

***Wild Pork and Watercress* by Barry Crump**  
**Teacher Notes**

**Before Reading:**

1. What do the cover and title indicate this book might be about?

**Themes:**

1. Discuss the following themes and find examples from the book which illustrate each:
  - a. friendships and family relationships
  - b. childhood and growing up
  - c. authority and justice
  - d. humour and humanity
  - e. nature and survival skills
  - f. death, grief and loss
  - g. trust and love
2. What do you think is the main theme of the novel? Write an essay on your choice.

**Setting:**

This rollicking good yarn is set in the remote and rugged Ureweras in the North Island of 1960s New Zealand.

**Language features, structure and narrative:**

1. What do you think the genre of this book is? List the aspects that are indicative of this genre.
2. The story is told in the first person. Why do you think the author chose to do this? Is it effective? Why or why not?
3. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that might otherwise be difficult to express, such as similes. Examples of these are: 'It was like a tidal wave, tearing past us like a giant train through the bush' (p. 77) and 'on top of a boulder as big as a Forestry hut' (p. 89). Find more examples from the book.
4. The author uses animal imagery in some similes, for example, 'like a big piece of an elephant' (p. 68). Think of ten other animals and create a simile for each.
5. What figure of speech do the following examples illustrate: 'pot lids rattling' (p. 26) and 'something smoking and spitting' (p. 26), 'snarling and whoofing' (p. 34) and 'starting to sizzle' (p. 59). Find another example from the book. Write a poem or descriptive paragraph which includes the words from your example.
6. The following are examples of which figure of speech: 'listening to the Apopo

river talking away to itself in mangled voices beyond the window' (p. 28) and 'Uncle Hec's fires. They were positive, they were alive, they talked to you' (p. 72)?

7. 'Hovering harrier hawk' (p. 93) and 'Hookgrass Harry' (p. 99) are examples of which figure of speech. Think of some more examples of this figure of speech starting with five other letters of the alphabet.
8. What are the definitions of 'colloquialisms' and 'idioms'? Below is a list of sayings taken from the book. Try to find their origins and then draw a cartoon representation of each of them:
  - 'skinny old bag of bones' (p. 27)
  - 'got Uncle Hec's back up' (p. 41)
  - 'stop for a breather' (p. 55)
  - 'let's have a brew-up' (p. 58)
  - 'play it by ear' (p. 73)
  - 'right in the guts of it' (p. 87)
  - 'getting bushed' (p. 103)
  - 'topping and tailing' (p. 131)
  - 'he's straight up' (p. 143)
  - 'you've had a rough trot' (p. 172)

### **Characters:**

1. Do you like Ricky and Uncle Hec as characters? Do you think they are realistic characters? Why or why not? Compare and contrast their personalities, opinions and actions, and analyse how they are influenced by one another. Use quotes from the novel to support your points, for example, 'He looks real nice when he smiles' (p. 187).
2. Do you think Ricky is a strong protagonist? Why or why not? Which other characters do you feel display strength or weakness? In pairs, write character studies on the main characters. Begin by making a chart to list the strengths and weaknesses of each. How do their particular strengths and weaknesses affect the part they play in the novel?
3. Do you think Ricky and Uncle Hec have a realistic relationship? Do you believe that their relationship develops and changes through the book? If so, list what these changes are and the main events which contribute to the development.
4. At the start of the book Ricky describes his Aunty Bella as having 'a bit of magic' and being his 'best friend as well' (p. 37). Find examples of when she displays these qualities.
5. Think of three adjectives to describe each of the following characters: Uncle Hec, Quiet Brian, Robby and Ricky.
6. Choose an important event from the novel and describe Ricky and Uncle Hec's reactions to it. What are the different pressures on Ricky and Uncle Hec throughout the novel? What factors lead to the decisions they make and how

do they cope with the various situations they find themselves in?

7. What does the novel say about friendships and/or family and their importance during difficult times? List examples of episodes when friends and/or family are either a help or a hindrance to Ricky and Uncle Hec.
8. Draw a picture of one of the characters based on their physical descriptions, for example, Aunty Bella (p. 21), Uncle Hec (p. 21), Willy (p. 42), the wild boar (p. 68), Hookgrass Harry (p. 100) or Ricky (pp. 195-196).
9. Which character do you particularly like or dislike? Why?
10. Which character do you most identify with? Why?

### **Comprehension/Close Reading Questions:**

1. Why did Ricky think that he 'always had trouble fitting in'? (p. 17)?
2. How old is Ricky at the start of the book (p. 19)?
3. What does Zag do for Ricky to 'have respect for him over that' (p. 35)?
4. Why does Ricky consider himself 'a hunter' (p. 41)?
5. What leaves Ricky 'exhausted' and why (p. 55)?
6. What is a 'spiritual experience' for Ricky (p. 69)?
7. What was Uncle Hec referring to when he states that, 'There was someone in our corner that time' (p. 78)?
8. What does Ricky feel when Uncle Hec tells him about the Aboriginal lady (pp. 96-97)?
9. What does Ricky mean when he says, 'We were becoming nocturnal' (p. 112)?
10. What do Uncle Hec's actions in helping the diabetic man in the coma tell us about his character (p. 120)?
11. Why do Ricky and Uncle Hec feel 'indignant' and do you think they had a right to feel this way (p. 121)?
12. Why does Uncle Hec insist on leaving Quiet Brian (p. 123)?
13. Who does Uncle Hec refer to as 'clowns' and why (p. 135)?
14. What is Ricky's reaction when he sees himself and the mirror and why does he react in this way (p. 149)?
15. What cranks their 'trouble-scale up another notch' (p. 156)?
16. How and why do Ricky and Uncle Hec react to Robby's news that he has talked to a lawyer about them (p. 167)?
17. What does Ricky and Uncle Hec's talk reveal about them as characters and their relationship with one another (pp. 172-173)?
18. What is Ricky referring to when he says they were 'up our sleeve, our trump card, our back-stop - perhaps even our future' (pp. 187-188)?
19. What did the time in the bush teach Ricky and what does it tell us about how he has changed as a character (p. 190)?
20. How is the pair represented by Robby in the 'Epitaph' and does it change your impression of Ricky and Uncle Hec (pp. 195-202)?

