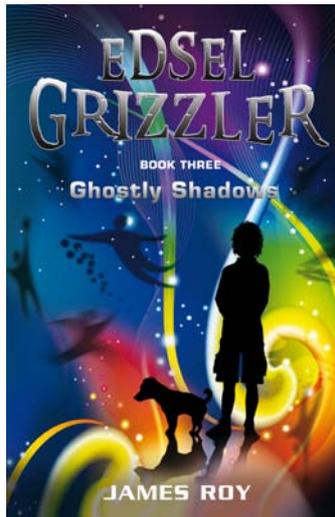


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EDSEL GRIZZLER:

Ghostly Shadows

James Roy



Teachers' Notes

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SYNOPSIS:

Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows is the final instalment in James Roy's science fiction trilogy in which Edsel finds himself in the parallel dimension of Verdada. Determined to rescue Jacq from eternity in Widen, Edsel is unexpectedly reunited with the *Mira* and entrusted with the task of liberating Verdada from the tyrannical clutches of Ben.

Edsel's friendship with Jacq deepens as her health rapidly deteriorates. Fearful that she will die, Edsel confronts his own insecurities and faults to help Jacq and the children in Verdada, and in so doing, discovers much about himself.

In a blurred combination of reality and dreams, Edsel manages to use his courage, wit and intelligence to rescue those close to him.

THEMES:

Relationships:

- Edsel has a very close friendship with Jacq
- Edsel understands his parents' overprotective behaviour

Heroes and Villains:

- Edsel is an unlikely hero who risks much to rescue others
- Ben has allowed revenge and bitterness to erode his character
- Ben's sense of control and autocratic leadership make him evil

Loyalty and Trust:

- Jacq and Edsel are intensely loyal to one another
- Richard trusts Edsel to rescue Verdada
- Edsel trusts that the *Mira* are trying to help him

Bullying:

- Ben bullies the children in Verdada

Dreams and Reality

- Edsel is confused by a blurred sense of reality; which of his experiences in Verdada are a dream and which are reality?

WRITING STYLE:

Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows is written in third person, past tense. The text contrasts dream-like sequences with starkly realistic scenes. Edsel is unsure of what he is truly experiencing and what is a dream. The writing is fast-paced and includes quality dialogue and characterisation.

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STUDY NOTES:

- *Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows* is the final book in the *Edsel Grizzler* trilogy.
 - Recap briefly the plots of *Edsel Grizzler: Voyage to Verdada* and *Edsel Grizzler: Rescue Mission* before commencing *Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows*.
 - Compare the covers and blurbs of the three titles
 - After reading the last chapter of *Edsel Grizzler: Rescue Mission*, predict how *Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows* may begin
- Before, during and after reading, it is important to teach students what happens as we read. Discuss strategies that readers use such as:
 - When getting ready to read, we:
 - Speculate, predict and ask questions of a text to make sense of it
 - Find patterns in the text
 - During reading, we:
 - Read between the lines – infer
 - Visualise scenes
 - Hear the voices of the characters
 - Make connections between events and the reactions of characters
 - Empathise
 - Form a connection with the narrator and the author
 - Reflecting on reading, we:
 - Make judgements
 - Draw conclusions
 - Respond in different ways depending on our experiences and insights
 - Have students identify which of these strategies they are using as they complete activities
- Model some of these reading strategies by using the following questions after reading the first page or two:
 - What is my purpose in reading this text?
 - What can I immediately begin to understand?
 - Who is the narrative voice in the story?
 - What do I learn about the voice in the story?
- Writers use imagery to create a picture in the minds of their readers. Using the first paragraph of chapter 1, highlight the language and techniques used by James Roy to create this opening scene. Discuss choices such as:
 - It was silent on the plain, except for the scratch of the shovel against the sides of the hole
 - Distant wail of the train

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- Pencil-straight track
- The use of repetition such as the three consecutive sentences starting 'The train'
- Stagnant place of weary, hungry children
- Dry earth under the wide, silent sky
- Keep a journal of phrases and sentences that you enjoy as you read *Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows*
- Use the conversation between Jacq and Edsel on p2 to discuss and practise the language and punctuation conventions used with dialogue. Take note of:
 - New Speaker, new line
 - It is not always necessary for the author to tell the reader who said what (ie said Edsel; replied Jacq etc) Sometimes, it is clear who is speaking from the context of the passage.
 - Instead of always ending dialogue with clauses like '*said Edsel*' or '*replied Jacq*', take note of James Roy's techniques such as:
 - *He sighed. 'You always say that...'* Vary the placement of direct speech. Notice the sentence '*He sighed*' before the dialogue. This serves two purposes. It varies the sentence structure of the passage of writing and also tells the reader who is speaking.
 - '*Fine.*' *Jacq peeled off her jumper and tied it around her waist.* The reader knows that Jacq was the speaker because of the sentence following the direct speech.
- Characters drive stories. Find examples from *Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows* to illustrate the characteristics of Ben, Richard, Jacq and Edsel. Create character portraits of two characters of your choice. This could be presented on PowerPoint or Prezi.
- To infer is to read between the lines. Select passages of the text to specifically practise the skill of inferring. Below is a very simple example:

