



scot gardner

White Ute Dreaming – Teacher's Notes by Scot Gardner

White Ute Dreaming is a book about dogs and mates and lovers. About dusting yourself off when you fall down. About living life to the max.

The notes draw on a few of the major themes in the book.

1. Communication – listening to others and speaking your truth
2. Life experience – adventure, travel, tattoos
3. Self responsibility – authority, autonomy, stuffing up and getting caught
4. Risks – parties, drugs, cars, emotional courage
5. Family – busted families, family rules, having things in common with your parents
6. Sexuality – infidelity, first sex, sex and love, perversion, homosexuality
7. Sadness – anger, fear, depression, suicide

For each of the themes, there are some questions **FROM THE BOOK**, a **SNIPPET** of my thoughts and some **WHAT DO YOU THINK?** ideas for discussion.

The **WHAT DO YOU THINK?** exercises are designed to engage young people in an individual and creative way. They provide opportunities for students to tell stories from their own lives and develop personal voice through writing and discussions. A couple of suggestions are: set some ground rules prior to discussions (respect others' stories, use 'I' statements, give positive feedback) and get actively involved in discussions (teacher tells *their own* stories as part of the process).

TEN FAST MINUTES is a creative writing technique. For exactly ten minutes, disregard language, grammar, spelling, character, plot and structure and tell a story. The telling of the story is paramount. Students should be coached to keep their hand moving for the whole ten minutes.

The results may be 'stream of consciousness' or have more or less structure. Some people might like to read theirs aloud. Some might be refined further.

SHOW, DON'T TELL is a fiction writer's axiom. It's the crux of professional writing. Instead of writing, 'Bob was angry' and feeding the reader all the information, say 'Bob's face changed colour, from red to purple', still conveying the image but drawing the reader into the story. Some of the exercises use this technique to expand young people's grasp of creative writing.

The **FOR THE COURAGEOUS** questions are curly ones. Teachers will know their groups well enough to decide if opening discussions on these issues will be courageous or stupid. I like to err on the side of madness in the classroom, but I wouldn't ask you to.

THEME 1.

COMMUNICATION – LISTENING TO OTHERS AND SPEAKING YOUR TRUTH

Wayne gets anonymous notes (p17, pp23-24, p28, p34, p61).

Wayne finds it hard to put his feelings into words (p127, p161).

Wayne hears stories from the tattooed bloke that eventually shape his life (pp81-85).

FROM THE BOOK

1. Where does Wayne's 'white ute dream' come from?
2. Wayne gets notes from whom?
3. How does Wayne make Kerry cry for a day?

SNIPPET

Learning how to express myself clearly has been a big battle. It's still going on. One of my English reports in year nine said I used too many big words, that I needed to simplify my language to get the message across. Keep It Simple, Sexy.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Non-verbal communication. How does your mum/dad/cat/dog/goldfish give you messages about how they're feeling without using words?

Some things are bloody hard to put into words. What are the hardest things to say to people? (Not like 'she sells sea shells' and that sort of tongue twister crap, but things like 'you're beautiful' and that – head/heart twisters).

Can you think of a time when you've been lost for words? Can you think of a time when nothing was the perfect thing to say?

FOR THE COURAGEOUS

The tattooed bloke in *White Ute Dreaming*

says that dads sometimes find it hard to tell their kids that they love them (p83). Is that true?

Who are the good teachers in your school? What makes them good?

THEME 2.

LIFE EXPERIENCE – ADVENTURE, TRAVEL, TATTOOS

Wayne has some big experiences in *White Ute Dreaming* ...

Wayne's best mates shift interstate (p13).

Wayne's uncle dies (p76).

Wayne's dad moves out of his life (p138).

Wayne's dog gets shot (pp187-189).

FROM THE BOOK

1. What breed of dog is Ernie?
2. Where does the tattooed bloke work during the Dry?
3. Where do the guys go to camp?

SNIPPET

I write stories that people have told me, that I've lived through and that I've made up. Experience gives life colour, texture and meaning. Not much happens when you're watching teev.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Recount an adventure or experience that has shaped your life.

If you had a tattoo what would it be? Where would you get it and why?

TEN FAST MINUTES

I remember when ...

FOR THE COURAGEOUS

I wish I didn't remember when ...

THEME 3.

SELF RESPONSIBILITY – AUTHORITY, AUTONOMY, STUFFING UP AND GETTING CAUGHT

Wayne gets pissed off at the ticket inspector (p85).

Wayne gets stopped by the cops (p128).

Wayne has a barney with his mum about dope (p22) and about her car (p136).

