



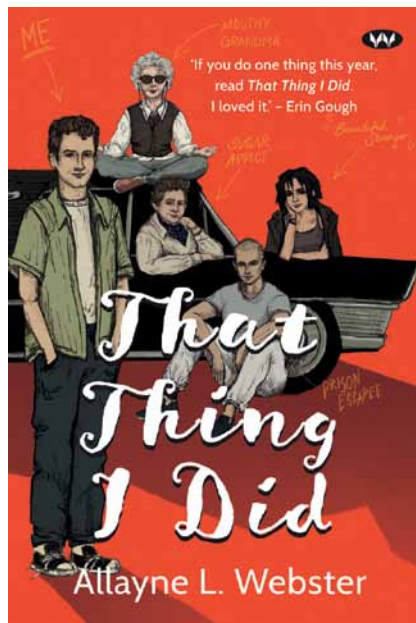
# Wakefield Press

## TEACHERS' NOTES

### That Thing I Did

By Allayne L. Webster

Notes prepared by Andrea Altamura © 2022



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## 1. Introduction to *That Thing I Did*

Five misfits hit the road in a haunted hearse on a madcap road trip in this frank, fearless and taboo breaking comedy.

After Taylor Kennedy commits online treachery, he's befriended by his eccentric neighbour, Chip Carter.

Chip talks to dead people and he needs help with a very dubious business venture.

But the prison escapee Jackson Rollock takes refuge in Taylor's back yard.

Soon, the boys are liberating Jackson's mouthy grandmother Daisy and hitting the road to fulfill her dying wish – with beautiful hitchhiker Chloe on board.

What could go wrong?

They'll break the rules, bare their souls, make a bucketload of questionable jokes, and learn that love and friendship is everything.

## 2. Praise for *That Thing I Did*

'*That Thing I Did* is a rollicking, funny YA novel that bursts off the page with frenetic, youthful energy. Allayne Webster writes with wit and precision, delivering a zinging tale chock-full of non-stop humour and tonnes of heart. The twists and turns are so frequent, the pages practically turn themselves. This book is a wild ride from start to finish: it's witty, hilarious, hectic, manic and unabashedly irreverent!'

**Holden Sheppard – author of *Invisible Boys* and *The Brink***

'*That Thing I Did* is a road trip like no other. This raucous escapade through regional Australia has it all: from prison breaks to fancy dress party hijinks, from sugar hits to hometown truths.

Its unforgettable characters are joyous, outrageous, foolish and wise, all at once. There's Taylor, obituary writer wannabe, recently friendship dumped after committing a social faux pas; Chip, aspiring pornographer and Chupa Chup addict who speaks to dead people; Chloe, a shoplifting heartbreaker; and Jackson, a prison escapee who just wants to see his dying nan, the irresistible potty mouthed Daisy.

It's a hot mess of the best possible kind, and well worth the ride. If you do only one thing this year, read *That Thing I Did*. I loved this book.'

**Erin Gough – author of *Amelia Westlake* and *The Flywheel***

'A hilarious, punchy as hell road trip story that's pretty much got it all.'

**Robert Newton – author of *Promise Me Happy* and *Mr Romanov's Garden in the Sky***

'*That Thing I Did* feels like a familiar road trip/buddy comedy/coming of age/loss of innocence story, and yet it's fresh and edgy and like nothing I've ever read before. It's *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* if it was directed by Kevin Smith!

Be grossed out, shocked, and snort your soft drink out your nose, while still getting the feels, on a rollicking, twisting and turning road trip adventure sharing a hearse (yes, a hearse) with a truly unique and wonderful cast of (somewhat morally ambiguous) characters – both the living and the dead ones.

There's at least one laugh-out-loud moment on every single page and some major didn't-see-that-coming plot twists, which rival Hollywood's best filmmakers. But be warned: nothing is off limits and *That Thing I Did* is DEFINITELY not PG, unless by PG you mean Pure Gold (I'll never think of *Winnie the Pooh* the same way ever again!)

*That Thing I Did* is bawdy bonkers brilliance, and a book you'll never forget for all the wickedly right reasons.'

**Adam Cece – author of *Huggabie Falls* series, *Wesley Booth Super Sleuth*, and *Twin Spin***

'Fast-paced, funny and brilliantly written!'

**Poppy Nwosu – author of *Taking Down Evelyn Tait*, *Making Friends with Alice Dyson* and *Road Tripping with Pearl Nash***

### 3. About the author

**Allayne L. Webster** is an internationally published Children's and Young Adult author. She also plays guitar/sings and sometimes she illustrates.

Allayne is the proud recipient of three arts grants and a South Australian Premier's Reading Challenge Ambassador. She has served on literary festival boards and her novels have been listed for various awards.

