



**TEACHING NOTES**

**Prepared by Christine Sarandis**

***The Night They Stormed Eureka***  
**by Jackie French**

**ISBN: 9780732285418    RRP: \$15.99**  
**Publication Date: August 2009**

**Book Description**

It's 1854, and the Ballarat goldfields are a place of dreams and rebellion as Sam, a homeless teenager, is called back to the past to join the Puddlehams, who run 'the best little cook shop on the diggings'.

The Puddlehams dream of buying a hotel with velvet seats, while others dream of freedom from the British crown, away from the rule of wealthy landowners and corrupt officials.

Once again Jackie French takes a fresh look at the history we thought we knew and recreates an event entrenched in our national heritage.

Ages: 10+

**Jackie French**

Jackie French is a full-time writer who lives near Braidwood in the Araluen Valley, NSW. In 2000, *Hitler's Daughter* was awarded the CBCA Younger Readers' Award. *To the Moon and Back* won the Eve Pownall Award in 2005. Her books appear consistently in the CBCA Awards, most recently *A Rose for the Anzac Boys* was shortlisted, and *The Camel Who Crossed Australia* was named a Notable Book.

**Review of the novel**

[http://www.readplus.com.au/blog\\_detail.php?id=582](http://www.readplus.com.au/blog_detail.php?id=582)

## **Themes**

The following events and themes may be used as a basis for discussion about the novel but also in more universal terms. They might also form the basis for class debates or individual or small group projects.

- The Eureka Stockade
- Life on the goldfields
- Democracy and human rights
- The role of women on the goldfields and in the 1850s
- Law and order on the goldfields
- Conflict
- Aspirations for a better future
- Justice and equality
- Love and friendship

## **Setting**

21<sup>st</sup> Century, Australia

The Ballarat Goldfields, 1854 - the Eureka Stockade

## **The Eureka on Trial Timeline**

<http://eureka.imagineering.com.au/timeline.htm>

## **Characters**

### **Sam**

- Compare and contrast her life at home and on the goldfields.
- From what had she run away?
- How was her experience at home altered or viewed differently while she was with the Puddlehams? Explain your answer.
- How did Sam's view of her life as the Puddlehams' daughter change over time and what was it that made her feel uncomfortable about the long-term prospect of staying in their world, as part of their family? Give examples.
- Why was Sam compassionate towards the Professor, despite the drunkenness that reminded her of her own mother?

- Why was Sam so intent on preserving the Puddlehams' safety above all else?
- How did Sam's opinion of George and his family differ from those of the white men of the goldfields era?
- How did she consider her role in changing the course of history and how realistic was it?
- After her time in the goldfields had ended, how had Sam changed and for what in her past did she blame herself? How did she plan to do things differently in order to improve her future?

### **Mrs Puddleham**

- Why did Mrs Puddleham blame herself for her daughter's death and how did this belief affect her life?
- What were her dreams and aspirations for the future?
- Use examples to describe how she felt about her husband.
- Make a list of the simple things that gave Mrs Puddleham pleasure in life and compare them with the sorts of things that make you happy.
- Why did Mrs Puddleham believe her husband would find life in the colony so difficult?
- Why did Mrs Puddleham take Sam under her wing and what did she hope the future would hold for them as a family?
- Give an opinion on the timing of Mrs Puddleham's death and the conversation she had with Sam before she passed away.

### **Mr Puddleham**

- What had been his role before moving to the colony and why had he travelled there in the first place?
- Make a list of the characteristics and some examples which indicate the level of respect and love he felt for his wife.
- What motivated him to join the cause against the injustice on the goldfields?
- How did his feelings towards Sam change over time?

## **The Professor**

- Outline the relationship between Sam and the Professor and discuss their mutual understanding and connection despite their very different life circumstances?
- Give an opinion on the professor's alcohol addiction. What might he be trying to mask with the alcohol and how did he eventually manage to change his focus on life?
- How did the Professor's original opinion of George change over time and why did he hold an initial prejudice towards him?
- What do you believe were the key factors that changed the Professor and gave him hope and plans for a future?

## **George**

- How did George and Sam find a common interest and what conditions or elements of their personalities enabled a friendship to develop between them?
- What were George's aspirations for the future and how did he plan to achieve them?

## **General Character Questions**

- Find three or more examples and at least one quote to build up a character profile of any of the following characters from the novel: Mr or Mrs Puddleham, Sam, George, the Professor. Present your profile as a PowerPoint document or poster. To help you get started, you might consider not only the things the character says, but also some of their actions. (As an alternative, you might choose a character from history, such as Peter Lalor, on whom to base your project.)