FROM THE BOOK

1. What little act shows Wayne's changing ability to look after himself (p3 then on p211)?
2. Why is Wayne pissed off at the cops?
3. What promise does Wayne make to Kez?

SNIPPET

Growing up leads to more responsibility. One of the biggest revelations I've had through life (and it's about as big as the discovery of fire for cave men) is that the more choices you *make* in your life – like where you want to go, what you want to learn, who you want to be with – the more choices you *get to make* and eventually, the more control you have over your life. Forget the phrase 'I dunno'. Practice making decisions.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Can you think of an incident, when dealing with authority, where the best way to deal with the situation would be to pull your head in?

Can you think of an incident, when dealing with authority, where the best way to deal with the situation would be to stick up for

your rights?

What are you allowed to do now that you weren't allowed to do three years ago?

FOR THE COURAGEOUS (TEN FAST MINUTES)

The worst thing I've got sprung doing was ...

THEME 4.

RISKS – PARTIES, DRUGS, CARS, EMOTIONAL COURAGE

Wayne makes a few edgy decisions about dope (p20), his mum's car (p133) and grog (p178).

Wayne takes a few emotional risks ... like saying that he would kiss Angie (p96) and telling his dad that he wants to live with his mum (p207).

Wayne tells his dad that he loves him (p207).

FROM THE BOOK

1. What does Wayne get tanked on at the canyon?
2. What does Wayne crash into when driving his mum's car?
3. What does Griz offer Wayne at Rod Holloway's party?

SNIPPET

You have to push yourself every now and again or you won't grow or change but if you push yourself too hard you could get hurt. It's a balancing act. A lot of the young people I work with in schools push their bodies hard with drugs and shit. They go at it like they're immortal. I hope they live long enough to find a balance.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Have you ever been in a risky situation?

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Write about a good risk you've taken and one you wish you hadn't.

When we write or talk about drugs and alcohol we write 'drugs *and* alcohol'. Isn't alcohol a drug? Why do we make the separation?

FOR THE COURAGEOUS

Have a discussion about times when you've pushed it too far – emotionally or physically.

THEME 5.

FAMILY – BUSTED FAMILIES, FAMILY RULES, HAVING THINGS IN COMMON WITH YOUR PARENTS

Wayne's mum sets some stiff rules about how Kez and Wayne are allowed to use the flat (p4).

Wayne gets grounded (p21).

Wayne's mum reckons he's like his dad (p136, p147).

Wayne nuts out why his mum and dad may have separated (p161).

Wayne has memories of being smacked (p119).

FROM THE BOOK

1. What is it that Sylvia (Wayne's mum) finds that confirms her opinion that Wayne and his dad are alike?
2. Why does Wayne get grounded?
3. Why does Wayne's dad shift?

SNIPPET

I have two teenage daughters and a son in primary school. My mum and dad still live together. I have two brothers and they're both married with kids. I love the lot of them. I guess some people aren't so lucky. Your families are the ones who help you launch the boat of your life. I also love that idea that

sometimes friends get so close to you that they become part of your family.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you have uncles and aunts that aren't really related?

Do you ever call your friends 'sister' or 'brother'?

List some people in your life that aren't part of your blood family but are part of your big family. Why are they included?

FOR THE COURAGEOUS

As a group, list some bad things about family and some good things about family.

TEN FAST MINUTES

If there were one thing I'd change about my family it'd be ...

SHOW, DON'T TELL

It's Sunday afternoon and your family are together. Write a scene in dialogue (just people talking to each other) that gives a snapshot of where you fit in your family and how the people relate to you.

THEME 6.

SEXUALITY – INFIDELITY, FIRST SEX, SEX AND LOVE, PERVING, HOMOSEXUALITY

Wayne is a sexual being and confused about the relationship between love and sex (p4, p130, p209).

Wayne decides not to have sex with Angie (p126).

Wayne cops an eyeful of Angie (p58).

Hendo is missing the 'politeness gene' (p99).

Den comes out (pp181-183).

Higgins (the old bloke) watches the Humes through their windows (p172).

FROM THE BOOK

1. How did David Longmore get his nickname?
2. Where did Wayne find the stash of *Penthouse* magazines?
3. What happened between Kerry and the guy at her new school, Aaron?

SNIPPET

It's difficult to write about or teach sexuality without sounding like a prude or a pervert. I went right through school without doing a single class of sexual education. Disappointed!

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Straight girls can have girlfriends, why can't straight guys have boyfriends?

Is it ever okay to perve?

What is legal sex where you live for someone your age?

FOR THE COURAGEOUS

Why is it that a sexually confident woman is called a *slut* but a sexually confident man is called a *stud* or a *legend*? Is that fair?

