

EDDY, EDDY

BY KATE DE GOLDI

ISBN: 9781910646922

RRP: £8.99

Page Extent: 320pp

Format: Paperback



www.oldbarnbooks.com



TEACHING NOTES

Kate De Goldi's *Eddy, Eddy* lends itself to a rich literary analysis at Years 11-13. It could be taught for a number of purposes across the senior levels of secondary school, and is particularly well positioned to link to the EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) standards.

Using these notes to guide you, you could consider using *Eddy, Eddy* as:

- **Extended written text study for the EPQ**

The novel is rich in theme and character development, both of which can be neatly linked to a number of wider textual features including intertextual allusion, narrative perspective, and setting.

- **Initial text for an EPQ study**

Eddy, Eddy could be linked:

- Thematically to texts in the bildungsroman or coming-of-age genre (*Boy*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *Great Expectations*)
- Structurally to texts that use a similar non-linear narrative structure (*All the Light we Cannot See*, *Memento*)
- Stylistically to texts featuring the free indirect narrative perspective (*Jane Eyre*, *Mrs Dalloway*)
- By intertextual allusion (*A Christmas Carol*, *Murder in the Cathedral*)
- To other NZ writers (Joe Bennett, Glenn Colquhoun, CK Stead, Bernard Beckett)
- To other YA texts (*Hunger Games*, *The Fault in our Stars*)

- **Primary text for the application of literary lenses in the Level 3 Advanced English Literature GCE course, such as AQA Independent Critical Study: texts across time.**

- The novel would lend itself particularly well to a Freudian or Lacanian psychoanalytic reading (see notes below - "Putting it all together"), but could also easily be studied from the perspective of:

- Feminist criticism (examining Boo's voice throughout the text)
 - Queer theory (examining gender roles, particularly for Eddy and Brain)
 - New Historicism (examining social pressures in post-quake Christchurch)
 - Marxist theory (noting Eddy's comparisons between east and west Christchurch, and the political leanings of Sue Lombardo, Thos Moore and Ginge.)
- **The basis for close reading passages of unfamiliar text**
 - **A research project**

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Setting - Christchurch after the 2010-2011 earthquakes

Discussion questions:

- Have you studied earthquakes in Geography? Have you seen reports about them on the news?
- What was the impact on people's lives?
- How are people's lives differently impacted by earthquakes in developing countries (Turkey, Haiti) and developed countries (New Zealand, Japan)?

Research:

- Create a timeline of the major earthquakes that occurred in Christchurch during 2010-2012.
- Choose a person or family living in Christchurch featured in the media. Conduct your own research to examine the way that life changed for them during and after the earthquakes.

Allusions - Charles Dickens and *A Christmas Carol*

Discussion question:

- Have you ever heard of or read any novels by Charles Dickens? How many can you name?

Research:

- If you are not familiar with it, find out about the basic storyline of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*.

WHILE READING THE BOOK

Allusions:

- Keep a list of all the books, songs, plays and thinkers referenced in *Eddy, Eddy*. How many have you heard of before? What do the allusions add to your understanding of the characters and story?

Vocabulary:

- Eddy has a remarkably sophisticated vocabulary for a teenager. In the first chapter ("September"), he lists what he calls 'Brain-type words' - instertices, adumbrate, desuetude. As you read, keep track of all the 'Brain-type words' that slip into Eddy's thoughts and speech. Use a dictionary to look up those you are unfamiliar with.

AFTER READING THE BOOK

Story and plot:

- Eddy is affected by a number of experiences over the years between 2010 and 2014. The novel doesn't give us this information in chronological order, and several important events that occurred prior to the beginning of the novel are only revealed towards the end. Make a list of the important formative experiences that shape Eddy's development over this period, and then put them in the order in which they occurred (rather than the order in which they are revealed in the text).

Character map:

- Eddy doesn't have a large biological family, but his *whānau* (the Maori language word for extended family) grows over the course of the novel. List all the people (and animals) that Eddy cares about and cares for in this text, and then draw a chart or diagram that shows their relationships to him and each other.

GOING DEEPER

What's in a name?