Edsel sat. The ballast was pointy and quite uncomfortable, but it felt good to take the weight off his feet. (p27)

- How is Edsel feeling?
- Why is he feeling like this?
- Is Edsel glad to be sitting on the uncomfortable ballast?
- Has Edsel been walking for a long time? What makes you think that?
- In Chapter 6, Richard compares Edsel's unusual view of the train station with the way in which film works. Investigate how still images in film are

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- used to create moving pictures. Examine James Roy's description of the train station in light of this investigation. Discuss his original descriptions.
- Many of the events in *Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows* seem to be a dream. How has the author written these scenes? What techniques help create these dream-like scenes?
 - Re-read the description of Grand City in Chapter 7 (p57) or of the blue door in Chapter 11 (p99), analysing the descriptive techniques used.
 - Project a scene or an object onto a Whiteboard. Brainstorm words and phrases to describe this image. Write a descriptive passage about this scene or object.
 - Edsel describes Jacq as feisty. What clues does the reader get of Jacq's feistiness?
 - Edsel begins to have feelings of doubt and regrets. He has a lot of 'if' statements (p92). Discuss the positive and negative implications of 'if' statements as outlined on p92, for example:
 - What if I'd never brought my mum those flowers?
 - What if I'd never tried to make money ... by convincing the little kids that the Egg was a spaceship?
 - What if I'd never taken the plug thing home?
 - If I'd never come to Verdada, I'd never have met you...
 - Discuss the contribution that James Roy's use of original figurative language has on the quality of the reading experience:
 - Like ants from an anthill p93
 - Like spots of dandruff on a collar p117
 - Realisation hit him in the guts like a sledgehammer p142
 - Body odour that hung around Ben like a thick cloud p150
 - Voice was smooth, like melted chocolate p176
 - Swimming towards the surface of his sleep p194
 - One of the hinges complained faintly as the door swung open p194
 - It was so subtle it almost wasn't there at all p140
 - Discuss clichés and the need to create meaningful, yet original imagery. Using a variety of images as stimulus, try creating your own similes and metaphors.
 - What does Richard mean when he says, 'we each drive our own' train? (p125)
 - Graham says to Edsel, 'There's so much that's special about you...' (p139)
 - What is special about Edsel?
 - If you were in Edsel's situation, what special qualities could you use in Verdada?

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- The notion of dreams recurs in *Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows*. This is discussed on p140. What is the difference between Edsel's dreams and his goals?
- One of the controlling measures Ben has over the children in Verdada is to stop them from asking questions. What does Edsel mean when he says to 'stop asking questions ... only makes them weaker'? (p168) Is this true of everyday life?
- Ben is very controlling and is clever at making those around him feel insecure and doubtful. This is a form of bullying. Discuss this type of bullying and strategies to counteract such mind games.
- The conclusion of *Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows* is quite open ended. Discuss open endings and why this is an appropriate way to finish this trilogy.
- Continue the story by writing your own Chapter 23, being sure to follow the author's style.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

James Roy talks about this motivation for writing *Edsel Grizzler: Ghostly Shadows*:

Writing this book was, in many ways, the hardest writing I've ever had to do. The reason is simple - it's because I don't generally plot out my books before I begin writing. I often try, but once I get a little way into the story, I find myself going in another, more interesting direction. The book I'm currently working on, which is connected short stories, is charted out all over my study window with whiteboard marker and looks quite a bit like a really complicated molecule or something. It's really interesting to see the story grow in that way, but I also let myself change direction if a better, more interesting or more believable option presents itself.

*This isn't quite what happened with *Ghostly Shadows*, because I knew that there were a couple of things I had to do in this book. First, I had to wrap Edsel's story up. This series was never going to go to a fourth book, so I had to give the reader a satisfying ending. Would that mean that Edsel would ultimately get everything he wanted? Not necessarily, but I did want him to have a satisfactory conclusion to his story. Second, I also wanted Edsel's friendship with Jacq to end up in a good place. I always wanted Jacq to come back to her family - I knew that from the very beginning, just as I always knew that Edsel would be a changed boy from his experiences in Verdada. What I didn't quite know was how I was going to get him there. The journey by which he reached that point was the bit I had to work out as I went, whilst being conscious of the*

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rules that I'd set up in the earlier books. So that was tough. Obviously not impossible, but certainly quite challenging at times.

Would I recommend writing a series like this without completely planning it out first? Probably not. But it's how I work, it's how I've always worked, and I imagine it's how I'll work for a little longer yet. As long as my characters are driving the story, and are being challenged and forced to change or fight back, I'm mostly happy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Roy lived on the islands of the South Pacific in his younger days, and was surrounded by adventure and books. Now he writes books for young people and thinks that might be one of the best adventures he's ever had. His stories have earned popular and critical praise, especially the CBCA Honour Books *Captain Mack* and *Billy Mack's War*, the non-fiction title *The 'S' Word – a boys' guide to sex, puberty and growing up* and, most recently, *Town*. He lives with his family in the Blue Mountains, and relaxes by bushwalking and playing his guitar. He doesn't like olives very much.