*Paper Planes* (Scholastic) was a 2016 CBCA Notable, shortlisted for the Adelaide Festival Awards, and has recently been included in the Australian Heritage Literary Project Untapped Collection. *A Cardboard Palace* (MidnightSun Publishing) was a 2018 CBCA Notable, published in Sweden. *Our Little Secret* (Scholastic) was listed for the Golden Inkys, and *The Centre of My Everything* (Penguin RandomHouse) was listed in the 2019 Davitt Awards and shortlisted in the 2020 Adelaide Festival Awards. *Sensitive* (UQP) is published in Russia and was shortlisted in the 2020 Australian Speech Pathology Awards.

*That Thing I Did* – YA (Wakefield Press) is Allayne's ninth publication. *Selfie* – YA (Text Publishing) will be out 2023.



#### **A letter from Allayne about *That Thing I Did*:**

*Hello, and thank you for reading *That Thing I Did*. Mostly? I hope you enjoy a really good giggle.*

*This is my ninth publication. I have a Middle Grade/Young Adult novel, *Selfie*, due out with Text Publishing in 2023. My prior work has been largely educational, often broaching difficult topics, but always with a sprinkling of humour.*

**That Thing I Did* is all about the humour.*

*There's been much joy sucked from our universe owing to the pandemic. We're all in desperate need of escapism and a bloody good laugh. That said, I could never write a story that doesn't have a serious undertone, and at the core, this novel is about youth suicide and the ones left behind. My son lost his best friend at the beginning of the pandemic. Jed took his life. Our hearts were ripped out. I was already writing *That Thing I Did* based on the death of another friend, but that experience cemented the need (in my mind) for a book like this for our young adult audience.*

**That Thing I Did* is all kinds of self-effacing naughtiness. It twists and turns and takes you to the unexpected, and its characters are deeply flawed and about as far from moral barometers as you can get. Judge them, laugh at them, be shocked and endeared by them. Immerse yourself in their often idiotic antics, but above all, suspend belief and enjoy the \*ride.*

*(\*road trip)*

*Thank you again. I hope you snort-laugh and need new underwear.*

**Allayne**

## 4. Style

*That Thing I Did* is told from the perspective of protagonist teen, Taylor Kennedy. Written in first-person, the reader is privy to the thoughts and emotions of Taylor, and is central to the action as it unfolds. Rich in witty, insightful dialogue and regular plot twists, the structure of the book is fast paced and engaging. Humour is used extensively to address sensitive themes in a heartfelt manner.

## 5. Themes

### Friendship

The story opens with the dissolution of a 12-year friendship, and then explores the formation of new friendships.

Examples from the text.

#### Pg. 1, Cass to Taylor:

*'You're hard work, Taylor. You're not like the others.'* She meant Lia, Jack and Riley. *'With them, it's easy. With you, there's always something.'*

#### Pg. 157, Taylor:

*Why didn't my friends stand up for me?*

#### Pg. 191, Taylor:

*Chloe looks at her, tears shining. Then she looks at me, a smile curling her lips. Her face says it all. You're my confidant, Taylor. You're someone I trust.*

### Comedy

Full of comedic moments there is something to appeal to everyone's sense of humour.

Examples from the text.

#### Pg. 31, Taylor:

*Cue the part where I ran from the room like a squealing pig, thirty-something pairs of eyes trained on me.*

#### Pg. 158, Taylor:

*There are several headless shots of a couple presumably in their mid-forties dressed in their underwear, who, looking past their saggy but-tanned skin and small paunches, are otherwise fit and attractive. No ageism here. However, when I look closer there's something strangely familiar about them. The woman in the photo has a bluebird tattoo on her left ribcage just under the line of her bra – a tattoo I've seen countless times on summer holidays by the pool. The photo has been taken in a darkened hotel room, but in the background I can see a can of whipped cream on the nightstand.*

*'Cool huh?' Chip says, shrinking the screen. 'They claim to be locals of our stomping ground.'*

*My mouth goes dry. I feel dizzy. 'What email address did they submit under?'*

*He thinks a moment. 'Something about going down on you?'*

*Fuck. My dad's unofficial roller-door account.*

**Pg. 228:**

*'Errol wasn't murdered,' Daisy says. 'He was bitten by a brown snake.'*

*Jackson's eyebrows almost leapfrog his buzz cut. 'A brown snake?'*

*Daisy nods. 'He trod on it, right here. A long bugger of a thing, too. King Brown. Good two metres. I told Errol not to wear loose shorts and thongs. Do you think he listened to me? Serves him right he was bitten on the balls.'*

*'Errol died of a snake bite to the nutsack?' I can't believe it. I literally can't believe it.*

*'Yes,' Daisy confirms. 'First time in years a mouth had gone anywhere near it, too.'*

## **Family**

Family dynamics are shown from the perspective of each of the characters, each with its own nuances.