## **Chapter Questions**

### **Chapter 1**

- Describe how Sam drifted from one world to another.
- Once Sam had adjusted to her new surroundings, why did she suddenly find herself shouting at an armed bushranger?

## **Chapter 2**

- What information from her own life and from history did Sam use to help her protect the Puddlehams from the bushranger's attack?

## **Chapter 3**

- According to Mrs Puddleham, what good reason might Sam have for disguising herself as a boy and running away?

## **Chapter 4**

- What reason did the Puddlehams have for working on the goldfields and what were their aspirations for the future?
- Which arguments did Mrs Puddleham employ to convince her husband that Sam should remain with them?

## **Chapter 5**

- What reasons did Mrs Puddleham give Sam for having made the trip to the goldfields and why did Sam think there was more to her story than she was letting on?
- Describe the Higgins family and the key points of the discussion between Sam and George.

## **Chapter 6**

- How did Sam feel when she and the Puddlehams finally reached the cook shop?
- How did Sam learn where and in what time in history she had arrived and why did this realisation make her fearful?

## **Chapter 7**

- Why did Sam open up to the Professor and what reasons did she provide for wishing to remain on the goldfields rather than return to her home?

## **Chapter 8**

- Give an opinion on the Professor's comparison between gold and ideas. (Pg, 56)
- Why did Sam question the Professor's knowledge of the Eureka Stockade?

## **Chapter 9**

- How did Sam feel about her circumstances once she'd had a good breakfast and was peeling the potatoes for the lunches?
- Describe the circumstances that led to Mr and Mrs Puddleham's separation in England and their eventual reunion in the Colony?
- For Sam, what question kept resurfacing in relation to the Puddlehams?
- Explain the difference between Mr and Mrs Puddleham's behaviour towards Sam? What do you believe to be the cause of Mr Puddleham's perceived reservations?

## **Chapter 10**

- When Sam looked down on the gravel pits, describe the scene that made her gasp.
- What did Sam realise after she learnt that many of the miners were working without licences?
- Why did Mr Puddleham warn Sam about calling upon the police for help after she saw the bushranger who had earlier tried to rob them?
- Describe how Sam began to imagine her future life with the Puddlehams.

## **Chapter 11**

- After the troopers handcuffed Mr Puddleham, why did Mrs Puddleham give in and meet their demands instead of defying them?

## **Chapter 12**

- Why did Mr Puddleham refuse to sell coffee at his wife's

suggestion?

- What reasons did Mr Puddleham give for refusing his wife's suggestion that he and Sam should buy mining licences?

### **Chapter 13**

- Through their discussions outside the Professor's lean-to, what similarities and differences or truths were revealed about Sam and the Professor's personal circumstances?
- Which injustices experienced by all the miners were revealed through this discussion?
- After her visit to the Professor, what made Sam suddenly realise that the past wasn't necessarily the safe haven she had believed it to be?

### **Chapter 14**

- Mrs Puddleham had a simple but happy life on the goldfields. List the things that made her happy and from which she derived pleasure.
- What caused the upset that saw a number of diggers abandon their stew at the cook shop?
- What had happened to the Puddlehams' baby and why did Mrs Puddleham blame herself?
- How was Lucy's death indirectly related to Mr Puddleham's decision to defend his own rights and those of the diggers?
- For what did Mr Puddleham thank Sam?

### **Chapter 15**

- Why did Mrs Puddleham believe that her husband had no understanding of the real world?

### **Chapter 16**

- After she wrote to the farm, how did Sam feel about the prospect of seeing George again?

### **Chapter 17**



- Describe the circumstances that lead Sam to confess her gender to George.

### **Chapter 18**

- Why did the Professor offer to teach George to read better and to write?
- List the main points of the discussion between George and the Professor and the possible implications for the future.

### **Chapter 19**

- What agreement had been reached between George and the Professor?
- What did George say about his father's intentions that shocked Sam and left her speechless?

### **Chapter 20**

- How did Mrs Puddleham's increasing insistence at enhancing Sam's femininity in the future make Sam feel, especially after she accidentally called Sam Lucy?
- Reflecting on the Professor's words, what did Sam suddenly realise about her own past?
- How did Sam convince Mrs Puddleham that they should attend the roll up?

### **Chapter 21**

- What were Sam's thoughts as she stood amongst the excited crowd at the roll up?

