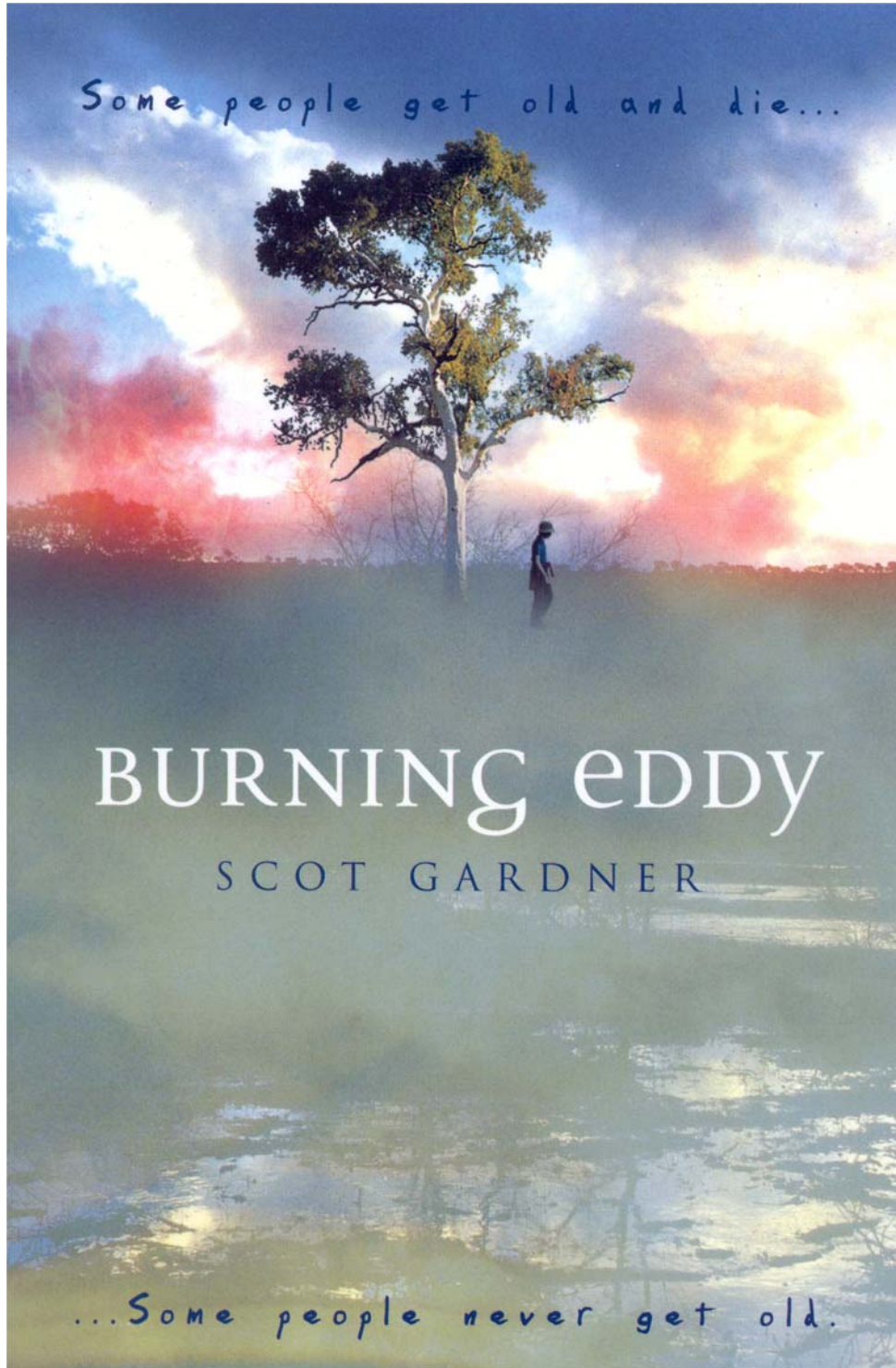




# scot gardner





# burning eddy

## **BURNING EDDY TEACHERS' NOTES** **Written by Scot Gardner**

***Burning Eddy is a story about friendship and love. Of hardship and loss. Fire and the cycles of life. Hope.***

The notes draw on the following major themes in the book.

- 1. Animals** - weird and wonderful, symbolic and real, part of our culture and homeland
- 2. Life Experience** - age, attitude to life, the good and the bad
- 3. Work** - money, effort, time, a job that suits your personality
- 4. Friends** - friends that used to be enemies, falling in love with friends, friendships of all ages
- 5. Family** - busted families, family rules, family lies
- 6. Death** - death of a child, death of an older person, murder, grief
- 7. Fire** - symbolic and real, friend or foe, pyromania

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 their personal voice through writing and discussions. A couple of suggestions are: set some ground rules prior to discussions (respect others' stories, use 'I' statements, 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 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.



