

# THAT BOY RED: Teachers' Guide

## SUMMARY:

Eleven-year-old Roderick “Red” MacRae never has much spare time. It is the Depression and times are hard. When Red isn't at school, he's helping Pa with chores on their P.E.I. farm. Red would rather go fishing or tinker with woodwork than do his homework, but he can't slack off – his older sister, Ellen, is also his teacher and she simply won't tolerate it. Resourceful, impulsive and pig-headed, Red all too often lands himself in the midst of hair-raising – and hilarious – misadventures involving runaway horses, cow dung, lost sisters, outhouses and even aeroplanes. But when Pa is seriously injured, Red must step up to the challenge to finish building the wooden tobacco caddies his father makes for credit at the local store. An episodic novel, THAT BOY RED traces the coming of age of a remarkable young lad over the course of a particularly difficult year, and showcases the strength and spirit of his large and lively family as they weather the Depression.

**This novel contains six chapters. While there is an overarching theme, the book lends itself well to being studied one chapter at a time, as each chapter explores a particular episode in Red's life.**

**Background:** Set in the early 1930s. Red's family is managing better than most on their farm in the village of Applecross in Prince Edward Island. Hard working and ingenious, they have enough to eat as well as to help others. Red's parents are determined that all their children get an education, even if Red and the older boys are mocked at times by their neighbours for being all soft and sissy for going to school instead of doing an honest days work on the farm. To supplement their income, Pa and the boys build wooden tobacco caddies (6x6x5 inches – intended to hold chewing tobacco plugs) during the winter, which they barter for credit at the local store. While the family is better off than many others, they can't afford a car or a telephone line to the house – Pa insists that what money he has be put towards his children's education. The family consists of Pa, Ma, Alex, Ellen, Mac, Red and Bunch. There is no electricity in the house, water is obtained from a pump in the yard, and the toilet is a outdoor privy, next to one of the barns.

**ABOUT THIS GUIDE: Below the GENERAL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS are CHAPTER SUMMARIES for each chapter, along with CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES (Topics of Discussion, Writing Exercises, Art Projects, Drama and Extra Research and Study Activities) for each chapter.**

## **GENERAL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS:**

**The following are themes found through the entire novel. Themes emphasized in particular chapters are indicated below:**

### **1) Rural life in the early 1930s**

- \* lack of electricity
- \* outhouses
- \* water from a well or a pump
- \* rarity of telephones
- \* rarity of cars

### **2) Farming in the early 1930s**

- \* Use of horses in the fields
- \* Crops grown on a family farm
- \* farm equipment used

### **3) The Depression**

### **4) Prince Edward Island in the 1930s**

- \* Island life during the Depression
- \* P.E.I. landscape
- \* P.E.I. expressions

### **5) Rural economies in early 1930s**

**(Found in the entire novel, barter emphasized in Chapter 4: Upside Down and Right Side Up)**

- \* Barter system
- \* scarcity of money
- \* digging out snow-bound trains in the winter for cash

### **6) The Importance of Community support**

- \* Neighbours helping each other

### **5) Family life and family support**

- \* family interrelationships
- \* the value of co-operation and hard work
- \* roles within a family

- \* care of the elderly
- \* children as helpers within the family

## **6) Family life on a farm in the early 1930s**

- \* the hard work involved
- \* daily farm routines
- \* children helping on the farm
- \* domestic life on a farm
- \* the scarcity of free-time

## **7) Education in the early 1930s**

**(Through the novel but especially in Chapter 3: Pure Aggravation)**

- \* One-room Schools
- \* Rural attitudes about education as a luxury
- \* The importance and value of education to change lives
- \* Sacrifices made to obtain education

## **8) Impulsiveness**

## **9) Aviation in the early 1930s**

**(In Chapter Six: The Edge of the World)**

- \* Gipsy Moths
- \* Biplanes

## **10) Children's games during the 1930s**

## **11) Nicknames**

## **12) Women's Roles in the 1930s**

**(Particularly in Chapter 3: Pure Aggravation)**

- \* social attitudes towards women's work
- \* pay inequities for women
- \* rarity of women in the paid workforce

## CHAPTER ONE: CAT-LESS GRANNY

### SUMMARY:

Granny, Ma's mother, comes for her annual visit. Stern and critical, she is not a favourite of the children. Red particularly resents how she loves to display a relic from her youth – a two foot switch of red hair. Each time she brings it out, she sniffs at how Red's hair, which used to be red at birth, is now no more than a *durrty bruhn*. One day, Cat-less Granny asks Red and Mac to put away her switch as she leaves the house. Red starts to play with it, pretending it's a magical witch switch of great power. Caught up in the game, he and Mac run outside into a pasture field – and things get out of control. Cow dung, a bad tempered horse called Flash play a role.

