

## A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussions, library programs, or classroom activities.

Meet Ohio-born author Mindy McGinnis and learn about her first contemporary novel.

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *The Female of the Species*.

Discover read-alikes, informational texts, and websites to explore topics and themes in depth.

# The Female of the Species

By Mindy McGinnis

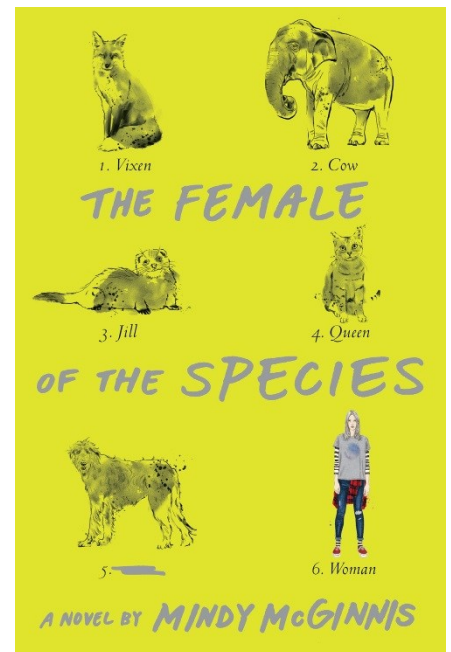


### About the Book

Alex Craft knows how to kill someone. And she doesn't feel bad about it.

Three years ago, when her older sister, Anna, was murdered and the killer walked free, Alex uncaged the language she knows best—the language of violence. While her own crime goes unpunished, Alex knows she can't be trusted among other people. Not with Jack, the star athlete who wants to really know her but still feels guilty over the role he played the night Anna's body was discovered. And not with Peekay, the preacher's kid with a defiant streak who befriends Alex while they volunteer at an animal shelter. Not anyone.

As their senior year unfolds, Alex's darker nature breaks out, setting these three teens on a collision course that will change their lives forever.



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### Book Details

***The Female of the Species*** by Mindy McGinnis.  
Katherine Tegen Books (HarperCollins), 2016. ISBN 9780062320896. Ages 14+.  
341 pages.

Leveled Reading: AR Points 11.0. ATOS Book Level 4.7. 980L Lexile.  
[www.harpercollins.com/9780062320896/the-female-of-the-species](http://www.harpercollins.com/9780062320896/the-female-of-the-species)

Available as an ebook and digital audiobook through the Ohio Digital Library:  
[ohiodigitallibrary.com](http://ohiodigitallibrary.com)

Available through the State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program:  
[webopac.klas.com/talkingbooks/ohio](http://webopac.klas.com/talkingbooks/ohio)

Enjoy the official book trailer for ***The Female of the Species***:  
[youtu.be/7AiLXqm6u-c](https://youtu.be/7AiLXqm6u-c)

Book awards include YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults 2017, *School Library Journal* Best Books 2016, and *Seventeen's* 10 Best YA Books of 2016.



Author photo and biography courtesy HarperCollins; used with permission.

**“You see it in  
all animals—the  
female of the  
species is more  
deadly than the  
male.”**

## About the Author

Mindy McGinnis is an Edgar Award-winning novelist who writes across multiple genres, including post-apocalyptic, historical, thriller, contemporary, mystery and fantasy. Her other books include 2015 & 2016 Choose to Read Ohio selection ***Not a Drop to Drink*** and its companion, ***In a Handful of Dust***, as well as ***This Darkness Mine***, ***Given to the Sea***, ***Given to the Earth***, and ***A Madness So Discreet***.

While her settings may change, you can always count on Mindy's books to deliver grit, truth, and an unflinching look at humanity and the world around us.

Mindy McGinnis is a graduate of Otterbein University with a BA in English literature and religion. Before becoming a full-time writer, she worked in a high school library for more than fifteen years. She lives in Ohio.

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## Author Resources

**Mindy McGinnis's official website**

[mindymcginnis.com](http://mindymcginnis.com)

**Author page on HarperCollins website**

[www.harpercollins.com/author/cr-107280/mindy-mcginnis](http://www.harpercollins.com/author/cr-107280/mindy-mcginnis)

**Mindy McGinnis's blog for writers, “Writer Writer Pants on Fire”**

[writerwriterpantsonfire.com](http://writerwriterpantsonfire.com)

**Follow Mindy McGinnis on Facebook**

[www.facebook.com/MindyMcGinnisAuthor](http://www.facebook.com/MindyMcGinnisAuthor)

**PBS Books Interview with Mindy McGinnis**

[youtu.be/2ERuaSIMINI](http://youtu.be/2ERuaSIMINI)

Mindy discusses ***The Female of the Species*** at the Miami Book Fair.

**For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:**

Contact Mindy McGinnis at [Mindy@MindyMcGinnis.com](mailto:Mindy@MindyMcGinnis.com).

