Katherine's point of view. It is a female journey into female youth culture, humour, identity, sexuality, peer group pressure, boys, friendship. It explores the way young women relate, their communication, insecurities, capacity for anger and courage as they try to find their place in the world.

Katherine's mother is from an Italian background. She is the product of the conservative traditions of her Italian village. Her family expectations include traditional roles for a woman including early marriage, motherhood and limited pursuit of educational aspirations. Her failed marriage to an Australian backpacker leaves her in the role as a sole mother and carer of two girls, one with burns.

Butterflies invites female identification, but it also gives male readers an insight into the world of women, opening communication and understanding.

- Diversity of Cultures

The main characters come from an Italian background and face issues of language, cultural differences and the impact of migration and finding home.

***Butterflies* harnesses an individual's strengths to overcome the challenges of life and moving towards a positive future with support of family and community.**

Butterflies celebrates the fighter in all of us

Dr Hugh Martin

*President of the Australian and New Zealand Burn Association and
Head of the Burn Unit, The Children's Hospital Westmead, Sydney writes:-*

Every survivor has a story. Often the story is of interest, and even more often instructive. *Butterflies* is the story of a burn survivor, and is both interesting and instructive. It explores the complex areas of the emotional impact of a burn on the individual and family while giving insight into the world of hospitals, patients and doctors. It traces the development of the personality from insecurity and relative isolation to a healthier level of self esteem that enables the individual to form balanced relationships with family and friends. It shows how the inner person can triumph over a preoccupation with surface scars and know that basic values of commitment, caring and trust are more important than the texture of the skin.

Butterflies has relevance outside the narrow circle of burn survivors and their families. It shows the ebb and flow of emotions that affect us all, particularly in the transition between childhood and adulthood, and how parenting and family life make these bearable.

Those of us who are involved in the world of burns know how survivors need help from time to time, but slowly develop a depth of character and an inner strength which is rarely seen in others. Like tempering steel, the process of passing through the fire helps make a person of exceptional quality. *Butterflies* captures these subtleties for the reader, and gives a stunning insight into a difficult topic.

Literary Style

'Butterflies is 'cleverly told through flashbacks and current day scenes with natural dialogue and episodes from school and home. Through these we can understand Katherine's gritty courage and stoic determination forged through many painful hospital surgeries. These same qualities drive Katherine to excel in school and in sport, and we cheer with her as she succeeds. The author's smooth storytelling style adds to that feeling that we are part of this young woman's life.'

Associate Professor Belle Alderman, University of Canberra.

Stylistic techniques used in ***Butterflies***:

- Written in third person present tense with flashbacks.
Present tense gives a sense of immediacy and engages the reader. Third person enables the narrator to present an omnipresent viewpoint, not just Katherine's as would be the case through first person only narration.
- Internal monologue of the main character Katherine is written in first person present tense reveals Katherine's feelings.
- Flashbacks to the past are in the present tense, third person with extensive use of dialogue. Italics are used in these passages to denote the past and a time and place change. This effectively brings the past to life through the immediacy of present tense with an active voice rather than the more traditional stylistic method of retelling what happened using past tense and a passive voice.
- Significant variation of styles used - ranging from but not limited to:-
 - dialogue
 - letters
 - descriptive passages
 - poetry
 - flashbacks to the past
 - imaginative dream sequences
 - humorous incidents
 - dramatic scenes
 - symbolism, notably the butterfly, birds, nature, Beauty & the Beast

STUDY GUIDE

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This is a chapter study guide with a focus on language, themes, critical thinking, literacy, communication, values and attitudes.

Within each chapter there are **optional student questions and activities** in composing and responding, including, spoken, print, visual, media and multi-media responses for individual and collaborative learning.

The dedication:-

*Like butterflies, those who survive burns
Defy their fragility to migrate large distances
And find warm climates. Butterflies was written
For all those heroes who survive burns and for all those
special people who help them on their great journey.*

Butterflies is an extended simile revealing the theme of meeting challenges to find self fulfilment.

In what way are butterflies like survivors?
Why does Susanne call burn survivors heroes?
Why does she call them survivors and not victims?

