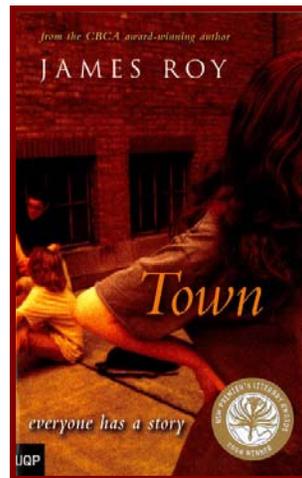


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TOWN

James Roy



Teachers' Notes

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SYNOPSIS:

Town is a series of thirteen interconnected short stories, each of which revolves around a different teenager in a small town in NSW. In the course of a year we meet a number of different young people from the town and are invited into their lives. The stories tackle a number of important and relevant young adult themes, including school life, family dynamics, sexuality, rumours and reputations, disability, illness and death. Whilst Roy does not shy away from tackling hard and confronting issues, his stories are told with a blend of humour and pathos which draw the reader in and allow him to entertain as well as to engage in some powerful social commentary.

All of Roy's characters are well-drawn and realistic. Readers can easily relate to these people and sympathise with the predicaments they face, such that even the most deplorable of them remain, in their way, likeable.

By telling each story through the eyes of a different character, Roy has also managed to manipulate his use of voice, language and genre to create a broad range of writing styles. This in itself makes the book a valuable tool for an examination of the Short Story genre.

Discussion/activities:

- The thirteen stories in *Town* take place over the course of a year. Map the stories to create a calendar of events for that year.
- Because all of the events take place in a small community, many of the characters appear in a number of different stories. Make a list of all of the teenage characters who appear in the stories. Collect all of the information we are given about each of these characters from each story. Make a note of any inconsistencies with the ways in which people see themselves or others see them.
- Discuss the power of location. What comments might James Roy be making about the nature of small country towns. Make a list of the events, issues or behaviours that you believe were the result of the nature of the small town itself. (Include any positive factors as well as negatives). Could these stories be set in a big city? Give reasons to support your answers.
- Make a list of the issues Roy depicts as those being faced by teens. Do you agree that these are in fact significant issues? Did you feel that Roy addressed them appropriately? Can you think of other significant issues that were not covered in these stories?
- Each of Roy's stories is told through the eyes of a teenager. Choose one of the stories and re-write it through the eyes of one of the adults involved in the situation. In what ways does the story change?
- Throughout the book, James Roy manages to take his readers on an emotional rollercoaster. Many of his stories are sad or confronting and yet he manages to blend this with a mixture of humour to keep the

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stories entertaining. Humour is a powerful device. Make a list of the events or characters in the novel that you find humorous. Can you explain why? T.S. Eliot once said "Humour is a way of saying something serious." As a society we often turn to humour at our saddest and most anxious times. Why does this happen? Why can humour often help with the healing process? Which of the stories in *Town* did you like best or feel had the greatest impact? Give reason.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

James Roy was born in western New South Wales in 1968, and spent much of his childhood in Papua New Guinea and Fiji, adventuring by day and reading books by night. Then, one day, tired of reading books by dead people, he decided to start writing his own.

His first novel, *Almost Wednesday*, was released in 1996 and was followed by the CBCA Notable Book *Full Moon Racing*. Other critical successes came with the CBCA Honour Books *Captain Mack* and *Billy Mack's War*, and the Notable Books *The Legend of Big Red* and *A Boat for Bridget*. In addition to writing fiction, James also drew on his years as an adolescent nurse to write *The 'S' Word - a boys' guide to sex, puberty and growing up*.

James lives in the Blue Mountains with his wife and two daughters. He doesn't like olives very much, and in his spare time he demonstrates an entirely misplaced confidence in his skills as a guitarist, painter and sportsman.

Awards

- **A Boat for Bridget**
CBCA (2002)
Notable Australian Book
- **Full Moon Racing**
Australian IBBY Award for Children and Young People (2000)
Commended - Ena Noel Award
- **Full Moon Racing**
CBCA (1999)
Honour Book - Younger Readers
- **Full Moon Racing**
Royal Blind Society Talking Book Awards (1999)
Shortlisted
- **Captain Mack**
The Queensland Premiers Literary Awards (2000)
Childrens Section
- **Captain Mack**
CBCA (2000)
CBCA Honour Book

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- **The 's' Word**
APA Book Design Awards (2007)
Australian Publishers' Association Book Design Awards - The Tien Wah Press Australia Best Designed Children's Non-fiction Book
- **Town**
The New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards (2008)
The Ethel Turner Prize