

Rough, tough and had enough

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Synopsis

Michael is a city boy through and through. He much prefers the play station and the television to the great outdoors. When Michael's father takes him tramping he finds himself way outside of his comfort zone. He has trouble keeping up with his fit and capable father, who has lots of experience in the bush. Michael feels like even more of a failure when he meets Doug, a mysterious hunter, at the hut where he and his father spend the night. Doug thinks that Michael is soft and takes it upon himself to teach him some important survival skills.

Michael has no idea how soon he will need to use these newly acquired skills. On day two of their adventure Michael's dad hurts his foot and Michael needs to reach help. This entails crossing a treacherous river and balancing on a perilous wire bridge – all solo. Michael's boring holiday soon turns into an exhilarating adventure. A flash flood nearly sweeps Michael, his father and Doug away and bad weather stops the group from being able to get out of the bush on foot. Michael's experiences bring him closer to his father and also teach him a few important lessons about himself.

Text Type

Rough, tough and had enough is a fast-paced adventure novel which will appeal particularly to boys. The novel is a classic survival story which sees Michael, the main character, face many important challenges. During the action-packed story Michael must learn new skills and step up to help rescue his father who injures himself. Despite the fact that Michael is scared he shows courage and determination to overcome his fears and complete his mission. By doing this Michael reaches a deeper understanding of himself as an individual.

Themes include the relationship between a father and son, facing adversity, the powerful forces of nature, courage and perseverance.

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapter 1 (pp. 9-23), Chapters 2-5 (pp. 24-72), Chapters 6-9 (pp. 73-118).

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of words and ideas presented in the novel. Have them discuss events and make predictions about what is going to happen next. Wherever possible encourage students to relate Michael's adventures to their own experiences and broader knowledge. Have them analyse Michael's character and track the changes that he undergoes as the story progresses. Students should identify themes and explain why they are important.

Introducing the Text

Study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- What kind of novel do you think this is? What do you expect from a novel of this genre?
- Where is the story set?
- Who is the main character in the novel? How does he feel about his father's choice of holiday destination?
- Why do you think the phrase "luck only lasts so long" has been included on the front cover of the novel?
- What dangerous elements of nature does Michael have to face during his holiday?
- What do you think is going to happen to Michael and his father to make them ask the question "will we ever get home alive"?

Teacher reads Chapter 1 (pp. 9-23) aloud. Students follow along in their books.

Comprehension Chapter 1 (pp. 9-23)

- Who is the narrator of the story? How does he feel about his father's holiday idea?
- What sorts of things does Michael moan about to his father? How does his father respond to his moaning?
- What factors make it hard for Michael to reach the top of the hill? Why are they running behind schedule?
- Why does Michael's dad insist that Michael change into warm clothes?
- How does the wind hinder Michael's progress? What is the only way that Michael can reach the ridge?
- Why does Michael believe that being in the bush is turning him into a "girl"?

Discussion

- Where is the story set?
- Have you ever been tramping or camping? What sorts of things do you need to take with you to ensure that you have a safe and comfortable trip? What elements of nature do you need to be mindful of? What do you enjoy the most about being in the bush?
- How does Michael's attitude towards the bush holiday differ from his father's?
- What evidence is there in this Chapter to suggest that Michael is not very fit or used to being outdoors?
- Predict what is going to happen in the story next.

Students read Chapters 2-5 (pp. 24-72) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 2-5 (pp. 24-72)

- Describe the hut. How does Michael feel when he finally reaches it?
- Describe the man who is already in the hut. How does Michael's reaction to the man differ from his father's?
- How does Doug know that Michael is a city boy? What is Doug's attitude towards Michael?
- What information does Greg draw out about Doug during their conversation?
- Why does Michael believe that he won't be able to sleep?
- Why does Greg suggest to Michael that they extend their camping trip by a day? Why does Michael agree to this?
- What does Doug decide to teach Michael while they are stuck in the hut? What does Doug believe is the only way to stay "safe and alive" in the bush?
- What aspects of bush craft does Michael learn from Doug? Why does he describe Doug as being "Sergeant Major Robertson"?
- What information does Doug teach Michael about hyperthermia? What is the safest way to cross a river?
- What further information does Greg draw out of Doug when Michael goes to bed? What does Michael overhear his father saying to Doug when he returns from the long drop that intrigues him?
- Describe the swing bridge that Michael has to cross. Why does Michael have so much trouble crossing it? What causes him to nearly fall off? How does he feel when he successfully reaches the other side?
- Why don't Michael and Greg cross the river as soon as they reach it? Where do they go instead?
- Michael uses the walk through the bush as an opportunity to do something. What does he use it as an opportunity for?
- Describe how Michael and Greg cross the river. Why does it take them so long? Why does Michael feel such a sense of triumph when they reach the other side?
- How does Greg hurt his foot? How does Michael know that his father is really hurt? How does Michael take charge of the situation?
- What does Michael look for when choosing a campsite for the night?
- Why is Michael convinced that he has to go for help? How far is it back to the hut? Why is Michael so worried about completing the journey alone? Why does his father suggest that he wait a couple of hours before he sets off?
- What does Michael do to ensure that his father is comfortable during his absence?