Chapter 1

Katherine and Jessie are girlfriends gossiping, sharing the day, waiting at the bus stop to go home. The dialogue immediately invites the reader into the girls' lives.

It's hot and the boys are at the bus stop. Why does Mark call Katherine, who has scars from her burns, Dracula? What does this show us about peer group behaviour? How does Katherine react? What does she feel like inside?

How do we know Jessie and Katherine are good friends? How would you react if someone attacked your friend?

The author writes 'the eucalyptus crinkle and crack in the summer heat'. It has two levels of meaning. What are they?

Why is Katherine angry? Would you be angry?

How did Katherine get burnt? How does her sister Rachel feel about the incident? Then the author goes back and forwards from the present to the past and back again. How does this technique give depth to the story?



What does the kookaburra symbolise to Katherine?

Activity:

1. Collaborate on research about how most children get burnt and what programmes are in place to reduce the numbers; what severe burns actually are; what treatments are given.

2. Write the bus stop scene from Mark's viewpoint.

3A narrator reads the bus stop scene while students act it out.. Then the class discusses the scene.

Chapter 2

Do you believe that disabilities should be hidden?

How do people react when they see someone with a burn or any disability?

Why does Katherine's mother hold Katherine until she's hurting her? Is there any excuse for this?

How does Katherine feel about her mother cleaning houses? What does your mother do? How do you feel about it?

Find a humorous incident. Why does the author write funny scenes?

Activity:

In a group of students, workshop the following questions.

What makes you angry?

What other ways can you deal with anger?

Write your comments on a large sheet of paper and pin on the board. One person presents the comments to the class for general discussion.

Chapter 3



Walter Crane's illustration of Beauty & the Beast

Katherine has dreams of Beauty and the Beast. Beauty and the Beast are symbolic. What do the dreams mean?

Why doesn't Katherine talk after she's burnt as a little girl?

Katherine and Jessie go shopping to buy a dress. There are three different perspectives – Jessie, the shop assistant and Katherine. What are these perspectives? Is anyone right or wrong? What would you do if you were Katherine?

Activity:

Find material about Beauty & the Beast from the web, picture books, the library, computer games, music or film. The material should be diverse and originate in different parts of the world. The first published version of the tale was written by Madame Gabrielle de Villeneuve, and published in *La jeune américaine, et les contes marins* in 1740.

Bring the material to class to discuss them. What do they mean? What is their purpose? How have they been adapted? What context are they being used in?

Chapter 4

Katherine loves swimming competitively. However the scars from her burns restrict her movement. Why does she hide the tears?

Katherine uses the metaphor – 'I am a dolphin.' What does this mean?

Katherine's mother speaks with an Italian accent as her heritage is Italian. Migration has been difficult, so why does she tell her father on the phone - 'Papa, my home is Australia.'?

Jessie betrays Katherine by choosing to go with Greg to the dance. Katherine has to go alone. Why is this so painful for Katherine?

As the sibling of Katherine, Rachel has to take on a lot of responsibility as her mother can't be there for her. Is the mother wrong to leave Rachel to care for Katherine? Do you think Katherine realises how much her sister has done for her? How would you cope if you were Rachel?

Why is Katherine scared to go to the dance?

Activity:

Write a short piece about how you'd feel if you had to go to a dance alone.
Create video or power point.

Chapter 5

The butterfly is plain and brown. How does it symbolize freedom and beauty?
When Katherine is taken to hospital after the burn, she is in intensive care on life support. The mother is sitting beside the baby. What does she mean that she can't see Katherine?

What happens when Jessie 'falls in love'? How do girls and guys change when they date?

At the dance, Katherine challenges her fears doubt about herself. 'there might even be a prince out there for me.' What does she mean? What does she want? Is there a prince? Explain.

Activity:

Sketch a stage scene on the harbour ferry for the dance so that all the characters can act their parts.

Create a role play of the scene on the ferry/boat.

Chapter 6

Katherine wants to be independent but she loves her mother. When he mother goes with her to the Professor's surgery, why is Katherine angry?