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

#### 1) Topics of Discussion:

- In what period of time is this story set? How do you know that? How is Red's world different from yours?
- Who are the members of Red's family?
- How does Red come by his nickname? How does Cat-less Granny come by her nickname?
- Do you have a nickname? How did you get it? How did people you know with nicknames come by them?
- What do Red and his siblings feel about their grandmother? How do you know that? What does Red's mother feel about her mother? How do you know that?
- What kind of relationship does Red have with his older brother Mac? (Note: relationships are never one-dimensional or simple – they can have more than one characteristic.) Give examples to prove your point.
- Red's mother has trick gadgets. What are they? What do you think that says about her? Why do they have to be put away at the start of the story?
- Discuss Red's motivations for taking Cat-less Granny's switch. Why does he in particular resent Granny's switch?
- Discuss the work Red and Mac do on the farm. How does that compare with your lives? What does that say about what was expected of children in the 1930s?
- From where does the MacRae family obtain their water? How does that differ from your life? What would your life be like if you had to get water from a pump? How would it impact on how often you wash and bathe?

- What are the modes of transportation used commonly in this story? How common are cars? How does this differ from life today?
- What kind of personality does Flash have? How do you know this?
- Why do you think Red keeps swiping the switch against the bark of the tree? What do you think he feels at this point?
- Why do you think Red asks Mac if Flash's hair looks like Granny's? Does he really believe it? Have you ever been in a situation where you desperately needed to believe something you knew wasn't true?
- Discuss Red's relationships with his family members. How is it the same or different from your relationships with your family?
- What does Red come to understand about Granny at the end of the story?
- Discuss the references to the Depression here. What do you know about the Depression?

## **2) Writing exercises:**

- List Red's feelings while he waits for Cat-less Granny to arrive. Compare his feelings to Mac's feelings at this time.
- List three emotions Red might experience at each of the following places in the story: when he is running with Granny's switch; when it falls into the cow dung; when he scrapes the switch against the tree; when he tries to get a piece of Flash's tail; when he sneaks back into the parlour with Mac with Flash's tail hair; when Granny and the rest of the family come home; when Pa talks to him and Mac; at the end of the story when he looks at Granny.
- Write your own version of what might Red and Mac might do after Granny's switch gets covered in cow dung.
- Write a journal entry as written by any of the characters in the story at the end of the day when the switch incident occurs.
- Write a journal entry as though written by Granny at the end of the day when she loses her switch.
- Write a scene showing Ma using one of her trick gadgets on someone.
- Write a scene when Granny was young and she cuts a lock of her hair – show why she is cutting it.
- Write a first person account of the story, as though Flash is telling it, from where Red and Mac sneak into the barn with the scissors.

### **3) Art Projects:**

- Draw a picture of your favourite part of this story.
- Draw a picture of Flash running away.
- Do a cartoon strip consisting of at least three pictures to show what happens after Red and Mac take the switch out of the parlour.
- In groups, make a papier maché model of Red's farm.
- Draw a picture of a trick gadget of your imagination and make up a poster showing how it works.

### **4) Drama:**

- Write and then act out a scene showing Ma using her trick gadget on someone.
- Write and act a scene showing what happens the day after the story when the family is eating breakfast together.
- Break into groups of eight and write and deliver monologues for each of the following characters on the day of the story: Red, Mac, Pa, Ma, Bunch, Ellen, Granny, Flash.

### **5) Extra Study and Research activities:**

- Research the Depression and write a report on it.
- Research pumps in the 1930s and how they work. Make a poster showing your research.
- Research small farms in the 1930s and present your information to the class. Include information about crop rotation and the tools used in that era.
- Research Prince Edward Island and make up a poster to show the class.