THEME 7.

SADNESS – ANGER, FEAR, DEPRESSION, SUICIDE

Wayne feels depressed and isolated after the Humes shift house (p109).

Wayne cries at his uncle's funeral (p78).

Wayne is almost swallowed by the rage he has for the old bloke (pp188-189).

Wayne feels suicidal (pp137-139).

FROM THE BOOK

1. How was Wayne intending to kill himself?
2. What musical instrument played a part in Wayne's undoing at his uncle's funeral?
3. What does Wayne miss most about Kerry?

SNIPPET

I felt like killing myself when I was fifteen. Really angry, black and 'life is shit' feelings chased me for a while. Lucky they didn't catch me. My mates and my family shook me around – when they eventually worked out that there was something wrong. I wrote some heavy poetry around that time. Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Have you ever thought of suicide? Why? Why not?

What's one thing that gives you reason to live?

What makes you angry?

SHOW DON'T TELL

As a group write a list of words that we use when we talk about sadness. Write a 'blue' piece. Show us that the character is sad or depressed without any words from the word list.

FOR THE COURAGEOUS (TEN FAST MINUTES)

The worst thing I've done in anger is ...

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SOME ANSWERS FOR THE 'FROM THE BOOK' QUESTIONS

THEME 1.

COMMUNICATION – LISTENING TO OTHERS AND SPEAKING YOUR TRUTH

1. Where does Wayne's 'white ute dream' come from?

From the tattooed bloke. He spends his summers on the road with his family.

2. Wayne gets notes from whom?
3. How does Wayne make Kerry cry for a day?

Kerry and Angie.
He writes her a love letter.

THEME 2.

LIFE EXPERIENCE – ADVENTURE, TRAVEL, TATTOOS

1. What breed of dog is Ernie?

He's probably a mongrel with plenty of dingo blood.

2. Where does the tattooed bloke work during the Dry?

On a mango farm in Darwin.

3. Where do the guys go to camp?

The canyon.

THEME 3.

SELF RESPONSIBILITY – AUTHORITY, AUTONOMY, STUFFING UP AND GETTING CAUGHT

1. What little act shows Wayne's changing ability to look after himself (p3 then on p211)?

Tying his shoelaces. His mum ties them for him (p3) then he does them himself with a bit of a struggle (p211).

2. Why is Wayne pissed off at the cops?

They pull him up and ask him questions. This is a vignette to show Wayne's issues with authority.

3. What promise does Wayne make to Kez?

That he'll come back and take her on a trip in his white ute.

THEME 4.

RISKS – PARTIES, DRUGS, CARS, EMOTIONAL COURAGE

1. What does Wayne get tanked on at the canyon?

Jack Daniels, Southern Comfort and Jim Beam.

2. What does Wayne crash into when driving his mum's car?

A wheelie bin.

3. What does Griz offer Wayne at Rod Holloway's party?

A tablet – ekkies – ecstasy.

THEME 5.

FAMILY – BUSTED FAMILIES, FAMILY RULES, HAVING THINGS IN COMMON WITH YOUR PARENTS

1. What is it that Sylvia (Wayne's mum) finds that confirms her opinion that Wayne and his dad are alike?

A condom.

2. Why does Wayne get grounded?

For smoking dope.

3. Why does Wayne's dad shift?

To take a job on a deepwater fishing cruiser.

THEME 6.

SEXUALITY – INFIDELITY, FIRST SEX, SEX AND LOVE, PERVING, HOMOSEXUALITY

1. How did David Longmore get his nickname?

They called him 'David Longdick' after he was sprung playing with himself at school.

2. Where did Wayne find the stash of *Penthouse* magazines?

In his Uncle Don's shed.

3. What happened between Kerry and the guy at her new school, Aaron?

They met at a party and it was a bit of a set-up. They kissed. He put his hand up her shirt. She thought she was going to chuck. She phoned her mum and went home.

THEME 7.

SADNESS – ANGER, FEAR, DEPRESSION, SUICIDE

1. How was Wayne intending to kill himself?

He was going to hang himself in the cupboard.

2. What musical instrument played a part in Wayne's undoing at his uncle's funeral?

Didgeridu.

3. What does Wayne miss most about Kerry?

Walking Ernie with her.

ABOUT SCOT GARDNER

Scot Gardner has been a counsellor, masseur and hypnotherapist but currently works in schools with young people who'd rather be somewhere else. He lives near the Victorian town of Yinnar in a solar-powered

barn with his wife and three sweet little fairies (HA!). He likes hippie music and thunderstorms. *White Ute Dreaming* is his second novel.

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