Katherine has had 50% of her body burned. She has lost half her hair and her ear. She's scarred down one side. Surgery can give her hair and reconstruct her ear, enable her to stand straight. Are these surgeries cosmetic? Should they be covered by the medical health system?

Why does Katherine hate and love her mother?

Katherine is scared no boy will ever want her. She's got confused feelings about boys and men. Why?

Activity:

Play the music from the film 'Romeo and Juliet.' How does it make you feel? How does it represent love? The relationships between a boy and girl? Discuss.

Chapter 7

Why is having a casual job so important for Katherine?

Why is Katherine so distressed at being offered to swim in the Paralympics Games?

What do you think of her Coach? Why?

Should general schools accept disabled or different students? Is Katherine disabled?

Activity:

Research the Paralympics Games. Write a brief report or make a presentation on one event. Give your opinion regarding these games.

Chapter 8

A woman's role. Should Katherine's mother have followed traditional female roles or made her own decision?

Katherine's mother loves the garden and the rosellas. In what way does the garden represent the mother?

Katherine has a date with William. How does she react? Is it like any other girl's reaction?

Activity:

Search the web, books, magazines, any other source to create a pictorial representation of women throughout the world.

Discuss.

Chapter 9



Choice. We have choice. Romeo and Juliet had choice. Katherine has choice. What does she choose?

A child with severe burns will face many years of surgery. How does Katherine regard surgery? How do you think you would cope? Why is Katherine not the beast tonight?

Activity:

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has had many adaptations from ballet, to modern film interpretation, TV, cartoon, music, comics as tragic young love and family feuds are explored. Bring any adaptations to class for discussion.

Chapter 10

The world of children in the hospital is emotionally complex. What are the issues?

The technique of short sentences, truncated sentences, verbless sentences, repetition, increase tension, as Katherine comes out of surgery. It is sparse and edgy description, that re-creates the reality of the hospital scene with all the participants.

Do you think longer sentences and more description would have made the scene more or less effective and why?

Activity:

The surgery is over and Katherine is in recovery.

Write a paragraph about the feelings you have as:-

- Katherine's mother
- Her sister, Rachel
- Her boyfriend, William
- Her best friend, Jessie.

Does the *Butterflies* trailer reflect some of these feelings?

Chapter 11

What is a father to Katherine? What is a father to you?

How does the poem *to be byron* reflect Katherine's search for meaning?

Activity:

Write a poem or song lyrics (with or without music) about relationships with father.

Or

Research and find a poem or song lyrics and music about relationships with a father

Chapter 12

What does Katherine understand now about her mother's courage bringing her up?

'It's all right to be afraid?' Why is Katherine afraid? Why are young people afraid?

What are they searching for?

Activity:

Courage. Classroom discussion on the meaning of courage.

Chapter 13

Why did Katherine's father leave his family?

How does alcohol impact on the father's behaviour? Is it understandable? Is it acceptable?

Does Katherine's mother act in a traditional female role? Is Katherine's mother right or wrong in closing the door on the past and not relating to Katherine's father?

Jessie's father is in his daughter's life. He cares about her. So why is Jessie angry at her father?

What is Katherine's mother's relationship with her father?

The author uses dialogue, interspersed with internal monologue, to reveal character and theme. The dialogue between Katherine's mother, Katherine and William, Jessie and the interaction between the characters highlight Katherine's search for identity.

Activity:

Research any aspect of ALCOHOL and its impact. The written piece in response to the research can be factual or creative. It can be presented in any medium from music, prose, an excel report, a power point presentation, a visual display to illustration.

The work is to be presented to the class and discussed in terms of the text and generally.

Chapter 14

Katherine, Rachel and their mother confront each other about the girls' father.

What do each of them feel about the father?

How does Katherine feel about her body?

Activity:

Body image is a powerful influence on how young people feel about themselves. Discuss.

Chapter 15

Exams are stressful and there are pressures for the future. What are these pressures?

How does the author reveal the different levels in a conversation, when people are saying one thing, but thinking another?

Birds are used throughout 'Butterflies' to symbolise characters and journeys. What do the magpies symbolise?