## **CHAPTER TWO: BUNCH O'TROUBLE**

### **SUMMARY:**

Bunch, Red's six-year-old sister insists on tagging after him when he has a rare free afternoon to go fishing with his friend, Gooley. To throw her off, Red plays dead. Glad to be rid of her, Red has a wonderful afternoon, but when he returns home and finds that Bunch is missing, he must confront his worst fears to find her.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**

#### **1) Topics of Discussion:**

- What time of year is this story set? How do you know?
- What kind of fishing equipment does Red have? Have you ever gone fishing? What kind of equipment do you use?
- How often does Red get to go fishing? What does this tell you about his everyday life and chores? How does this compare to your everyday schedule and chores? What does it say about the way of life in the 1930s and the attitudes towards children?
- How does Red feel when Bunch tags along? How do you know this? What does the author do to show this?
- Why doesn't Red want Bunch to go with him? Do you have younger siblings or cousins or neighbourhood kids? Do you like to play with them?
- What does Red do to shake off Bunch? How does he feel when he manages to shake her off? Remember you can feel more than one thing at a time.
- How do you think Bunch feels when Red won't let her go along with him? Have you ever felt like that? When?
- Do you have older siblings or cousins or neighbourhood kids you'd like to play with? Do they let you?
- What kind of person is Gooley? Discuss how he might have come by his nickname.
- What does Gooley say about his cousins from the "Boston States"? What does this tell you about the times, and about the Depression?
- When Red comes home and Ma asks him to find Bunch, how does Red react? Why? What does that tell you about what he is feeling?
- What does Red feel when Bunch can't be found? How would you feel in his place?

- The whole family is upset and concerned about Bunch’s disappearance. How does the author show Ma’s emotions?
- What makes Red think to look for Bunch in the old McKinley house?
- Do you have a house near you that you think might be haunted? What is it like?
- Do you think the old McKinley house is haunted? How do you think Red and his friends might have come to believe that?
- What does Red feel when he decides to go into the McKinley house? You can feel more than one thing at a time. What does it say about him that he decides to go in there anyway?
- Have you ever had to confront your fears? Discuss what happened.
- Why do you think Bunch doesn’t tell on Red? What does that say about her?
- Why do you think Red feels he has to tell Pa about what really happened?
- What did Pa mean when he says that he doesn’t need to punish Red because he thinks Red has been punished enough already. Do you agree?
- When does the potato harvest take place? Why does school close down for that? Again, discuss the role of children in rural P.E.I. in the 1930s.
- What happens in the end of the story? Why do you think Red tugs on Gooley’s arm to slow him down?
- How did Bunch come by her nickname? How do you know this? Do you have nicknames in your family? What are they, and how did you come by them?

## **2) Writing exercises:**

- Make up and write a story of your own about how and where Bunch is found.
- Draw a line down the middle of the page. On one side list Red’s feelings on the other Bunch’s feelings when: Bunch wants to tag along; when Red finds Bunch; when Bunch doesn’t tell on Red.
- Write an account of what happens to Bunch after she hides in the old McKinley house. Write it in the first person, as though you are Bunch telling the story.
- Describe a haunted house of your own imagination. Use all five senses in describing it.
- Write a scene at the supper table that night, after Bunch is found.

### **3) Art Projects:**

- Draw a picture of a haunted house.
- Draw a picture of Red and his family searching for Bunch.
- Make a cardboard model of a haunted house and the land and trees around it. Decorate the house so it's your version of a haunted house. Use toilet paper rolls for tree trunks. Here is a site with instructions on how to build a cardboard house:  
[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5698851\\_build-cardboard-house-school-project.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5698851_build-cardboard-house-school-project.html)

### **4) Drama:**

- Act out a scene with Gooley and his Boston cousins searching for Bunch and what happens if the cousins get lost.
- Write and act out a scene in the MacRae household the day after Bunch gets lost.
- Make up and act a scene in a haunted house – make sure to add plenty of drama and excitement.

### **5) Extra Study and Research activities:**

- Research potatoes and how they were harvested in the 1930s. Research how they are harvested now. Write a report describing the harvest in the different eras.
- Research and make a poster about fishing in the 1930s, including information about equipment, bait etc.

