

# LONGACRE PRESS TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

## AND DID THOSE FEET...

TED DAWE

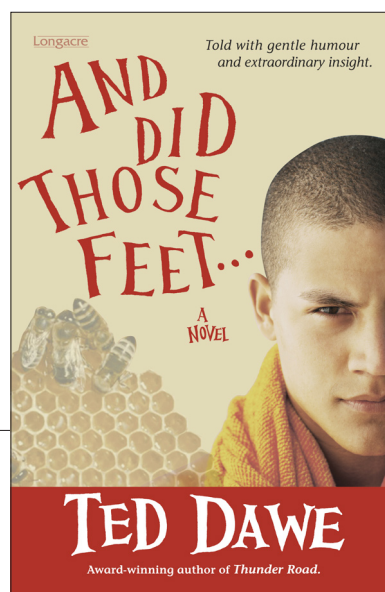
*"The year Mum died and Dad went mad I was packed off to live on a farm for a while."*

**SANDY WILL TELL YOU:** he looks like an ordinary kid on the outside, but on the inside, he's a time bomb. Ever since his mum died, and his father started slacking off on the dad front, he's felt lit-up by a barely-contained rage.

After an ugly showdown at school he gets sent to stay at his aunt and uncle's Taranaki farm. "Going agricultural" is bad enough for a city kid, but worse: his rellies are members of an unusual group who follow the teachings of poet William Blake. Branded "cultie" along with his cousins at the country school, Sandy reckons you can't go much lower.

Then events on the farm, and at school camp, show Sandy more about his own strengths than he'd ever thought possible.

This is the story of how a boy faces up to a season of disasters: some of his own making, some brought upon him by others. Told with gentle humour *And did those feet...* is an outstanding novel from award-winning writer Ted Dawe.



### SPECIFICATIONS:

Imprint: Longacre Press  
Classification: NZ Junior Fiction  
Publication: November 2006  
ISBN: 9781877361494  
RRP: \$18.99  
Format: 197 x 130mm  
Binding: paperback  
Extent: 192pp  
Readership: 11 to 14 years

### RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

author statement  
questions for discussion/essay topics  
research questions

© Longacre Press ISBN: 9781877361685

Published by **Longacre Press**

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www.longacre.co.nz

Distributed by **Random House New Zealand Ltd,**

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## THE AUTHOR:

As the child of school teachers, Ted Dawe moved around a lot, in places that ranged from Mangakino to Invercargill. In his early years at Ruatoria, he learned Maori from an elderly couple who looked after him while his parents taught.

Since school, he's worked as an insurance clerk, storeman, builder's labourer and fitter's mate and flown hot air balloons over Hyde Park; he's been a university student, world traveller and high school teacher. These days he teaches foreign students, helping them gain enough English to enter our universities. 'It's a neat job,' Ted says.

With his partner and young son — he has two adult children as well — Ted is renovating their Auckland home. 'I'm more a carpenter than a cabinet-maker — I do the big stuff.'

He enjoys travel, surfing and tennis. He loves cars, car people and motorcycles, although he confesses to currently riding a motor-scooter to work. In later years, Ted's early immersion in Maori culture reasserted itself; he felt compelled to go back to the marae, and to relearn the language. With friend and mentor, Niko Tangaroa, of Motua Gardens fame, Ted has made

two trips down the Whanganui River in waka, and taken part in the controversial occupation of the gardens.

Ted's Young Adult novel *Thunder Road* won Best First Book and the Senior Fiction Award in the 2004 New Zealand Post Book Awards for Children & Young Adults. Of *Thunder Road*, Ted says it took him 40 days one summer to write, spilling out 2500 to 3000 words a day. 'Not bad for a two-finger typist.' Although the story came out in a rush, it had been mulling for some time in his head. Devon in the novel reminds Ted of his cousin, Jak, a dynamic, overconfident street racer who died in a car accident.

2005 saw the launch of the Urban imprint with Ted's gritty and moving cross-over novel *K. Road*.

*And Did Those Feet...* is Ted's third novel, and his first for a junior audience.



## AUTHOR'S COMMENT:

When I wrote this I had just finished *K Road* and the effort of constructing and linking the themes and motifs in that book had been very prolonged and sometimes arduous.

I longed to write a series of simple stories aimed at two specific readership groups. One of these was a collection for Young Adults. The other was for a junior audience.