### **Chapter 22**

- What was the central point made in the letter sent down to Governor Hotham?
- How did Sam feel about the gift from Mrs Puddleham?

### **Chapter 23**

- Describe the rising fervour that was generated after the wagon

was captured and the little drummer boy injured.

### **Chapter 24**

- How did the Professor assist the injured digger?
- According to Sam, how had the Professor changed since he began teaching George?
- What did Mr Puddleham say about the future that gave his wife a sense of hope?

### **Chapter 25**

- Describe what Sam meant when she said about the miners: *'They were drunk on dreams.'*
- Which incident soured George's mood and what was his subsequent resolve?
- What agreement did Sam and George make in their aim to ensure the Puddlehams' safety?

### **Chapter 26**

- Describe the events that occurred as Mrs Puddleham and Sam were about to leave Wilson's shop.

### **Chapter 27**

- As Peter Lalor rallied the diggers to form into divisions, what did Sam envisage as her main responsibility and why?
- With which dilemma did Sam wrestle after she watched the stockade take shape?

### **Chapter 28**

- What part did the Puddlehams play in aiding the rebels' cause?
- Which fact about the stockade events did Sam remember amidst Mrs Puddleham's reference to her and Mr Puddleham's 'maritals'?

### **Chapter 29**

- What were Mrs Puddleham's plans for Sam in order to get her away from the danger of the stockade?

- Of what was Sam thinking whenever the wind blew, while the leaves on the ground stayed still?

### **Chapter 30**

- What realisation struck Sam as she attempted to rescue the Professor from his mine?
- Why had he remained underground for so long and what did he plan to do once he had staked his claim?
- Why was the Professor unaware of the events that had been taking place?
- What promise did Sam ask the Professor to make before she went for help?

### **Chapter 31**

- How did the Professor's situation help Sam to remove the Puddlehams from the direct danger of the stockade?

### **Chapter 32**

- What happened to the Professor's gold?
- Despite her best efforts to stay awake, what were Sam's thoughts as she drifted off to sleep?
- Why did Sam dress in the pink silk and lace dress that Mrs Puddleham had given her?
- How was Sam prevented from alerting everyone to the impending danger?
- Why did the redcoat spare Sam despite being in a position to harm her?
- Give your opinion on what was said between Sam and Mrs Puddleham before the woman passed away.

### **Chapter 33**

- Along with her memories, what else remained from the past when Sam returned to her own time?
- What jolted Sam from a strong sense of loss and helped her realise that the activities of the rebels at Eureka stockade had

actually changed the course of history?

- How did this knowledge enable Sam to begin to move forward in her own life?

### **Author's note**

Ask pairs or small groups of students to read specific sub-headings of this section of the book and report their findings to the class.

### **Quotes for discussion**

Use the following quotes as the basis for small group or class discussion. Reread the section the quote is taken from to discover the context of the quote as well as the speaker. In small groups, students could discuss and take notes or find examples that illustrate their understanding of the quote within the context of the novel, and/or its relevance to the action or themes of the novel.

- Pg. 4: *For a second, the emptiness overcame her. She wanted to kick the gravestone, to hurt the world that had hurt her. But she'd seen what happened when you hit back... and Mum screaming, 'Get out! You're trying to ruin what little happiness I have left.*
- Pg. 28: *This world was suddenly as complex as the one she'd left. Maybe the past only seemed simple, she thought suddenly, because all you knew of it was what was written on the page. But what about the bits you didn't know? That no one had written about?*
- Pg. 38: *What sort of world was it where a book could be so precious? Sam had thought she knew about hunger. For the first time she had a glimpse of a hungry mind.*
- Pg. 55: *The unexamined life is not worth living. But sometimes one's life is not worth living if you examine it too closely, either.*
- Pg. 84: *Gold isn't just yellow metal, she thought suddenly, remembering the Professor's words last night. They're digging for the stories that could change their lives. A poor man becomes a rich man, a convict buys a farm...*