- At several points in the text, we are invited to think more deeply about characters' names and the significance of names in general. Consider the nicknames Eddy and Roberta (Boo) make up for each other, the nicknames Thomas (Thos) makes up for Eddy's friends, and the following conversation between Eddy and Delphine on page 179:

'Why did she have a boy's name?' said Delphine.
'Mistake probably. It's French ... maybe they didn't know.
Way before the internet, all those baby name sites.'
Eddy had scrolled those sites years ago, a little shifty, feeling it was not something a boy would do.
An unavailing search for more substance on his parents. Vincent, he read, meant Victorious. Jehann, God is Gracious. Edmund, Riches. Total bollocks then. He searched further anyway, checking out Brigid (powerstrengthvigourvirtue) and Raymond -- Ginge's actual name -- (counselprotection) and finally Brian (highnoble): okay, jury out.
'Delphine means delphiniumdolphinwomanfromDelphi,' said Delphine. 'And Jasper means Bringer of Treasure.'
'Let's all stay close to Jasper then.'
'Gran gave me a delphinium for the garden once but I forgot to water it so it died.'

Consider the possible significance of each of the following names in the context of the novel:

- Edmund (see pg 119)
- Smallbone
- Boo
- Thomas Moore
- Mother the cockatoo

Narrative perspective:

- Stories can be told from the **first person perspective** (eg. "I walked into the room"), from the **third person perspective** (eg. "Alex walked into the room"), or occasionally even the **second person perspective** (eg. "You walk into the room").
- *Eddy*, *Eddy* uses third-person for the most part when telling *Eddy's* story, but occasionally slips into the first-person to tell us what Boo is thinking at various points.

Why do you think the author may have chosen to break the narrative up in this way? What is the effect of interspersing the main narrative with Boo's perspective? Why do you think her perspective is conveyed in the first-person and *Eddy's* in the third-person? Does this give any clues about their personalities or the different ways in which they think?

- Within these broad types of narrative perspective or point of view, more precise techniques can be discerned. Specifically, third-person narratives can differ quite vastly

depending on how much the narrator knows about the characters and the story they are narrating. Three main sub-types of third-person narrative perspective are:

- **Fly-on-the-wall perspective:** the narrator tells the story from the perspective of an observer, as if the speaker of the story is someone who is in the room watching each character(s) as the story progresses. (Eg. "Alex walked slowly into the room and sat down.")
- **Omniscient narrator perspective:** the narrator seems to know far more about what is happening than could be determined just by watching the characters and action. The speaker of the story might be able to tell us specific information about how each character is feeling, what they are thinking, or even what is going to happen next. (Eg. "Alex walked slowly into the room and sat down. Little did he know that soon his life would change forever.")
- **Free indirect perspective:** The narrator seems to have a special connection with one character, and some insight into this character's thoughts and feelings. This does not extend to other characters. (Eg. "Alex walked slowly into the room, wondering what was going on. He felt apprehensive as he sat down, but couldn't put his finger on exactly why.")

Which of these perspectives does the third-person narrator of *Eddy, Eddy* most often adopt? Why do you think this might be? What effect does it have on the story and our developing understanding of Eddy's character? How does it impact the way that information is revealed in the book? What could it suggest about the way Eddy thinks and processes information?

(Re)Building a character:

- The novels of Charles Dickens are frequently alluded to throughout this text, and they have much in common with *Eddy, Eddy*. Dickens's novels often feature stories of children growing up as orphans and experiencing a range of trials and tribulations. Importantly, these main characters will always mature and develop emotionally over the course of the novel as they age and learn more about themselves and the world around them.
- This narrative structure is so common in western literature that we have a specific term for it: *bildungsroman*. This term is from the German, *bildung* = development, and *roman* = novel; so, a novel about the development of its central character. A *bildungsroman* will often follow the physical maturation of its main character and also chart their emotional and spiritual development as their character arc unfolds.

In what ways does *Eddy, Eddy* present as a *bildungsroman*? In what ways does it break from this tradition?

- What is interesting about this novel is that we are not introduced to our hero until he is almost an adult, and many of the major formative events that will shape his emotional development have already happened when the story begins. In fact, we meet Eddy on the brink of an emotionally unstable period, and then work backwards in time to slowly unravel the facts behind what led him to this point. Once we (and he) fully understand what has led him to this point, Eddy begins to rebuild himself.

In a sense, we could consider *Eddy, Eddy* to be a contemporary take on the bildungsroman genre. In what way does the setting of this text in post-quake Christchurch become particularly meaningful when considered in this light?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Psychoanalytic literary analysis:

A main feature of *Eddy, Eddy* that one might want to look at in more depth is the development of Eddy's character across the text: the revelations of his past trauma, his resulting breakdown, and the ways in which he comes to terms with these events to build stronger relationships and a stronger version of himself going forward.

An interesting way to analyse Eddy's character development would be through the lens of psychoanalytic literary criticism. In fact, the text seems to invite a psychological study of its own main character, by referencing psychology and psychoanalysis at several points - particularly in Eddy's conversations with Sue Lombardo (pp. 76, 120, 169, 263).

