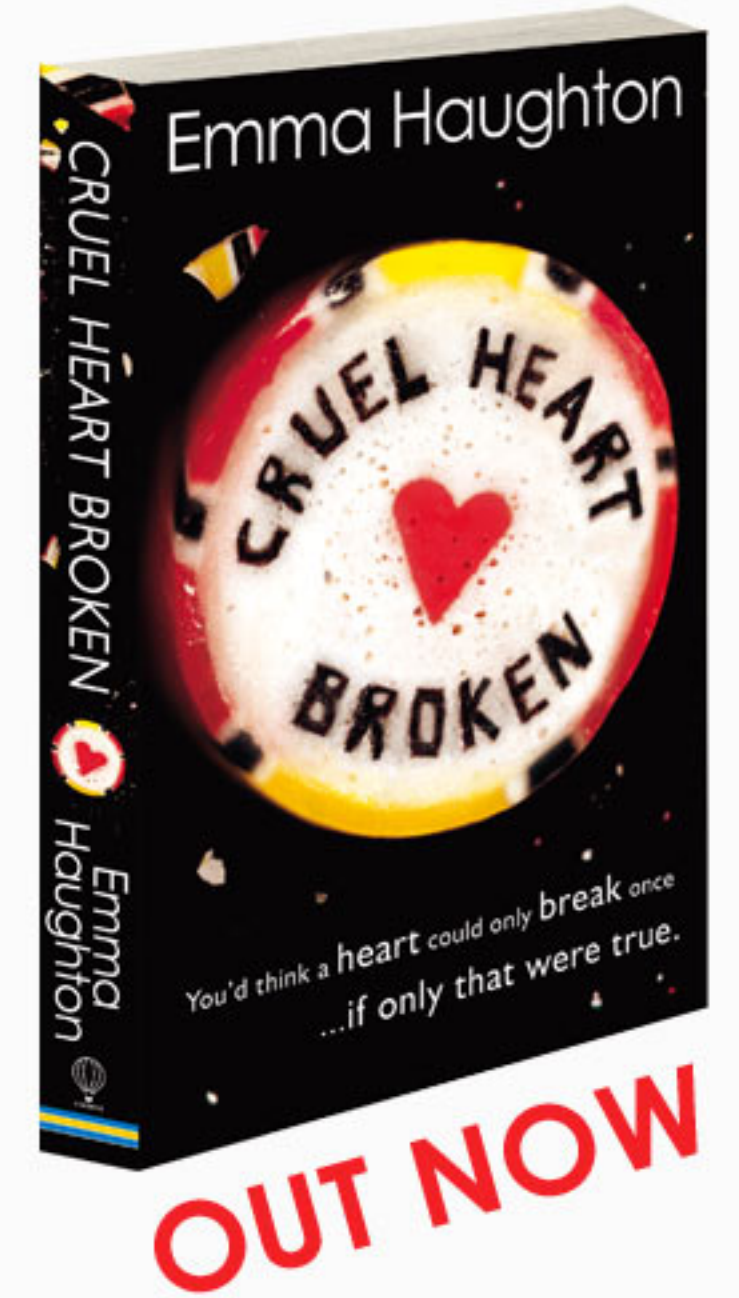


You'd think a **heart** could only **break** once...



CRUEL HEART BROKEN

discussion questions



SPOILER ALERT

These discussion points assume that you have read the entire book, and as such contain spoilers!