## **CHAPTER THREE: PURE AGGRAVATION**

### **SUMMARY:**

Red's older sister, Ellen, who is also the local teacher, is furious with Red because he is near the bottom of the line during the spelling bee. Red knows Ellen is crankier than usual because she's had yet another fight with Stewart Gillis, with whom she has a turbulent on-again off-again relationship. Red gets into a fight with another boy in school who calls Ellen names, and when he is punished by Ellen, and later humiliated at home by her, he changes the words of a birthday card – a recycled one, given to him by an aunt – which he and his siblings were supposed to give Ellen on her upcoming birthday. A disastrous turnip crop, the birthday card, and Stewart weave together in a way that leaves Red perplexed and sorely aggravated.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**

#### **1) Topics of Discussion:**

- What is Red's school like? How is it different from yours? How is the same?
- Think about how you feel when you do well in a subject or test, and when you do poorly; do you think that Red and the other students feel the same? What does that tell you about human nature? Does that make you feel more connected to Red and his time? Would it be worse or better for Red that all the grades and students in the school are right there in that one room?
- Who is Red's teacher? How would you like to have a teacher who is a member of your family? What do you think some of the challenges might be for you and for the teacher?
- Why does Red refuse to say anything to Gooley or his other friends about why Ellen is extra grumpy? What does that tell you about the kind of person Red is, and about his family?
- How does Ellen discipline Red and Eddie for fighting? How does this differ from how you might be disciplined today?
- What is Red's attitude towards the greeting card? How is it different from the way we consider and use cards today? What does it tell you about money in Red's time?
- What are Ma and Aunt Lina doing when Red and Mac come home at the start of the story? Have you ever made hand-made soap?
- How do you think Red feels when Ellen drills him again in his spelling? How do you think she feels? What about Ma?
- When Red goes up to bed at night, what does he take upstairs with him to light his way? How is this different from your life? What do you think some of the challenges might be when you don't have electricity? What do you think the advantages might be?

- What crop are Pa, Mac and Red so busy harvesting? Can you remember what they do to harvest that crop?
- What does Red find out about the turnip crop when his father and Mac return from loading the bags on the train? How do you think the family feels about what has happened? How do you think Pa feels, and Ma, Mac, Red and Bunch? Do you think what happened to the price of turnips is fair?
- Does what happened to the turnip crop give you an idea of why Pa and Ma are so keen on their children getting an education? What does Pa say to help you understand this? How is the attitude of the MacRae family towards education different from some of their neighbours' attitudes?
- Which of Ma's trick gadgets do we hear about in this story? What does that tell you about Ma and about this family?
- How do you think Red feels when Ma hands Ellen the birthday card at supper time? How would you feel if you were Red? How do you think Ellen feels? How do you know this? How do you think Ma and Pa and the others feel? What does the author do to show this?
- How are birthdays celebrated in Red's family? Are presents common? Why not? How is this different or similar to how you celebrate birthdays?
- Why does Red decide he has to do something to help Ellen? What does he do? Do you think it was a smart choice? What would you have done?
- What is Stewart's reaction to what he overhears Red say? Is Red surprised at this?
- Why does Stewart stop Red on his way home? What does he want to know? What does that tell you about his feelings for Ellen?
- What happens during the conversation between Red and Stewart? Does it go the way either of them expected? What does this tell you about Stewart? What does it tell you about Red?
- What are Stewart's attitudes towards women? Was it typical of the time? How is it different from now? How is it the same?
- At the end, Red says he doesn't know what he said to bring Stew around. Can you figure out what happened?
- What kind of boy is Red? Would you like to be friends with him? What are his strengths and weaknesses?

## **2) Writing exercises:**

- Write a birthday rhyme that Red might compose for Ellen if he wasn't mad at her.

- Write a note Red might send to Ellen after she sees the card.
- Draw a line down the centre of the page. On one side, write Red’s feelings, on the other side Ellen’s feelings: at the spelling bee; when Ellen disciplines Red for fighting; when Ellen drills Red again with his spelling; when Ellen sees the birthday card; when Stewart comes over and he and Ellen make up.
- Write a journal entry as though written by any character of your choice, on the day when Pa and Mac take the turnips to the train, and they celebrate Ellen’s birthday.
- If you could come up with a trick gadget, what would it be? Describe it, and write a scene showing you using that gadget.
- Make up and write your own version of a scene between Red and Stewart.