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## THEME 1

### **Animals** – weird and wonderful, symbolic and real, part of our culture and homeland

Daniel reads a lot into the appearance of animals in his world.  
Dan loves spiders (pp 1-5).  
An owl gives Dan a 'message' about Eddy's death (pp 151-152).  
They run over a wallaby in Dan's new car (pp 95-96).

#### FROM THE BOOK

1. What animal do Daniel and Toby find in the woodheap?
2. What is the significance of 'Fish' to Chapter 16?
3. What did the American Indians say about the shedding of a snake's skin?

#### SNIPPET

I've lived in the bush and on farms for more than twenty years. Animals are a part of my daily existence. I can hear an eagle chattering from the big manna gum across the valley as I type this. Rats in the roof keep us awake in autumn. I *do* like spiders.

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Nicknames are cruel sometimes. Sometimes they're fun. What sort of outstanding features and attitudes would someone with the nickname 'Rabbit' have? What sort of characteristics might someone with the nickname 'Camel' have?

Sit for a minute and decide which animal in the world best describes you. Your totem, perhaps. List the admirable characteristics of that animal.

#### TEN FAST MINUTES

Write like a wild thing about an animal that you hate, but write about it as though you love it.

#### FOR THE COURAGEOUS

Cruelty to animals is generally not tolerated in our society. Why is it still okay to be cruel to snakes and spiders, flies and mosquitos?





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## THEME 2

### Life Experience - age, attitude to life, the good and the bad

Daniel is fifteen in the book and lives a sheltered life.  
Eddy is eighty-six and seen a lot of the world.  
Daniel feels like his life is stuffed (pp 44).  
'Be careful what you wish for' (pp 100, 131).  
Eddy admits to trying to kill herself (pp 136).

#### FROM THE BOOK

1. At what age did Daniel start working for money?
2. What good things come into Daniel's life after his dad is taken away?
3. How does being jailed affect Steven Fairbrother's (Daniel's dad) attitude to Daniel?

#### SNIPPET

I get this feeling, as I stroll through life, that attitude plays a part in organising your future. For me it seems that what you dwell on in your quiet moments – happy or sad, triumphant or disastrous – eventually comes to pass. I think there are wise young people and wise old people. Young people dream big, old people have lived.

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Recount an adventure or experience that has shaped your life.  
Does your attitude to life make a difference to how it unfolds?  
Write about a time that something good resulted from an initially bad experience.

#### TEN FAST MINUTES

I remember when ...

#### FOR THE COURAGEOUS

I wish I didn't remember when ...





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## THEME 3

### **Work** - money, effort, time, a job that suits your personality

Daniel is a good worker and spends a lot of his spare time working (pp 16).

Eddy is generous with money and committed to paying well for a job well done (pp 17).

Dan pays cash for his first car (pp 91).

Steven Fairbrother has a lonely job in a coalmine (pp 35).

#### FROM THE BOOK

1. What type of work did Daniel first do for money?
2. What tool does Daniel romanticise at the Mayor's place?
3. Daniel confesses to being good at making money; what is he not so good at? (pp 88)

#### SNIPPET

Work has been a big issue for me over the years. I've had about twenty jobs. I started washing cars when I was ten. We'd sometimes earn \$20.00 in a day. I like to work hard and sitting at the computer all day doesn't satisfy that urge. I like to build things and dig gardens and I still love the challenges writing brings up in me. I love performing for a crowd, especially young people – they're ruthlessly honest. I've almost got the balance right. I've been self-employed for twenty years.

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What would you do for work if you had all the money you needed?

Detail a day in your perfect job.

Think of someone in your life that enjoys their work. How does enjoying their work affect their personality?

#### FOR THE COURAGEOUS (TEN FAST MINUTES)

Would you kill someone for money? How much?





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## THEME 4

### **Friends** - friends that used to be enemies, falling in love with friends, friendships of all ages

Daniel becomes friends with Michael Fisher (pp 169-171).  
Dan and Eddy become friends (pp 92).  
Dan confesses his love to Chantelle (pp 186).

#### FROM THE BOOK

1. Who are Daniel's four-square friends?
2. What happened to Dan's friend Chris Gemmel?
3. What is the thing that Dan and Fish find they have in common at the shack? (pp 170)

#### SNIPPET

I have two daughters and a son. Through them I'm learning about the art of friendship and how crazy it gets during adolescence. My eldest daughter would rather sit in silence than start a conversation with someone. My younger daughter 'went out' with seventeen guys when she was in year seven and she confessed to only liking one of them. And my son worked out who he was going to marry when he was three – he's only six now so he's got a bit of travelling to do before he hitches up! Crazy. I was best man for a guy I went to kinder with. Some friendships go the miles.