I mapped out ten stories which I hoped would particularly appeal to boys from ages 8 to 14. After I had completed six of them I began a story that refused to stop. My self-imposed word limit of 3000 words was soon passed and by the time I got to the end I found that not only did the story exceed 7000 words but it had also eaten up the material I was saving for my last three stories. It was a monster that wouldn't stop growing!

So I embarked on a project to turn 'And Did Those Feet...' from a long short story into a short novel.

I began going through the story again, fleshing out the characters and adding detail where I felt it was needed. The little beast began to grow again and before long it had bulged from a modest 7,000 to the grand total of 25,000 words. It was now long enough to justify the description of 'novel' being attached to it.

I printed it off and threw the weighty tome onto the kitchen bench. It made a satisfying thud. I was pleased now that despite my short story aspirations I had once again written another novel. I dispatched the masterpiece to my publisher and hovered near the letter box waiting for a reply. In due course a letter arrived from Longacre and I was rewarded with a qualified, 'Yes, we will publish...'

The letter also outlined the things they wanted done.

"Ted, give Aunty Lorna more to do, she seems to only exist in order to make porridge."

“Ted, those cousins are all a bit too similar...”

“There is too much telling and not enough showing...”

“How about more dialogue, man...”

“It still has too many features of short story writing...”

At this point I realized that there was nothing else I could do... I picked up my tear-stained manuscript and went back to my word processor for a few weeks to go over it from page one onwards. When I had finished I had turned my slim novella into a 47,000 word-plus, fully fledged novel, complete with minor characters, flash backs and sub-plots. There was even the suggestion of a romance on the horizon. This time when I sent it off, Emma Neale, my stern, demanding editor-figure was pleased and a grateful smile snuck onto my face.

It was now just matter of countless read-throughs and fix-ups and the book could be released to the unwitting world.

### **The Origins of this book.**

When I was young I often spent time on farms. Some of these were in Taranaki, some were in the Manawatu. Three of my uncles were farmers and my grandfather was a farmer too so I had quite a bit of hayseed heritage even though my school teacher parents were strictly urbanites. The uncle in *And Did Those Feet...* contains elements of all three of these uncles. Compassion, originality, spontaneity and non-conformity. The character of Aunty Lorna similarly has warmth, calm, acceptance and sensitivity.

The main thrust of the novel is that of a boy trying to find himself after his whole world has collapsed. It shows how on the surface he seems much the same while underneath there is the intense pain that comes with loss. He endeavours to carry on as usual, ‘to put

on a brave face’, as it were, but he is not always successful. His father is dealing with a whole slew of adult problems and sees his son as just one more of these; something which must be solved while he puts his life together again. Neither Sandy nor his dad can talk about the death of the mother/wife, it is just too painful, too big.

During the course of the year, Sandy runs up against various problems: his father’s inadequacy as a home maker, unwanted mother substitutes, conflict with other boys, loneliness, depression and punishment. He learns ways of handling these things during the course of the story and in the process learns about himself. In some ways the book is about the passage from child to young adult/teenager. It is about survival; emotional, psychological and physical. It is about different kinds of love. I guess to be a little boring and generalist it is about growing up. I hope there is a bit of Sandy in everyone.

### **What about all the other stuff?**

You mean the William Blake, hexagons and the mysteries of the beehive, ridiculing of country life, that sort of thing?

When you are fleshing out a novel, changing it from a concept into something that seems to have a life of its own, you draw on all sorts of strange things that have been lying around in the junkyard of your head for decades. Things you have been longing to write about and sometimes things you didn’t even know you knew. Conversations blossom out of situations, plot complications lead to unexpected incidents or insights that come rushing out of the dark recesses and volunteer themselves as solutions. Maybe this sounds a bit vague but it’s a vague area.

For more about Ted Dawe, see: [www.longacre.co.nz](http://www.longacre.co.nz)

# COMPREHENSION

## **How this whole thing started:**

- What is strange about the big house the narrator, Sandy's family lives in?
- Why does the photo of his parents seem so idyllic to Sandy?
- How does Sandy deal with things now?

## **Dad: the early years:**

- How is Sandy's Dad's life similar to the lives of the men in the movie he takes Sandy to see?
- Why couldn't Sandy's father be a policeman?

## **Mum and dad's courtship:**

- What did Mum think helped Dad in his 'research' into her identity?
- How were Sandy's parents' backgrounds different?
- What were Dad's tactics in wooing Mum?

## **It was a day like any other:**

- How did Sandy's mother die?