### **3) Art Projects:**

- Draw a picture Red might make of Ellen on the day she disciplines him.
- Draw a picture of the scene the author describes outside the church.
- Make papier maché puppets of your favourite two characters in the story.

### **4) Drama:**

- Make up or write a different scene between Red and Gavin and the boys, with Stewart nearby, and act it out.
- Using the papier maché puppets made above, put on a puppet show of any scene of your choice.
- Write and act a scene outside the church between any made up characters of your choice.

### **5) Extra Study and Research activities:**

- Research one-room schoolhouses in the early 1930s, and write up a report.
- Research the history of greeting cards and how they became commonplace. Do a report to present to your class.
- Research women’s rights and present your report to the class.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: UPSIDE DOWN AND RIGHT SIDE UP**

### **SUMMARY:**

When Pa is seriously injured, Red must take the challenge of finishing the tobacco caddies his father makes to barter for credit at the local store. He must also re-examine his attitude towards school.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**

#### **1) Topics of Discussion:**

- What devices does the author use to convey what might happen in the story, before we learn of the accident? What words are used that indicate cutting and harshness?
- Who is Tinker MacPhee? What does his role in this story tell you about the community in which Red lives? How is this different or the same from your community?
- What trick gadget does Ma use on Tinker? Do you have any trick gadgets, and if so, how have you used them?
- What happens to Pa?
- Why does Red feel that Tommy Munn being “all stricken and sympathetic” is part of the strangeness of the day? How does Tommy Munn usually treat Red and Mac? Why? What does that tell you about the Munns’ attitudes towards education? How is this the same or different to attitudes today?
- What happens right after the accident that gives you an idea of what the Applecross community is like?
- What are some of Red and Mac’s regular chores? Do you have any regular chores? How are they the same or different from Red and Mac’s? What does this tell you about the role of children in rural P.E.I. in the 1930s?
- Why don’t the MacRae’s have a telephone? How is this different from today? What device or invention today that is new and expensive, might be equivalent to the telephone in the MacRae’s time?
- What are the feelings Red goes through at various points in this story: when he is waiting to recite; when he hears of the accident; when he sees what has happened to Pa; when he’s waiting to hear news of how Pa is doing; when he decides to work on the tobacco caddies; when he takes the order to the store; when Pa comes home; at the end of the story.
- What are the tobacco caddies? Why are they so important to the MacRae family?

- Why do you think Red decides to make the caddies? What does he feel when he decides to make them (you can feel more than one thing at a time)? What do Mac and Ellen feel?
- What do you think Ellen fears when Red decides to work on the caddies?
- How did the MacRae family get credit for the caddies? This way of exchanging is called the barter system. How is this different from how we buy things today? Do you ever barter with your friends and family members? Do you think it's a good system?
- What does Red feel about Flash? Why? Do you have horses, and if so, what do you feel about them?
- What kind of personality does Flash have? The author uses the word "persnickety". What does that mean?
- What do you think Mr. Morrison thinks when Red comes into his store and tells him that the tobacco caddy order is complete?
- Why did Red make two extra caddies to show Mr. Morrison?
- When Red goes into the store, there is a group of men around the stove. What is one of them doing that has to do with tobacco? What is Ma's attitude about tobacco? Have you ever heard of chewing tobacco? Have you seen anyone using it? How does the author describe the actions of the tobacco chewer? What do you think some of the dangers of chewing tobacco might be?
- How do you think Red feels as he's driving home after dropping off the shipping bill to Mr. Morrison's store? How does the author show this?
- After the accident, why does Tommy Munn think Red and Mac will leave school? What is his attitude about that? How does this make Red feel? Does it change Red's feelings about school-work?
- How does Pa show Mr. Munn that he can take care of his family? What does that tell you about how Pa and Ma feel about their children getting an education? Do you think they're making sacrifices? If so, what sacrifices?
- What does Tinker MacPhee feel when Pa is coming home? How do Pa and Ma treat him? What does that say about the community?
- Why do you think Red's eyes sting at the end of the story?
- In this story we hear a bit about Samuel Johnson and his family. What is their story? Why does Red think about Samuel when Pa is injured and in the hospital?

## **2) Writing exercises:**

- Write a journal entry Red might make on the day his father has the accident.
- Write a journal entry Ellen might make on the day of the accident.
- Write a scene in the hospital when Alex comes to see Pa.
- List five words that describe Red and his actions in this chapter. List five words that describe: Pa, Ma, Mac, Ellen, Bunch, Tommy Munn, Tinker MacPhee.
- Write an account of the accident where Pa is hurt.