Examples from the text.

**Pg. 23, Taylor's house:**

*Dad dons his well-rehearsed scammer persona. 'You have won the Lotto. We are needing your account details. Give us remote access and your passwords.' He gets up from his dining chair, goes over and grabs Mum by the hips, pressing himself against her, swinging. He nuzzles her neck and croons, 'Hey Ed Sheeran, where's your rendition of "Give Me Love"?''*

*Mum swats him with a tea towel. She winks, and says to me, 'Would you like to finish cooking dinner?'*

*Dad kisses her again – this time with tongue. It's beyond puke-worthy.*

**Pg. 43, Jackson Rollock:**

*'My gran is dying. I want to see her. That's why I broke out. I love her more than anyone. I have to see her.'*

## **Relationships**

*That Thing I Did* explores family relationships over the generations, as well as romantic relationships, and relationships that fall short of being romantic.

Example from the text.

**Pg. 78:**

*'I needed to wash my hands,' Jackson says.*

*Daisy says, 'He's a homophobe.'*

*'Germaphobe,' Jackson corrects.*

*'That too,' says Daisy.*

*'Granny! I may be a germaphobe, but I'm not homophobic!'*

*'That's not what you said when I told you I pashed Maisy Winterfeld behind the bowling green scoreboard.' She pushes her sunnies up the bridge of her nose. 'Hot diggety, that woman could kiss!'*

*Jackson explains, 'My distaste, if you recall, was about her fashion choices, not her sexuality. Who the hell wears Crocs and socks?'*

**Pg. 149, Taylor (about Chloe):**

*I know right then that I like her – really like her – and I’m disappointed she doesn’t like me. She likes girls.  
I bite my lip and turn away.*

**Pg. 171, Taylor and Chloe:**

*‘I had an invitation, didn’t make it to the party.’  
‘There’ll be other parties, Taylor.’  
‘I hope so.’*

**Pg. 247, Daisy/Granny (about her ex-husband):**

*‘The idiotic stunts continued,’ she says, ‘until one day I gave Errol an ultimatum. I told him it was me or his brother. Harold didn’t take too kindly to that. First he killed my cat, Angie, by hanging her from our gum tree.’  
Chloe drops her food and covers her mouth in shock. ‘Oh my God ...’  
‘And when that didn’t achieve what he’d hoped for,’ Daisy says, ‘he came around when Errol was at work and he beat me. I was carrying your aunt or uncle at the time.’ She clutches her stomach when she says this and gives Jackson a sad look. ‘I almost bled to death.’*

## **Peer Pressure**

Examples from the text.

**Pg. 12 Chip:**

*‘Look, if you don’t have the cojones for this project, it’s cool, go home. Walk, my friend. I won’t think any less of you. Well maybe I will, but I won’t tell you about it.’*

**Pg. 53 Taylor (when coerced):**

*I throw my hands up. ‘Fine! Do whatever! But count me out! My loose morals might have supported your whole harebrained pornographic ventures thing, but aiding and abetting criminals is another ball game. I don’t need friends this badly. I’m quite happy friendless. I’m out.’  
I go to leave. Jackson stops me. He digs a finger into my collarbone. ‘You’re doing it.’  
I shake him off. ‘No, I’m not.’  
‘It’s one day. Two, max. Besides, I can’t let you go, you might squeal.’  
I look at Chip. ‘Is he for real?’ I turn back to Jackson. ‘Are you kidnapping us?’ Who is harbouring who?  
‘Abduction,’ Jackson says. ‘At least I think it is.’ He scratches his head. ‘I’m not sure. I know I googled the difference once.’*

## **6. Discussion and guided reading questions**

### **Chapter 1**

- How might a bruised chip symbolise Taylor’s life?
- What is Chip’s view of his future? What evidence is there in the text that led you to this view?

## **Chapter 2**

- Reflect on the conversation Taylor has with his mum. What do you know about his mum's personality from the conversations she has?

## **Chapter 3**

- What could 'The Thing' be? What reasons could break up a 12-year friendship in your view?
- Social media doesn't let the youth of today make mistakes and move on. Discuss.

## **Chapter 4**

- Reflect on the actions of Taylor and Chip upon meeting Jackson. What evidence is there of a power shift?

## **Chapter 5**

- Earlier, Taylor said in no way was what happened his fault. How much power/ responsibility does Taylor have over what is happening?

## **Chapter 6**

- What does each person bring to this alliance? What do they each have to gain by working together?

