



School: School of Creative Industries

Researcher: C. J. Skuse

Project Title: Absurdity and Reality in YA Fiction

UOA: 27 - English Language and Literature

Research Timeline

Date	Rationale of research activities and decisions undertaken
<i>Monster Timeline</i>	
Dec 2012	Skuse's desire to write in a boarding school setting coincided with seeing an article in the Daily Mail regarding a big cat sighting: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2314263/Britains-big-cat-history-revealed-Researchers-proof-LYNX-stalked-Devon-countryside-century-ago.html
Dec 2012	Developed of plotline. Originally the book was going to be called 'QOFE' (aka Queens of F*@!king Everything) or 'Cherryheads' (a name given to private school pupils who wear red berets as part of their uniform).
Dec 2012 – Oct 2013	Writing of first draft.
June 2014	Signed two-book contract with Mira Ink.
Research 2013 - 2014	April 2013 visit to Hestercombe House in Taunton for exterior inspiration (gardens/woodland follies that doubled up for Bathory School for Girls) June, 2013 visit to Cheddar Gorge (doubles for Bathory Village) for the scene with Nash and Charlie's date.

Various news stories about Big Foot and big cat sightings in US and UK. UK private girls' school websites for ideas about ethos, uniform requirements, exeat dates, teaching staff and lesson plans.

Missing brother storyline came from these three articles -

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2278470/Desperate-hunt-launched-British-teenager-missing-searing-heat-Australian-outback.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2279833/Sam-Woodhead-How-backpacker-lost-days-Australian-bush-used-clothing-make-SOS-signal.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2280933/British-22-year-old-Tom-Armstrong-ALIVE-going-missing-Thailand-month.html>

**Drafts
2014-2015**

Four main drafts, each one with a different 'monster' at the end of each of them. First draft finished August 2014 where the monster was the cat in the woods. Second draft (October 2014) the monster was a new character, an escaped prisoner in the woods. Third draft (Jan 2015) became the visiting delivery boy who was hiding psychotic tendencies and in the fourth and final draft (Feb 2015) in which the process of writing had revealed the true identity of the 'monster'.

**24th
September
2015**

Publication of *Monster*

The Deviants Timeline

**Conception -
early
2001/2002**

Skuse's desire to write a 'messed up Famous Five' story for a modern audience. Original pitch was 'Famous Five meets 'Junk' by Melvin Burgess. Skuse had a desire to write a subversive YA novel about how we romanticise children/teenagers in fiction when they are actually very messed up (some of them). A group of teenagers discover that one of their uncles may be a serial killer when they find a stash of jewellery oddments hidden in a remote barn on his land. Original titles - 'Square Pegs' 'Whipped' and 'Volcano Town.'

**2006 until
2014**

This book did not progress far, beyond the reading all the *Famous Five* books, and writing a few select chapters and composition of journals full of random and/rambling notes.

Research 2003 - 2014	<p>Research – while working at the Somerset County Gazette (Oct 2003 - Aug 2004) Skuse stumbled across some old archives about a psychiatric hospital formerly 'Tone Vale' in Taunton, now the village of Cotford St Luke. The fascinating news stories lent themselves to the book becoming more serious tonally, rather than tongue-in-cheek, and it became more about mental health issues and what seeds can sow these in a human being, particularly in childhood.</p> <p>https://www.whateversleft.co.uk/asylums/tone-vale-hospital-taunton https://alchetron.com/Tone-Vale-Hospital</p> <p>Other research trips - Shute Shelve near Cheddar (old railway line), Uphill Village, Weston-super-Mare (situation of Ella/Corey's houses), Burnham on Sea seafront (Zane's house, the town/beach), Nether Stowey (Fallon's farm), Rookery Manor (Shelby's 18th party), Brent Knoll Village (Pete's house). All in Somerset.</p>
June 2014	<p>Once Skuse had the contract, she focused on the story and applied everything learnt from writing several other books to develop the characters straight and decide once and for all what the book was really about - a tongue-in-cheek story about truant teenagers acting up or a serious story about teenagers in crisis and what could have hurt them.</p>
Drafts 2015/2016	<p>Once contracted to write the book, Skuse wrote perhaps three full drafts with a major line and copy edit.</p>
22nd September 2016	<p>Publication of <i>The Deviants</i></p>