

ENGLISH STANDARD: MODULE B

***Briar Rose* is shaped by the decisions of significant characters.**

Select ONE significant character in the novel and explore the impact of their choices and actions.

Multidimensional characters enable the reader to gain a deeper understanding of their process of maturation. Becca is one of these characters and throughout the novel develops of better understanding of her identity and love for her family, which impact on her choices and actions.

Love is a complex concept that helps the character overcome obstacles and challenges. Yolen uses the concept of love as one of the main themes in *Briar Rose*. Gemma and Becca share a very powerful relationship, the foundations of which, for Becca are her memories of how her grandmother used to tell the story of *Briar Rose*. From the very beginning of the story, the reader is aware of Gemma and Becca's bond, "I will want to hear it always, Gemma. Because it is your story". Progressively throughout the novel, Becca starts to question more about the story and its meaning, and everytime Gemma gives away that little bit more information then the previous telling. This foreshadows to the reader that there is a greater story behind the fairytale symbolic elements when she urges Becca to "... find the castle. I am the princess!" Becca's bond with her grandmother makes her want to know more – and her curiosity is further increased when the opening of Gemma's Rose Box' seems to pose more questions than it answers. Therefore Becca embarks on her quest to Poland to solve the mystery of Gemma and honour her love for her grandmother, 'I promised Gemma. I swore I would our inheritance.' And to Becca, swearing a promise and keeping it, is the honourable and right this to do, even if her family does not agree with her and so this affects her choices and then actions in the novel.

An understanding of self gives an understanding of identity. Becca does not know her true identity and also therefore cannot truly understand herself, and so when she agrees to find the castle for Gemma she is doing this for not only Gemma but for herself. Becca goes on a search for identity as she cannot find hers without finding Gemma's and so this action leads her to her heritage that was in need of being found, 'That castle is yours. It is all I have to leave you.

You must find it...promise me'. By undertaking this journey with Magda she is able to help Becca connect to Poland and the people she talks with, who she inspires with her story to find the truth about her grandmother. Even after finding from Josef that she was the only woman to have survived at Chelmno, it still left a gloomy picture in her head about how so many human lives were killed, 'Chlemno has no national survivor organisation. No one survived...[except] Four men. And one woman. Ksiezniczka'. The significance of Josef Potocki is that he gives an eye-witness account of Gemma's experiences, which – finally – allows the symbolic links of Gemma's fairytale to be solved. Potocki provides the reality of Gemma's story because that is how he has been able to continue on living his life but has never truly moved on nor forgotten his past. Both Josef and Gemma have provided themselves with different ways of dealing with their horrific pasts. Gemma tells hers like a fairy tale, passing on the necessary information to the next generation but in an innocent coating, whereas Josef could not bring himself to believe that it was s fairy tale as it was too scarring for himself. 'It's your story Becca, [only] you alone can break the spell', meaning that she alone is the only one who can find out the truth about her identity and of Gemma's.