## **Chapter 7**

- Why doesn't Taylor share his worries and problems with his parents? Do you believe this is a typical teenage response?
- Do you agree with the sentiment of Taylor's post? Why would Cass have reacted to this by ending her friendship with Taylor?

## **Chapter 8**

- If you could meet anyone that is no longer alive, who would you choose and why?

## **Chapter 9**

- Take a moment to reflect on the characters. Are they all believable, could they really exist? Or are there characters whose traits or behaviours are unconvincing?

## **Chapter 10**

- What are the character's impressions of each other? Use evidence in the text to support each view.

## **Chapter 11**

- What revelations about the characters have surprised you? If someone were to reveal something interesting or unexpected about you, what would it be?

## **Chapter 12**

- Write your own bulletin article about Daisy's disappearance. Consider other witnesses for comment such as the nursing home director or fellow residents.

## **Chapter 13**

- If you could do anything without fear of the consequences, costs or logistics, what would you want to do?

## **Chapter 14**

- Many people talk of a life's to-do-list, such as the things they want to accomplish, or places they want to visit while they're alive. What would be on your list? Do you think having a list is worthwhile? Why or why not?
- What are the differences between Taylor and Chloe, that make him think he could be falling for Chloe but make her believe there is no such thing as love?

## **Chapter 15**

- Should there be books that aren't in general circulation on the shelves but are kept behind the desk?

## **Chapter 16**

- How important do you think it is to have someone who lifts you up and makes you feel like you can achieve anything?

## **Chapter 17**

- Why did the author include two sexual encounters that had some success but also some fails? Do you think a romance text would include sexual encounters like this? Why or why not? Also, notice how they're juxtaposed against Chip's business venture?

## **Chapter 18**

- Is loving and being loved simple? Discuss.

## **Chapter 19**

- It is often said that trust is one of the most important qualities in a relationship. What qualities do you see as important in a friendship, and are these different for a relationship?



## Chapter 20

- What has each character gained from this road trip so far?

## Chapter 21

- Why might some people choose to keep their blinkers on? Are you this type of person?
- Is having history reason enough to try and work things out? Discuss.
- Are we the same person in all environments, and with different groups? Pick a character and use examples from the text to illustrate your answer.

## Chapter 22

- What does, '*love thy neighbour*' mean?

## Chapter 23

- Why does the group consider Daisy murdering Errol feasible? Do you think Daisy has always been the character that we know, or do you think she was different in her younger years?

## Chapter 24

- Before you go any further than page 231, predict why Daisy would want to see Harold?
- What does '*revenge is a dish best served cold*' mean? How could it apply to Daisy's actions?

## Chapter 25

- Why do people still post messages to Kelly, and what do they get out of doing this?

## Chapter 26

- Does society celebrate strong men and strong women? Discuss.
- Explain what Daisy means by, '*I'm done with men like you!*'.

## Chapter 27

- Do you agree with the statement, '*Bravery is having faith in yourself; feeling the fear and doing it anyway.*'? When have you exhibited bravery, or when has a character in the novel? Give examples to support.

## Chapter 28

- '*Concepts planted in our psyche through music and other media unconsciously inform what we create.*' Do you think this is true? Discuss.
- '*Anonymity is powerful.*' Do you agree with this statement? Give some examples of things that might be done anonymously but wouldn't be done if a person was identified.

- *'In this life we don't have emotional space for everyone.'* Do you agree with Daisy? If she's right how can young people protect their own wellbeing and not become emotionally bankrupt?

### **Chapter 29**

- Predict why you think the police have pulled up? Which thing(s) have caught up with our main characters?

### **Chapter 30**

- The interaction between Chip and Officer Minogue – what is it about having something in common (the wayward online purchases) that bridges the gap between these two characters?

### **Chapter 31**

- Whose version of the 'point to life' do you most agree with?

### **Chapter 32**

- What influence or impact did Daisy have on each character?

### **Chapter 33**

- How did the road trip change each character?

## **7. Key curriculum links**

### **Learning Area, English Year 7–10**

'These texts explore themes of interpersonal relationships and ethical dilemmas within real-world and fictional settings and represent a variety of perspectives.' (ACARA)

### **General capabilities**

#### **Ethical Understanding**

'In the Australian Curriculum: English, students develop ethical understanding as they study the social, moral and ethical positions and dilemmas presented in a range of texts. They explore how ethical principles affect the behaviour and judgement of imagined characters in texts and the real-life experiences of those involved in similar issues and events.' (ACARA)

#### **Critical and Creative Thinking**

'English ... In discussion, students develop critical thinking as they share personal responses and express preferences for specific texts, state and justify their points of view and respond to the views of others.' (ACARA)