## **Dad goes solo:**

- How did Sandy's father try to be 'more of a father to him'? In what ways did he not do so well at this?
- How did Dad manage to ruin dinners?
- What is Sandy's 'cure for pizzamania'?

## **The pretenders:**

- How did Yoke-Lin communicate?
- Why did Sandy try to torment Yoke-Lin and drive her away?
- What happened that changed things? Why was Sandy surprised by this?
- Why did Sandy's father send him to his Uncle's?

## **My view of the country ... and its inhabitants:**

- What are the 'negative' and 'positive' points to living in the country, as Sandy sees it?
- How can you 'spot a farm family' in town?
- What does Sandy think country people are scared of?

## **Meetin' th' kin folks:**

- Why does Sandy think he's being sent away?
- How is Sandy's country relatives' greeting different to what he's used to?
- How does Mount Taranaki make Sandy feel?
- What frightens Sandy?
- What in the house wasn't hexagonal?
- How are Sandy's aunt and uncle different to his parents?

- How does Uncle Frank characterise his brother?
- What gives Frank and Lorna the sailing analogy?
- Who is William Blake?
- How did the house truck get its name?
- Why is Sandy scared of himself?

## **My new life in the country:**

- How does the new morning routine differ to Sandy's usual one?
- How does Uncle Frank get Sandy's hands warm?
- How do they ease Sandy into the working farm life?

## **The path to wisdom:**

- Where were Frank and Lorna when the car hit them?
- Why didn't Lorna escape without injury as Frank did?
- What was Frank's reaction?
- Why does Lorna hide her scars?
- What did Frank feel he'd found in the poem?
- What was Frank's revelation?
- What does Frank say 'Jerusalem' is?
- What is an apiarist?
- What special things does the Queen Bee have?

## **Encounters with nature:**

- Why does Sandy find it easy to talk to Pimpernel?
- How did Sandy get around the goat problem?
- How do Sandy's aunt and uncle react to his problem with the goat, Satan?

## **The new gumboots:**

- What made it seem like Sandy was officially part of the family? And what was the consequence of this?
- Who are the wolves?
- What made Jamie easier to find?
- How does Frank get Sandy's attention?

## **Down time, country style:**

- What are the three categories animals fall in to (in the eyes of country-folk)?
- What made Sandy feel like he wasn't fitting in?
- What is Sandy's recipe for success in comedy?

## **The crystal pool:**

- What does Sandy feel the crystal pool might do for him?
- What was Sandy's real dream about? Why did his cousins laugh at his dream?

**The New Jerusalem League:**

- What is the first New Jerusalem practice Sandy observes?
- What was different about the hut they built with the other kids?
- What was different about the New Jerusalem League's lunch?
- Why does Sandy feel partly responsible for Lara's disappearance?
- How does Pimpernel communicate with Sandy?
- What surprises and pleases Sandy most in this chapter? Why is this event significant (according to Lorna)?

**The mountain:**

- What are the options for how to get out of bed?
- Why is it significant that Frank decided to take them up the mountain?
- What makes Sandy think of his mother? Why do you think this is?
- Why does the car stop working (according to Uncle Frank)?

**The true nature of pigs:**

- Who are the two 'people' Sandy most admires? Why?
- What is the true nature of pigs?

**The auction:**

- What are the different cow breeds mentioned? How do they differ?
- What is the Farmer, Hec's, opinion of Auckland?
- How does Sandy end up crashing? How does Frank's reaction differ to what Sandy expects?

**The news:**

- How does Sandy react to the news he won't be going back to Auckland?

**At school with the locals:**

- Why does Sandy think Lara keeps him and his cousins at a distance?

**The Noel Cudby incident:**

- How does Sandy manage to 'offend' Noel Cudby?
- Why does Sandy get in trouble but not Noel?

**Suspended ... again!:**

- Why doesn't Sandy argue with the principal?
- What does Lorna consider the blackbird's footprints to be? How is this so?
- What is different about the teacher's reaction and

Lorna's reaction to Sandy, as he sees it?

- Briefly sum-up Lorna's philosophy about life and experience.
- How does Frank challenge Sandy? What is he teaching him?

**The three musketeers:**

- What tactic does Sandy use to try and get closer to Lara?
- Why do the kids call Sandy and his cousins 'culties' according to Sandy?