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## Go Further

*Ideas for extending the experience of reading ***The Female of the Species***.*

- Both Alex and Peekay volunteer at an animal shelter, rescuing and caring for abandoned animals. Research what steps should be taken if you find an abandoned or abused animal; information can be found on the websites of the Animal Legal Defense Fund ([aldf.org](http://aldf.org)) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals ([peta.org](http://peta.org)). Find the location of your local animal shelter and what services they provide, and consider volunteering or donating. You don't have to volunteer on a regular basis like Alex and Peekay. Many shelters have short-term or day-long projects available. Find a shelter in your area by searching on Petfinder: [www.petfinder.com/animal-shelters-and-rescues/search](http://www.petfinder.com/animal-shelters-and-rescues/search).

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## Talk About It

Topics to share when discussing *The Female of the Species* with teens.

**Educators:** Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Other Learning Standards may also apply, as may Health Education curricula at the high school level. Discussion questions and educational activities for *The Female of the Species* align with Learning Standards for Grades 9-12.

**Librarians, parents, and others:** These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, [education.ohio.gov](http://education.ohio.gov). From the Topics dropdown menu, click on "Learning in Ohio."

**Spoiler warning! Some discussion questions refer to key elements in the book. Do not read if you do not want to find out what happens.**

- Why do you think Mindy McGinnis switches among three points of view throughout the novel? Was there any one point of view that you thought was the "most important"? If so, which one, and why?
- Is there a main character in this story?
- How do you think the rural Midwestern setting is significant to the story? Do you think the themes and basis for the story would have been equally effective in an urban setting?
- Do you think Jack is too hard on himself about the role he played when Anna's body was found? Should he have been expected to act "better" in the situation?
- Jack decides not to tell anyone what he learns about Alex's crime. How does he justify this decision to himself? Does he come to regret this decision later?
- During the course of the novel, Alex commits several very serious crimes, under the belief that proper legal justice is not taken and she should respond herself. Is there anything justifiable about her actions?
- Throughout the novel, Alex's mother is shown as uninterested and detached. How do you think this affects Alex and her actions throughout the story?
- What do you think of Jack's relationship with Branley? Do you think he is unfair to her? Are they unfair to each other?
- After Peekay is assaulted, she says she doesn't report it because she is afraid her friends will get in trouble for underage drinking. Do you think she might have any other reasons for not reporting her sexual assault?
- Readers learn more about each of the main characters as the book progresses, including ways in which each is vulnerable. How did your opinion of Alex, Peekay, Jack, and Branley change over the course of the book? What specific revelations were most surprising to you?
- Do you see Alex as a hero, or a villain? What about Jack?
- Did you like Branley? Why or why not?
- Which character did you most identify with? What about that character resonates most with you?
- Did you find the ending of the story satisfying? Why or why not?

## Go Further (continued)

- Because law and policy have failed her family in the past, Alex chooses to take justice into her own hands. What laws and policies are in place? How are we protected from sexual crimes? Research local laws for sexual assault to learn how it is dealt with and prosecuted. Information on sexual assault laws for Ohio can be found at: [www.rainn.org/laws-your-state-ohio](http://www.rainn.org/laws-your-state-ohio).
- Peekay chooses not to report her sexual assault. Reasons someone might not report a sexual assault include fear of being blamed, not believed, or getting in trouble, and the general stigma around discussing sexual assault. Research facts and statistics on sexual assault, as well as how to report it. Helpful resources can be found on the National Sexual Violence Resource Center's website: [www.nsvrc.org/find-help](http://www.nsvrc.org/find-help).

## Explore More

*Additional ideas and resources to use with **The Female of the Species**.*

### National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)

[www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

Survivors of sexual assault should know that they are not alone and that there are resources available to help them. The NSVRC provides a wealth of information for survivors, their friends and family, and a variety of educators and advocates.

### April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

[www.nsvrc.org/resource-topics/sexual-assault-awareness-month](http://www.nsvrc.org/resource-topics/sexual-assault-awareness-month)

Awareness and understanding of sexual assault are key to its prevention. A deeper understanding helps to remove the stigma surrounding speaking out about sexual assault, making it more likely that a survivor will report their assault. A month dedicated to sexual assault awareness helps to keep the issue on people's minds.

### Sexual Assault Hotline Number is 1-800-656-4673

It's important to know that resources exist for those who have survived sexual assault. The Sexual Assault Hotline is available 24 hours per day.

### Animal Cruelty

[www.humanesociety.org/resources/report-animal-cruelty](http://www.humanesociety.org/resources/report-animal-cruelty)

Animal abuse and cruelty can be defined in many ways and can include physical abuse and neglect. The characters in **The Female of the Species** deal with various forms of animal abuse and neglect at the animal shelter where they volunteer. It is important to address the problem of animal abuse by knowing what constitutes abuse and how to report it.

## Check It Out

*Recommended for readers of **The Female of the Species**.*

**The Darkest Corners** by Kara Thomas. Delacorte, 2016.

**Killer Instinct** by S. E. Green. Simon Pulse, 2015.

**Underneath Everything** by Marcy Beller Paul. Balzer + Bray, 2015.

**A Good Idea** by Christina Moracho. Viking Books, 2017.

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: [library.ohio.gov/ctro](http://library.ohio.gov/ctro).

This toolkit revised December 2018.