## **3) Art Projects:**

- Draw a picture of Red and Mac doing the farm chores after the accident.
- Draw a picture of Red and Flash driving to Clearwater, showing the scenery.
- Based on the descriptions in the book, draw a map of Red's route to the station and then to Clearwater.
- Make up a sign that you might make to close school for any reason you would like to make up.

## **4) Drama:**

- Act out one of the following scenes from the book: when Pa has his accident; the scene in the store.
- Write and act out a scene in the store between the men sitting around the stove. Bring in new characters who walk into the store, and try and inject some drama or story into the scene.
- Write and act out a scene in the hospital and what happens when Pa arrives.

## **5) Extra Study and Research activities:**

- Research general stores and make a poster to present to the class.
- Research the barter system and do a class report.
- Research chewing tobacco and how it was used in the 1930s along with some research on its dangers.

– Research the medical system of the 1930s and list the cost of doctors' services. Make a poster showing these.

– Research Medicare and when it was introduced. Do a class presentation and include information about what life might have been like before and after Medicare, if you had an accident like Pa's.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: THE OUTHOUSE BANDIT**

### **SUMMARY:**

When a train is stuck in the snow, and Pa is not around to help dig it out, Red insists on taking his place, even though boys are never hired for the job. Mocked by a neighbour, Henry Munn, Red insists on skiing home after the train is dug free, instead of taking a ride home with the Munns. As it starts to snow and then storm, Red is lost and must find refuge – any refuge – he can find. At last he finds shelter – but it is not what he expected.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**

#### **1) Topics of Discussion:**

- In which month is this story set?
- What are some of Ma’s instructions when she leaves home? What kind of instructions would your parents give you if they left you alone in the house for a bit? How are those different or the same as Red’s parents’ instructions and warnings?
- Why are Red and Mac snippy with each other? What do you think Red feels, and what do you think Mac feels at the start of the story when they’re splitting wood?
- Why does Henry Munn stop by the house?
- Why does Red insist on going to dig out the train? Do you think there may be more reasons than he actually states?
- Why does Mac not want Red to go?
- When Red and Mac fight, how is it the same or different from your interactions with your siblings? How do you think each of them feels? What do you think each of them thinks of the other during the fight?
- What does Red’s decision to go dig out the train say about children’s attitudes in the 1930s about working to help their families? How is this different today?
- Red wants money to help pay the hospital and doctor’s bill when Pa hurt his hand. If this were to happen today, would Red’s family have to pay any such bills? Why not?
- Why is Dusty MacDonald, the section lineman, reluctant to hire Red?
- How does Red convince him? Why do you think he is so desperate to convince Dusty? There can be more than one reason.
- What is Henry Munn’s attitude towards Red, and why do you think he has such attitudes?

Think of possible reasons that aren't mentioned in the story. Hint: it helps to consider the history between people to come up with why they act and react the way they do.

- What are Red and the men doing at the site of the train? Why is it stuck? Does this happen in this day and age?
- Why are the men so keen to dig out the train? What does that tell you about the availability of money in Red's day and age?
- Why does Red refuse the ride home with the Munns? What does that say about him? What would you have done in his situation?
- If Red had simply gone home with the Munns, do you think there would be an exciting story here? Discuss how character flaws, such as Red's stubbornness and pride, can help to move a story forward in an exciting direction. What does that tell you about the need to have characters with flaws in stories?
- Have you ever been out in a snowstorm? Have you ever been afraid of being lost? What was it like?
- Do you think Red is really in danger when he's lost during that storm?
- Where does Red find shelter? Is it what he expected to find? Is it what you expected him to find? How does the author foreshadow this?
- Why does Red not know whose outhouse he is in? Whose privy/outhouse would he have recognized and why?
- What are the common elements in the outhouse that Red finds himself in, that would be in all outhouses of that era? How is this toilet arrangement different from today's facilities? What was the lime intended for? What was the Eatons catalogue intended for?
- What does Red feel when Henry finds him? Remember you can feel more than one emotion at a time. What do you think Henry feels?
- In the Munns' kitchen, the boys jokes come thick and fast. Do you think the Munn boys were trying to be mean? Do you think there was something malicious behind their jokes? How do think the Munns' attitude towards education impact on their attitude towards the MacRaes? Do you think it might have something to do with how the MacRaes think of the Munns?
- Although the Munns are critical of the MacRaes, they are also genuinely helpful. What does that tell you about them, and about the community?
- Have you ever been in a situation where one silly joke leads to another to the point of unkindness? Discuss how that happens. How can you put a stop to it?