You may have already been introduced to different literary lenses, or your teacher could point you in the direction of some reading on this topic. Sian Evans's textbook *Through the Literary Looking Glass: Critical Theory in Practice* is a good place to start.

After doing some initial reading into psychoanalytic theory and literary analysis, consider how we could apply this lens to an analysis of Eddy's character. Major points to consider would include:

- Eddy's early childhood as an orphan, and his ongoing search for information about his parents as a child.
- Eddy's negotiation of the Oedipal complex as a young boy.
- The role Brain plays as both surrogate mother and father to Eddy.

- His conversation with The Venerable (pp. 50 - 55).
- His conversations with Sue Lombardo (pp. 76, 120, 169, 263).
- Eddy's interest in families, especially mothers, and the way he seems to mentally 'try out' surrogate families for himself: his girlfriend Hazel's family, his New World family, the Mulholland family, etc.
- Eddy's interest in babies and children, and his job as a pet-sitter and eventually nanny to Delphine and Jasper.
- The role he plays as a carer to Thos in the absence of Thos's parents.
- His reaction to Boo's pregnancy.
- His conversations with Boo about her pregnancy (pp. 206-208, 212)
- Eddy's emotional breakdown
 - Beginning with listening to an audiobook of *A Christmas Carol* (pp. 215-220)
 - The coming-together of his various groups of friends and adopted family members for a Christmas party (pp. 221-224)
 - His reference to the 'two-year tantrum' in which he has been submerging negative memories (pg. 225)
 - Him talking to Thos in his head (pp. 235, 239-240)
 - His memories of the event afterwards (pp. 248-249)
 - Him telling the story of Thos's death to Sue (pp. 250-260)
 - His admission to Boo about the 'brain crypt' where he repressed thoughts and memories he didn't want to deal with (pp. 264, 267)
- His slow recovery (pp. 273, 279)
- Eddy's final embracing of the 'Skink of Glory' as a 'rare and secretive' deity (pg. 277-280)

UNPACKING MAJOR THEMES

In a literary essay on *Eddy, Eddy* one could easily write in depth about the characters of Eddy or Boo, and how they learn and develop over the course of the text. Twisting this slightly, you could just as easily talk about the lessons they learn as major themes in the novel for a theme-based question.

Discuss with a partner some of the important lessons that Eddy learns in this novel, and how these could be described as themes or ideas that the text teaches us.

Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

- Family can be gained throughout your life
- You have to look after yourself before you can save others
- You can find meaning and fulfillment in even the most chaotic or challenging situations
- The future is uncertain, but we can find peace in embracing the uncertainty.
- You need to embrace unhappy experiences and learn from them in order to move on.
- You cannot be completely happy if you are not honest with yourself.

Pick one of these ideas (or another of your own), and break it down into sub-topics or messages. Try to think of different points in the story at which the message is conveyed, or different techniques and elements that are used to develop this message. Note down any quotes from the text that seem particularly relevant. When you've done this, you'll have the basis of an essay ready to go!

Consider how some of the following techniques or elements may be linked to your thematic message:

- **The setting of the story.** Could we view Eddy as a metonym for the plight of Christchurch as a whole post-earthquake, and the process that all Cantabrians had to go through in finding their feet and rebuilding their lives?
- **The narrative perspective.** The free indirect narrative creates a tension between knowing and not-knowing, hinting at memories and events from the first pages that are not fully explained to us until much later in the story. Does this technique symbolically link to Eddy's journey of self-discovery and coming to terms with past experiences?
- **The narrative structure.** The novel follows a non-linear structure, in which information is given to us in little pieces and often long after events have occurred. There is a lovely line on page 263 used to describe the way in which Eddy relays his story to Sue that mirrors the way in which De Goldi relays this story to us: "Eddy had told it all, over several days, a choppy narrative, remembering things later, backfilling, much sighing and sometimes almost shouting."
- **The literary allusions.** What does this novel have in common with those texts it most frequently alludes to, like *A Christmas Carol* and *Murder in the Cathedral*? Is it trying to convey a similar message? Do these allusions serve to reinforce the major messages of *Eddy, Eddy*?
- **The ending.** In the final scene of the novel, Boo's friend Carys tells her a story about a man directing traffic on the day of the earthquake. Why would the author choose to introduce this completely new character and her completely new anecdote right at the end of the story? What can Boo and Eddy learn from the man who directed traffic? What can we all learn from his story?