- *Cruel Heart Broken* was inspired by a true story about a false accusation against a teacher which ended in tragedy. How much of a role do you feel this plays in the final novel? Why do you think the author chose to develop the story in the direction she did?
- How does the way the novel switches between “now” and “then” affect your reading and understanding of story?
- Laurie and Katy are close in age, but otherwise they’re “worlds apart”. Why do you think this is? And what role does Walt play in the family and the story?
- In the prologue, Laurie refers to herself as a murderer. How does she come to terms with the abortion and come to see her decision in a more balanced light? How does the impact of other people’s opinions affect her, both positively and negatively?
- To what extent do the fates of all the characters - Laurie, Charlie, Tom, Nicole, Mr Rochester, their families - interconnect with each other? How often is the fate of one dependent on the choice of another?
- How does the behaviour of the parents in the story affect the lives of their children, unwittingly or otherwise?
- ***“I think of my own father. His own cloudy patch, and feel a rush of gratitude that he’s weathered the storm. I’m lucky, I realize. It could have been worse. Much worse.”***

Suicide is the leading cause of death of British men under fifty. Why do you think depression in men is not more widely discussed? What can we learn from the contrasting consequences of Mr Rochester’s and Laurie’s dad’s depression?



Emma Haughton

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- ***“You can’t just dump someone, you know. You can’t lead them on like that, then toss them away when you’ve had enough.”***

“Oh yeah?” The words erupt from my mouth before I can stop them. I almost laugh, though it’s not remotely funny. I’m just so astounded. How could Charlie, of all people, actually say that to my face?

The book is peppered with ironies: Charlie complains that Mr Rochester left Nicole in the lurch, when Charlie himself did the same to Lee. Nicole believes Mr Rochester should have to account for himself and face the consequences but doesn't want Charlie to face the consequences of his own lies. Are there any other ironies in the book you can think of?

- ***“There’s nothing more corrosive than a secret, I can see that now. How it eats away the heart of you, devouring you from the inside. Sapping all your energy in the effort to keep it suppressed.”***

What would you say is the central message of the story? That it's better to be honest regardless of the consequences? How would Laurie's/Charlie's/Katy's story have changed if they'd been honest from the start?

- ***“I turned towards the closed door at the end of the landing. Nothing in my head as I approached it. Nothing now, except a whole universe of emptiness. A black hole at the centre of my heart.***

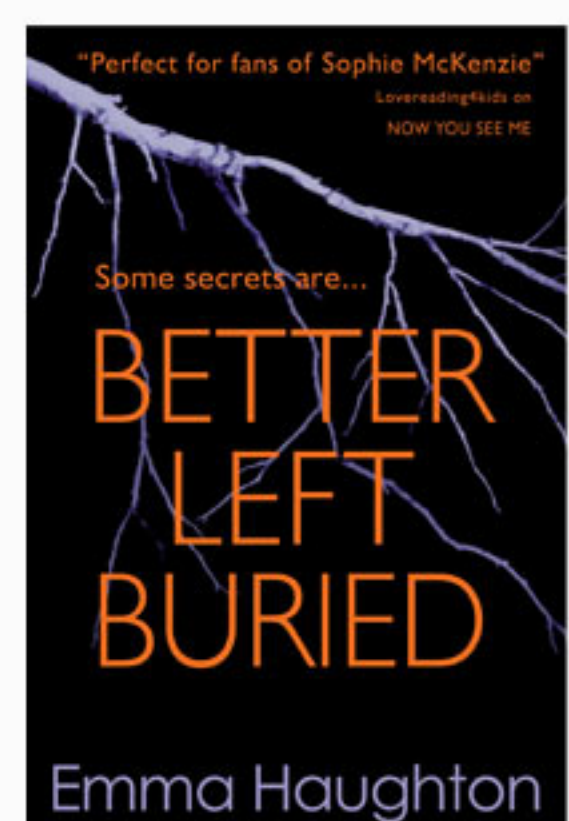
When I reached it, I paused, then twisted the handle and pushed it forward. Without a sound, the door to Katy’s bedroom swung open. But I already knew what I was going to see.”

The author occasionally stops short of describing dramatic events on the page. Why do you think she does this? What effect does this have on you as a reader?



Emma is a journalist and has worked freelance writing article for various broadsheets on topics ranging from family to travel.

Emma has written three YA novels; *Now You See Me*, *Better Left Buried* and *Cruel Heart Broken*.



Emma Haughton