- When Red comes home, why does Tommy insist on accompanying him to the door?
- Is Red surprised at Mac's defense of him? Why?
- Have you ever been the butt of jokes, or people making fun of you? What did it feel like? What does it tell you about how you might act if you're in the position to make fun of someone else?

## **2) Writing exercises:**

- Describe a snowstorm, using all five senses.
- Write an imaginary account of you being lost in a snowstorm and how you save yourself.
- Describe a bathroom of your imagination, with any magical or technological gadgets you can imagine.
- Draw a line down the middle of the page. On one side list Red's feelings, on the other Mac's when: Ma and Pa leave; when Red decides to go dig out the train; when Red gets back.
- Draw a line down the middle of the page. On one side list Red's feelings, on the other Henry Munn's when: Henry tells the boys about the snow-bound train; when Red arrives at the train; when Red refuses the ride home; when Red is found in the privy; when Henry drives Red home.
- Write a journal entry in the first person, as though written by any of the characters in the story at the end of the day. Eg: Red, Mac, Henry Munn, Tommy, Mr. Munn, Dusty MacDonald, etc.
- Write a dialogue between people inside the train, looking out at the digging. Make up characters and back stories for your characters.
- Make up a character who is inside the train, who is desperate for the train to get moving. Show the story from her/his point of view.
- Write your own fictional account of where Red finds shelter; make it any place of your choice.
- Make up a story using the following words: storm, wind, gusts, rage, terror, blue.

## **3) Art Projects:**

- Draw a scene with the train stuck in snow and people digging it out.
- Draw Red's face when he finds himself in the privy.
- In groups: using cardboard and cotton, make a three dimensional model of the scene where the snow is stuck and the local men, along with Red, are digging out the train.
- Draw a picture of the scene in the Munns' kitchen.

#### **4) Drama:**

- Break up into groups and act out a scene where the train is stuck and being dug out.
- Write and act out a scene inside the train while the train is stuck. Put in some drama and excitement to make it interesting.
- Write and act out a scene in the Munn household that evening, after Henry and Tommy return from dropping off Red.
- In groups, write a monologue as though delivered by each of the following characters on the day of the story: Red, Mac, Bunch, Dusty MacDonald, Mr. Munn, Mrs. Munn, Henry Munn, Tommy Munn. Discuss how a story changes depending on who is telling it.
- Write and act a scene in school on the Monday after this story.

#### **5) Extra Study and Research activities:**

- Research trains in the 1930s and do a report.
- Research trains in the 1930s and now, and show your information in a poster entitled THEN AND NOW.
- Research outhouses, and how and when the first indoor toilets were invented. Do a class report.
- Research snow storms and the tactics you can use to help you survive. Do a class report.

## **CHAPTER SIX: THE EDGE OF THE WORLD**

### **SUMMARY:**

It is a summer of change. Red is troubled by his older brother Alex's impending departure off Island to university, and his older sister Ellen's upcoming marriage. Mac, too, seems to be drifting into a grown up world, leaving Red behind. Red finds distraction, solace and delight in an aeroplane – a Gipsy Moth – which lands in a neighbour's field, after experiencing engine trouble. As Red helps with the repair of the plane and gets to fly in it, he comes to see life from a wider perspective, easing his fear of change.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**