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why is it that girls have girlfriends but boys don't have boyfriends?  
Think of your circle of friends. Who has been your friend for the longest time? What is the age difference between your youngest friend and your oldest friend?  
Is your best friend the one you've known the longest? What turns a 'good friend' into a 'best friend'?

#### FOR THE COURAGEOUS

Can you fall in love with a friend and still be friends?





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## THEME 5

### **Family** -busted families, family rules, family lies

Dan's dad makes family life strained.

Dan's dad has locks on everything and rules about music (pp 24).

Steven Fairbrother has secrets about his life (pp 179-181).

Eddy is like a grandparent to Dan (pp 130).

#### FROM THE BOOK

1. Who asked Eddy if she would marry him?
2. Michael Fisher's dad has an unsettling obsession with what?
3. Why does Dan think the family doesn't need a phone?

#### SNIPPET

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





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## THEME 6

### **Death** - death of a child, death of an older person, murder, grief

Daniel is passenger when his car runs over a wallaby, killing it (pp 95).

The fox kills the chickens (pp 49-51).

Dan remembers when Chris Gemmel died (pp 147).

Eddy dies (pp 190).

#### **FROM THE BOOK**

1. What is the significance of the owl?
2. What did Steven Fairbrother do to Barry and why?
3. Why did Dan lose it at the dam after the fire?

#### **SNIPPET**

Death is part of life, hey? Only in the same way that darkness is part of daytime. Older people have told me that they never used to think about death when they were younger, that they thought they were immortal until their body started to slow down. Death can be a good thing. On the farm we grew up with an honest appreciation of where death fits into life. Made our own roast beef, sausages and chicken drumsticks.

#### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Who do you think would go to heaven first, someone who kills a person to protect his family or someone who kills a person to protect his country?

Describe a situation when death is a good thing.

#### **FOR THE COURAGEOUS**

Fill a page with an imaginary 'after death experience'. Describe what your character may hear, feel, smell, see and taste after they die.





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## THEME 7

### **Fire** - symbolic and real, friend or foe, pyromania

Dan almost blows himself up starting a fire with petrol (pp 76).

Eddy's house burns down (pp 64).

Dan burns the remains of his best friend (pp 199).

Fisher's calls his dad a pyro (pp 170).

#### FROM THE BOOK

1. What does Dan burn in the fire he lights on the hill?
2. Why did the firemen interrupt when Dan was burning off at the Mayor's place?
3. Why did John Fisher go to jail?

#### SNIPPET

Beautiful servant, deadly master. We had a firebug torching the bush near my home in the summer I wrote *Burning Eddy*. It was bloody scary on the hot days. It was the year before all the houses burned in Canberra and East Gippsland. They thought it was a teenager with an attitude problem and it turned out to be a high-ranking member of the local CFA. I like to watch fire and I'd like to learn how to do fireworks ... that'd be cool.

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

List ten good things and ten bad things about fire.

Have you ever seen a fire out of control? Write a page about fire, imagining the details, the smell, the taste, how it feels, what you can see.

#### SHOW, DON'T TELL

As a group, write a list of the words we use to describe fire. Then write three lines describing a fire without using any of the words from the list.

#### FOR THE COURAGEOUS (TEN FAST MINUTES)

Why do we burn dead bodies?





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## Some answers for the 'From The Book' questions

### 1. **Animals** - weird and wonderful, symbolic and real, part of our culture and homeland

1. Scorpion
2. Michael Fisher's nickname
3. Symbolises death and re-birth

### 2. **Life Experience** - age, attitude to life, the good and the bad

1. Ten
2. TV, phone, girlfriend, a happy mum and sister, responsibility
3. He's sorry about everything that has gone on, he's much warmer and open hearted

### 3. **Work** - money, effort, time, a job that suits your personality

1. Pulling out thistles for Graham and Tina
2. Chainsaw!
3. Spending money

### 4. **Friends** - friends that used to be enemies, falling in love with friends, friendships of all ages

1. Robert, Aiden, David and David
2. Drowned in a farm dam
3. Their fathers are in jail

### 5. **Family** - busted families, family rules, family lies

1. Luke
2. Fire
3. Because they haven't got any friends

### 6. **Death** - death of a child, death of an older person, murder, grief

1. Dan sees an owl and thinks it's a symbol
2. He killed him because Barry had interfered with him when he was little. Revenge
3. He saw the dead goat in the dam and it made him recall the death of his best friend and the grief attached to the experience

### 7. **Fire** - symbolic and real, friend or foe, pyromania

1. Box of magazines from his cubby
2. Because they were in a fire restriction period and Dan shouldn't have been burning off
3. For lighting the fire that burned Penny Lane's house (and others)