Language holds meaning that is often more than the words. The mother holds her favourite sea-green mug. The word 'mug' is warmer than using 'cup', representing the mother who is warm. The colour infers a journey – the mother's journey across the seas from one country to another.

When the author describes the mother's action – she 'brushes aside her hair that has escaped from her bun.' How does this description symbolise her? There are many descriptions throughout the text that hold multiple meanings reflecting, character, theme, tone.

The author uses the technique of listing items the mother packed in her old car. What does this show about the mother's relationship with her children and her character?

Finally the details of how Katherine became burnt is revealed. Why were the family in the emergency housing block? What happened?

Activity:

Family breakdown. Bring newspaper clippings, website articles, any new items about family breakdown and the resulting social problems.

Class discussion on the impact of family breakdown.

Chapter 16

Why has Katherine has left competitive swimming and taken up Surf Life Saving?
What does she like about Surf Life Saving?

What is the difference between Katherine's old swimming coach and the Surf Patrol Captain?

The author uses her familiar technique of listing actions, verbless sentences, short sharp descriptions, to increase the energy of the scene. Describe in your own words, the surf scene.

Is Katherine comfortable with her body? Her burns? Explain. What is the impact on Katherine when the Patrol Captain 'puts his hand on her shoulder with its grafts and scars.'

What does Katherine secretly hope her father feels she is? Why?

Katherine is having fun about boy-girl relationships. She laughs about Mark and William. What are her real feelings?

Mark 'breaks the silence.' This is an important scene as it closes an issue that was opened in chapter one. The issue was that attack at the bus stop on Katherine about her burns. What is Mark confessing to Katherine? How has he grown? What does Katherine learn about Jessie? And Mark?

Activity: Research the Surf Life Saving. Present information to the class and discuss.
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Chapter 17

Why does Katherine never have a bath? She only showers? Can you understand that?

How does the mood and scenes of Australian bush tract, reflect Katherine's confused emotions about seeing her father?

The scene where Katherine and her father finally meet is a defining one. Why? How? Are Katherine's reactions right or wrong?

Note the literary techniques used by the author to empower the father-daughter scene with ethical dilemmas and emotional tension. Techniques include:-

- Symbolism of the kookaburra
- The 'milkbar smells stale' reflects on the staleness of the father-daughter relationship
- The father's eyes are blue. Katherine says that they are 'different to mine.' This description parallels the question of difference values

- When Katherine questions – ‘Do I recognise you?’ (Her father in the photograph) There are a number of levels of meaning – the actual physical recognition, the emotional recognition, the recognition of a father in her life.
- There is the literary device of two conversations being run at the same time. The actual dialogue between father and daughter, and the internal dialogue of the daughter’s real emotional response.
- Physical description to give a character description. Katherine describes the father with ‘thin lips on the rim of the bulky white cup.’ The feeling is that the father is emotionally limited – thin lips – at the edge of his relationship with his daughter – ‘the rim.’
- The rhetorical questions highlight Katherine’s anger and confusion and ultimately move her towards her decision.
- Listing events build up argument and tension.
- The dialogue is edgy, challenging, explains the back story of why the father abandoned the family, while increasing the emotional charge. He did abandon them to hardship.
- Descriptions are subtle with emotionally charge messages. The father sits on a ‘green vinyl seat’. The vinyl connects to his lack of authenticity.
- The ending of that chapter is powerful in its simplicity. It crystallizes the issue of father-daughter and abandonment.
‘I wanted a father.’

‘I am your father.’

I understand now, Rachel. I understand. (Katherine does not verbally respond.)

Without ‘speaking’, do the readers understand too?

Katherine has made a decision.

Activity:

Do a performance reading of the father-daughter scene with three readers - the narrator, Katherine and the father.

Chapter 18

The end of year party. Katherine confronts William about why he rejected her. Do you agree with William’s arguments? Is Katherine right?

In way is the cottage the family live in now their home? Why literary techniques has the author used to make the reader feel the warmth and safety of this home?