#### **1) Topics of Discussion:**

- What have Red, Mac and Alex been busy doing all week, when the story opens? Discuss what that tells you about rural children in the 1930s.
- What does Red feel about Alex and Mac's ongoing discussions about leaving the Island – you can feel more than one thing at a time. What other factors in Red's life make him feel this way? Have you ever felt this way – afraid of, or dreading change – or known anyone feeling this? What kinds of things can you do to make yourself/someone else feel better?
- How long do Red, Mac and Alex walk for their swim? What does that tell you about the activity level of that era? Would you walk that far for a swim?
- What kind of plane does Red spot overhead? What colour is it? How does he know it is experiencing problems?
- What do you think Red feels when he sees that plane land? Can you think of something in this day and age that would be equally exciting and new?
- Why does the author and the characters in the story refer to the plane as an aeroplane and not an airplane?
- What are Red's thoughts and feelings when he sees the pilots? How are they mixed? What informs his impression of pilots? What is the pilot's name?
- What do you learn about the community by their response to Mr. Tompkins, the pilot? Do you think today people would offer him a place to stay?
- What steps does the pilot take to secure the plane? Why do you think Red is so eager to have his stakes hold the plane down?
- How does Red feel when Gooley leads the way to the store? Why are they going there? What

does Tommy Munn feel? What does this tell you about the way people regard the pilot?

– Discuss how the landing of the plane impacts on Red and what he has been feeling at the start of the story. Is it a welcome distraction? Why? How does he feel about the pilot staying with the MacMillan family?

– Why is Red so eager that Ma invite Mr. Tompkins over for a meal?

– When Alex puts on his new suit, what does Red feel? Where did that suit come from? Were new clothes common place in that day and age? What is Mac's attitude towards new clothes? How are these attitudes the same or different in your family?

– When Mr. Tompkins comes to supper, what remark does Red make that annoys the pilot? Why do you think Mr. Tompkins is angry about it? What does that say about him? How does Ma react to the pilot's statement about the war? Which war is this?

– How do you think Red feels when he is able to help the pilot when the part needed to fix the plane comes in? What is that part called?

– How do you think Red feels when he hears the pilot is giving rides for money? How much money does Mr. Tompkins ask for? Does it seem like a lot of money today? Was it a lot of money back in Red's time?

– Why does Red not ask his father for the money for the plane ride? What does that say about him? Why does Pa offer it? What does it say about him? How do you think that ties into Pa's desire for his children to get an education?

– Discuss the scene when Red is up on the plane. Discuss the idea of the horizon moving, so the edge of the world keeps moving. Why do you think the author used this theme for this story? How does it fit in with what is happening in Red's life?

– Have you ever been up in a plane like the one Red goes up in? What was it like? What equivalent adventure would be equally exciting today?

– Why are other people not eager to go up in the plane?

– What do we find out about Shona Murray in this story? What does that tell you about the kind of girl she is?

– What do you think Red feels when he lands after his ride? And when he picks up the courage to talk to Shona?

– How does Red's experience in that plane influence how he feels about Alex leaving? How and why does his attitude change?

## **2) Writing exercises:**

- Describe a flight you've taken on a plane, and make up something dramatic that might happen.
- Write a journal entry Red might make on the day he goes up in the plane.
- Write a journal entry Henry Munn might make the day Red goes up in the plane.
- Make up a story about the most wonderful flight you might take – anything is possible, even space ships – and write about it.
- Write a story about an alien ship landing in your backyard.
- Write a journal entry from the point of view any of the following people on the day Red goes up in the plane: Ma, Pa, Ellen, Bunch, Mac, Alex, Shona Murray.

## **3) Art Projects:**

- Draw a birds' eye view of what Red sees from the plane.
- Draw a picture of Red working on the farm, and dreaming of the plane.
- Draw a picture of any imagined aircraft of your choice and give it whatever features you like.
- Make a poster announcing flights in a bi-plane.
- Draw a picture showing Red's feelings on the day he goes up in the plane.

## **4) Drama:**

- Act out a scene in the field when the plane lands. Make up characters from the village of Applecross and write dialogue for them.
- In groups, write and deliver monologues for each of the following people – something they'd say the day Red goes up in the plane: Red, Ma, Pa, Mac, Alex, Gooley, Ellen, Bunch, Mr. Tompkins, Henry Munn, Shona Murray, Gooley's mother, Erica MacMillan.
- Write and act a scene in the Munns' house the day Red goes up in the plane.
- Write and act out a scene in the MacMillans' house of the first evening that the pilot spends with them.

### **5) Extra Study and Research activities:**

- Research Gipsy Moths and make a poster about it.
- Research the equivalent value of money in the early 1930s and today, and make a poster showing how much items cost. Show what you could get then and now for \$5.00
- Research haying in the 1930s and do a class report.
- Research magneto coils and do class report.

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