**The falls:**

- What strikes Sandy as being odd about the list of things to bring and not to bring?
- How does Boyne show different treatment to Iain, Jamie and Sandy?
- What convinces Sandy to get in the water?

**That night:**

- What makes Sandy realise something is going wrong/ that there is a danger?

**The descent of man:**

- How has the mood changed?
- How do people seem to be relating to each other?
- How does Sandy find himself reacting?

**Many rivers to cross:**

- Why do they head upstream at the second stream?
- How do things go wrong? And how do they recover from this?
- Why can't Sandy move? How do the boys save him?

**One more river:**

- What is 'exposure'?
- How does the song work on the group?

**The fall:**

- How has the group changed?

**The return of the dad:**

- Why isn't Sandy milking?
- What is different about their new home?
- How does Sandy think his life has changed?
- Why does Sandy cry?
- What has happened to Pimpernel?
- What does Sandy mean by a 'different road' or a 'different Dad'? How is this so?

# VISUAL RESPONSE

William Blake was an artist as well as a poet. Take one of the poems from the book (see below) and paint or draw your interpretation of it. Have a look at William Blake's engravings (use your library or the internet) to see how he combines his poetry with images. You might like to try this style yourself.

The poems:

## **Jerusalem**

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.

## **Ah! Sunflower**

Ah! Sunflower, weary of time,  
Who countest the steps of the sun,  
Seeking after that sweet golden clime  
Where the traveller's journey is done;

Where the youth pined away with desire,  
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,  
Arise from their graves and aspire;  
Where my sunflower wishes to go.

(This is the poem that Frank is reading at Lorna's bedside, in which he believes God is speaking to him.)

## **The Tyger**

Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright,  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? And what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? What dread grasp  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,  
And watered heaven with their tears,  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright,  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

(Frank recites this poem before the New Jerusalem League has lunch.)

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Research the life and work of William Blake, particularly his *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. How was he viewed in his own lifetime and in the time since his death? You could give an analysis of one of his poems that interests you, or memorise and perform a poem for the class.
- See if you can find any writers or artists who have been influenced by William Blake. Why do they find him to be important? See if you can find any reference to an organisation like the New Jerusalem League – do organisations like this exist? Find out about James K. Baxter and Jerusalem on the Whanganui River.
- When the family go up Mount Taranaki they build a snow-woman, which Lorna names Boudicca. Research the historical figure of Boudicca, using your library and the internet.
- Research 'Exposure'. What are the cause and effects of exposure? How can it be remedied? Make a wall-chart that explains the dangers and what action you should take to treat people who are suffering from exposure.
- Can you find any real life examples of strange shaped buildings/dwellings? If so, what is the purpose of their different shapes? Different cultures throughout history have built different shaped buildings. Pick one of these non-right-angled buildings and find out its purpose, and the reasons for its design. You could look at igloos, pyramids, the Coliseum or the Pentagon, and many others.
- Research the honey bee. You could present your findings to the class as a speech or a chart. How is their society organised? How do they build their hives and make honey? How is the queen bee special?
- Think about the six-sided theme in Uncle Frank and Auntie Lorna's house. What do you think it might represent? Research other elements of number symbolism in your own world. For example, many people know about the importance of the number three to the Christian faith. What is its significance? Are there other numbers which have a particular meaning in your society or faith?
- Find out about the Maori myths, legends and history connected to Mount Taranaki. Find out about Parihaka, the settlement at the bottom of Mount Taranaki in the 1880s. Can you see any connections between this history, or the Maori mythology, and Ted Dawe's novel?

# DISCUSSION/ESSAY TOPICS

- The community has trouble accepting the New Jerusalem League. This is evident (according to Sandy) in the other kids teasing and labelling of the NJL kids as 'culties'. Why do you think this is? Do people have reason to be suspicious of cults? Is the New Jerusalem League a cult, in your opinion?
- At the end of *And did those feet...* Frank talks to Sandy about everything having its meaning and its place in life. Do you think that as people who live off the land, Frank and Lorna are more inclined to this point of view? Do people in the cities feel the same way?
- Sandy talks a lot about the difference between city people and country people. Though he comes to enjoy country life, he still sees the two as quite different. Do you agree with Sandy? What differences do you see, and why do you think this is?
- Discuss Sandy's way of dealing with his problems: e.g. hiding things from Yoke-Lin; lashing out at classmates. Do you understand why he's dealt with the loss of his mother this way? What are the consequences for him? What do you think of Uncle Frank's attitude to his rebellion?