Discussion

- Describe Doug. Why do you think he is so patronising towards Michael when he finds out that he is a city boy? What do you think motivates him to teach Michael about bush craft? What secret do you think he shared with Greg?

- How has the information that Doug taught Michael come in handy for him? Why is it important to go out into the bush with as much knowledge as possible?
- In what ways has Michael developed and changed since the start of the story? How has his attitude changed? What do you think has brought about these changes?
- What aspect of the walk back to the hut do you think Michael will find the most challenging and why? What do you think is going to happen in the story next?
- Have you ever found yourself in a position similar to Michael's where someone else is relying on you to rescue them or get them help? If so, explain what happened and how you dealt with it.

Students read Chapters 6-9 (pp. 73-118) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 6-9 (pp. 73-118)

- Why does Michael have conflicting feelings about his camping trip with his father?
- What does Michael learn about his grandfather and Michael's family during their conversation? What insight does the information give Michael into his father's motives for taking him tramping?
- Why is Michael reluctant to leave his father alone?
- Why does Michael build two towers out of rocks before he crosses the river?
- What does Michael use as a prop when he crosses the river? Why does he need it?
- How does Michael know that he has chosen a good place to cross the river?
- What does Michael do to stop himself getting tired during his walk back to the hut?
- What does Michael do to prepare himself for the swing bridge? How does he react when he reaches the other side?
- Why isn't Doug at the hut when Michael gets there? How does Michael know where he is?
- Why is it so important for Doug and Michael to get back to Greg immediately?
- Why does Michael decide that he needs to improve his fitness?
- Why is it so easy for Michael to find his way back to his father?
- How does Michael know that Doug is impressed with him?
- Why does Doug leave Michael and Greg? Where does he go?
- How will the rescuers get to Greg? Why doesn't this prospect excite Michael as much as it normally would?
- What sad information does Michael learn about Doug's son from his father? How does this information help Michael to understand Doug's behaviour better?
- Why can't the chopper come and rescue Greg that night? What does Doug bring back with him?

- Why does Doug show Michael the stars?
- What frightens Michael when he wakes up to go to the toilet? How does Doug react to his predicament?
- What causes Michael to wake up later in the night? Why do the group need to abandon their campsite? What does Michael grab from the tent to take with them? Why does Michael slide back down the bank after he has reached safety?
- What does Michael witness when he finally reaches the top of the bank? Why is Doug so convinced that they all would have drowned?
- What do Doug and Michael build to provide shelter?
- Why is Doug so happy when he realises that Michael grabbed the mountain radio?
- What do the trio find when they return to their old campsite?
- What do Doug and Michael build to ensure that the helicopter knows where the campsite is located?
- Why does Michael decide to walk out of the bush with Doug?
- What invitation does Doug extend to Michael during their walk? Why do you think Michael is so excited about this invitation?

Discussion

- What has Michael learned from his experiences camping? In what ways have his adventures changed him? What does the fact that Michael is willing to risk his own life to help his father reveal about his character?
- How does the camping trip change Michael's relationship with his father? What does Michael learn about his father during the trip? Do you believe that Michael will feel closer to his father when they return home? Explain your answer.
- How might things have turned out differently for Michael and Greg if Doug hadn't been there to teach Michael bush craft? What do you think the most important thing that Doug taught Michael was? Justify your answer.
- Why does Doug's attitude towards Michael change? What does Michael do that convinces Doug that he isn't just a "city kid"?
- Identify the climax of the story. Why is this event so important?
- Identify an important theme and explain how it is developed throughout the novel.

Activities

Pamphlet – Using what you have learned from the novel and your own research design a booklet that provides information about how to remain "safe and alive" in the bush.

Diary – Imagine that you are Michael and you have taken a diary with you on the camping trip. Write a diary entry for each day of the holiday. Describe the events that occur and your thoughts and feelings about them.

Plot – Draw a plot graph that shows important events in the novel and measures their "level of excitement". Label the horizontal axis "Events" and list 10 important events from the novel in the order that they occur. Label the vertical axis "Level

of excitement". Plot each event on the graph according to how exciting it is. Clearly label the climax of the novel.

News Report – Prepare a report for the evening news that explains Michael's adventures with his father, the flash flood and the helicopter rescue.

Research – Choose an aspect of bush survival mentioned in the novel and conduct a research assignment on it. Formulate focussing questions to guide your research and record your research process. Present your information as a speech, an essay or on a poster.

Setting – Draw a map that shows all of the important locations mentioned in the story.

Poetic Writing – Write a poem based on events that occur in this story. Try and create imagery by incorporating figurative language features into your writing.

Character – Draw a picture of Michael on a large sheet of paper. Around his picture include thought bubbles that show what he thinks and speech bubbles that show important things that he says. Also include adjectives that describe his character around his picture.

Drama – Choose an exciting event from the story and write a script for it. Include a list of characters and stage directions. Practise your play and present it to your class.

Soundtrack – Imagine that this novel is being made into a film. Choose 5 songs for the soundtrack. Explain why you chose the songs and where in the film they will go.