Activity:

‘Where am I going’ is the last question of this chapter. In what way has this been the theme of ‘Butterflies’? Class discussion.

Chapter 19

It is Katherine's 18th birthday. Rachel, Katherine and their mother go to an Elvis Restaurant. Her mother says, 'You make your own decisions now about your life. I will always be there, but it is time.' She glances at Rachel.' 'What is important is that we are together.' Is that what is important in life? Family? Even though Katherine is a fighter, would she have made it without her mother and sister?

Katherine is facing more surgery. The Senior Coordinator calls her to her office to organise an exam concession for a student with special needs. What is Katherine's reaction? Is she right or wrong? What are your views on this?

Activity:

Write a paragraph applying for a student concession for your exams because you have a disability.

How do you feel about doing this?

Chapter 20

Flowers, gardens, the bush, birds are used throughout the text as symbols. What do the pink and yellow rose buds symbolise? What does it mean when William can identify trees, flowers, birds and the brown butterfly in the bush?

Does the kiss beside the waterfall feel right? Why?

Katherine's dream is imaginative and complex. Analyse what it means and the techniques used to create it.

Activity:

Dreams are complex, unlocking emotions. Compose a dream using at least two mediums. There must be written text accompanied by a medium of your choice such as pictures, drawings, magazine/newspaper cuttings, video.

Chapter 21

Katherine wants her surgeries so that she will be 'perfect one day.' What is perfect? Is it possible? Is perfection the way you look? How do you feel good about yourself when your body is different?

Katherine has the operation to rebuild her ear. How does she react when her bandages are unwrapped?

Activity:

In small groups prepare a poster of images of young people and the way they want to look.

Class discussion about the posters and the pressures created by the images on a person's sense of identity.

Chapter 22

'I'll just have to accept whatever I am.' Katherine comes to this realisation. 'You have to believe in yourself. Change what you're able to change, but accept what you are. No blame.' What comments do you have on this?

Activity:

Music can be your voice. What bands, singers, song do you like? Select one song and print the lyrics. In a paragraph write what the song means to you.

Chapter 23

The grandparents arrive from Italy. What are the cultural differences between the old country and the new country?

What does it mean when Grandpapa calls Katherine – Bellezza – Beauty? How does it link to the symbolism of Beauty and the Beast referred throughout the story?

What do butterflies mean to Katherine now?

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Activity: Create your imaginative response to *Butterflies*.

Use can use posters, multi media, create your own trailer, write a story, illustrate, create new endings and journeys.

Reviews

Compelling?

Moving?

Inspirational?

You are not even close to the power that this book holds Katherine's story is one that reels you in, and won't let you go, until the very last word.

Susanne Gervay has crafted this book beautifully, and its gift of strength and hope will stay with the reader, long after the book is put down.

REACT ACT Department of Education

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In this challenging but inspiring book we meet Katherine, a 17 year-old who suffered horrific burns at the age of three. The whole story resonates with her courage and determination, and the warmth and love she receives from her mother, sister and friends. 'Butterflies' is a great reminder that all people are individuals, and deserve the same attention and opportunities. Although the central character is nearly 18, the book is suitable for those aged 14 and over and for adults too.

*Melbourne's Child*

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This story speaks of great pain, trauma and broken relationships and how love and courage triumph over all. Katherine, at 18, is in her final year of high school. At 3 years old she was severely burnt. Only the fierce and loyal love of her mother and her sister, Rachel, and Katherine's own refusal to live her life as a victim, help her face the future with the hope and courage that she does. The issues of adolescent relationships, dreams and aspirations, anxieties and fears are dealt with well. There are flashbacks to the past traumatic events, which are very vivid and add great depth.

Susanne Gervay has written with sensitivity and wonderful humour. The relationship between Katherine and her mother and sister is particularly warm and real. A compelling story. Recommended for older readers.

Reading Time

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## Butterflies celebrates the fighter in all of us

Website [www.sgervay.com](http://www.sgervay.com)

Blog: [www.sgervay.com/blog](http://www.sgervay.com/blog)

Youtube: [www.youtube.com/user/sgervay](http://www.youtube.com/user/sgervay)