- Pg. 104: *The diggers want democracy...None of the dreams on the diggings are new. Riches, power, democracy. All are old, old stories.*
- Pg. 112: *I am doing this for you, Mrs Puddlehams. I am doing it for me, and for Lucy. I am doing it for all who have suffered under the tyranny of those who rule us.*
- Pg. 135: *The mob killed Socrates, remember. Democracy does not mean that good decisions are made.*
- Pg. 138: *It's fun ain't it? Like shifting gold outta dirt.*
- Pg. 138: *Once you have learned to think you have a weapon more powerful than lies.*
- Pg. 143: *Sam walked over to a pile of tin plates by the tree. She began to automatically ladle out a helping of stew, trying to take it all in. Embroidery? Painting? Fainting at the sight of blood? Was this what it was like to be a girl back here?*
- Pg. 149: *There are times ... when you need to ask: on which side of the line do I stand? Humans are only capable of seeing small bits in the pattern of history... There are times when you need to stand together.*
- Pg. 151: *There are times you need to stand together. She'd never had a chance to do that. She'd always had to look after herself ... they'd all tried to help. It was her fault she'd faced it alone.*
- Pg. 175: *There aren't enough redcoats in the world to stop us if we stand together. No more redcoats and their swords, no more troopers and their lies, no more magistrates and bribes, no squatters stealing all the land. Can you imagine that?*
- Pg. 193: *We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other, and to fight to defend our rights and liberties.*
- Pg. 212: *Humans are only capable of seeing small bits in the patterns of history. All you can ask yourself is — is this bit that I do good, or is it bad?*

## **Activities**

- Create a Eureka Stockade timeline, including illustrations.
- Imagine that Sam was keeping a diary of her experiences on the goldfields. Write a diary entry to present her feelings for and experiences with the Puddlehams, her empathy towards George or the Professor, and her role or understanding of the events she is incapable of preventing.
- Have a school outing to Sovereign Hill at Ballarat. See web link below.
- Make some of the recipes at the back of the book to share amongst the class or hold a dress-up activity where students dress as characters from the novel and sit down to a meal or afternoon tea similar to that enjoyed by the diggers.
- Draw, make a collage of, or create a diorama of a scene reminiscent of the goldfields. Include the miner's lean-tos, the cook shop, and the diggings.
- Find out about the health conditions on the diggings and write a report to illustrate your findings.
- Write about a cause or issue you feel passionate about and present it as a newspaper article.

## **Discussion topics**

- Discuss how the troopers and the diggers would have had differing views of the Eureka Stockade and the laws on the goldfields.
- Organise a class debate to argue the issues central to the novel.
- Discuss some ways that people resolve conflicts and the effectiveness of the different methods.
- What were some factors that led to lawlessness on the goldfields?
- What caused the tension between the troopers and the diggers?
- What part did the Eureka Stockade play in helping to shape democracy in Australia?
- Imagine, like Sam, you had knowledge of a tragic event that was about to occur but you were powerless to change it. How might

that make you feel?

- How did the author prepare the reader for Sam's departure from the Puddlehams and a return to her own time? Give examples.
- Can fiction really inform about history and what particular features make historical fiction seem real and believable?
- When and how does historical fiction successfully teach us about the past?

### **Further reading**

#### **Other historical fiction titles by Jackie French:**

- *A Rose for the Anzac Boys*
- *Pharaoh*
- *They Came On Viking Ships*
- *Valley of Gold*
- *Hitler's Daughter*
- *A War for Gentlemen*
- *Tom Appleby Convict Boy*
- *Macbeth and Son*
- *Walking the Boundaries*
- *Somewhere Around the Corner*

#### **Animal Stars:**

- *The Dog Who Loved A Queen*
- *The Goat Who Sailed the World*
- *The Camel Who Crossed Australia*
- *The Donkey who Carried the Wounded*

#### **Other historical titles about the Eureka stockade or life on the goldfields:**

- *Fly A Rebel Flag: The Eureka Stockade* by Robyn Annear
- 'The Fight at Eureka Stockade' (Poem) written by Henry Lawson. Follow the link for a copy of the poem:  
<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~natinfo/lawson/fightateurekastockade.htm>
- *The Night We Made the Flag: A Eureka Story* by Carole Wilkinson, illustrated by Sebastian Ciaffaglione

- *Journey to Eureka* by Kerry Greenwood

### **Web links**

Kids Encyclopedia

[http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/eu/Eureka\\_Stockade](http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/eu/Eureka_Stockade)

Ballarat Accommodation & Tourist directory

<http://www.ballarat.com/eurekastockade.htm>

Archives of the Eureka Stockade

<http://eureka.imagineering.com.au/home.htm>

Australian Government Cultural portal

<http://www.culture.gov.au/articles/eurekastockade/index.htm>

Australian Heritage places inventory

<http://www.heritage.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahpi/record.pl?RNE19129>

Sovereign Hill

<http://www.sovereignhill.com.au/>

Sovereign Hill Education site

<http://sheducationcom.ascetinteractive.biz/>

The Eureka Centre

<http://eurekaballarat.com>



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