### **Creative responses:**

1. Barry Crump is a bestselling New Zealand author. Write a summary of his life based on the biographical notes featured in the front of the book (pp. 9-11).
2. Filmmaker Taika Waititi was quoted in the *New Zealand Herald* about the book that, “It’s a quick read, really engaging, and I recommend it to anyone. It’s so entertaining, quite beautifully written and profound. Everyone thinks Barry Crump was just a hunting man but his writing is very good. It’s simple....a minimalist style, straight to the point” (p. 13). Do you agree with his point of view? Write a letter to the filmmaker stating your point of view either agreeing or disagreeing. Back up your point of view with evidence from the novel itself.
3. Create an illustrated manual for at least one of the relevant activities and skills Ricky learns from Uncle Hec, for example:
  - Singeing a wild pig (p. 36)
  - Making a loaf of bread in the camp-oven (p. 60)
  - Making a camp using punga (p. 88)
  - Binding Uncle Hec’s broken foot (p. 88)
  - Improving a whare (p. 98)
  - Making a candle torch (p. 118)
  - Making bunk mattresses with vines (p. 138).
4. Many New Zealand place names are mentioned in the book, for example, Gisborne (p. 19), Apopo river (p. 19), Mangatoatoa creek (p. 57) and Whakatane Valley (p. 87). Find two places that are mentioned in the book. Locate these places on a map of New Zealand. Choose one of the places mentioned to design and create an entry for a travel book for this place. Include information such as geography, history, things of interest, weather, etc.
5. Descriptions of exteriors and interiors are featured throughout the novel, such as the Faulkner’s farm (pp. 19-20), the Forestry Department huts (p. 58) and ‘Broken-foot Camp’ (p. 157). Find other examples of descriptions of exterior and interior spaces in the book. Draw one of these based on the descriptions. Next, in pairs, write a description of an exterior or interior space of your choice. Read your description aloud to your partner and get them to draw the space based on your description.
6. New Zealand native flora and fauna features throughout the novel, such as manuka (p. 20), wekas and pukekos (p. 22), fern (p. 34), tawa (p. 67), freshwater crayfish (p. 71) and rimu (p. 77). Find two other trees, plants or animals that are mentioned in the book. Choose one to research and write an information report based on your findings. For example, what do they look like, where do they grow, what is their natural habitat, their call, their predators, etc. Write an illustrated report of your findings.
7. Ricky and Uncle Hec list the contents of the packs they take into the bush (p. 56). In pairs, list ten items you would take if you were going into the bush and why? Compare your list with your fellow classmates. Were there any similarities and/or differences?

8. Ricky and Uncle Hec make use of the supplies left in the Forestry Department huts in case trampers get lost (p. 57). Create a bush safety information pamphlet for trampers in the New Zealand bush.
9. Ricky describes how 'Log-jamb Creek' got its name (p. 76). Choose either one of the other creek names or one of the camp names (p. 78) to use as inspiration to write, illustrate and publish a picture book about how your chosen creek or camp may have got its name.
10. The author describes a storm which hits Ricky and Uncle Hec's camp in the Ureweras (p. 102). Use this description as inspiration to write a descriptive paragraph or poem about another force of nature.
11. The book mentions the newspaper, radio articles and letters to the editors that have been written about the fugitive pair (pp. 78-79, p. 142 & p. 148). Imagine you are a journalist or member of the public and write a news article for a social media website or your local newspaper in a current, modern journalistic style about Ricky and Uncle Hec. Think about what type of language, sentence and paragraph structure, headings, etc, you would use.
12. The novel is full of suspense-filled action sequences, particularly chase and escape scenes, for example, hunting wild boar (p. 68), escaping from a slip at 'Log-Jamb Creek' (p. 76), surviving an earthquake (p. 115) and crossing a swollen river (p. 116). Choose an action sequence from the book. Study the language the author uses in the sequence, then write a dramatic, suspense-filled action sequence of your own about something that has happened to you. Alongside your written description present your sequence in either a comic strip or a movie storyboard format.
13. There is a poetic section of writing in which Ricky describes the birds he likes in the Ureweras (pp. 93-94). Use one of the birds and Ricky's description as inspiration to write your own descriptive paragraph or poem about the bird of your choice.
14. Ricky pretends 'to be a wildlife photographer commissioned to get shots of birds in their natural habitat for a big nature magazine - *National Geographic*, perhaps (p. 94)'. Imagine you have been commissioned to write an article to accompany one of Ricky's photographs about one of the birds mentioned in the novel, for example the thought-to-be extinct huia that Ricky and Uncle Hec think they have found (p. 182).
15. Use these quotes from the book as either a topic for a class debate or as an essay starter:
  - 'Do you think it's good for anyone to kill things all the time?' (p. 93)
  - 'You don't want to go trusting people, mate' (p. 159).
16. Imagine you are one of the other characters from the book, such as Robby, the three Rangers: Bremner, Houghton and Drew, or Quiet Brian. Choose an event from the book and write a personal diary entry or monologue about it from your point of view. Think about how you would describe the physical

scene, any other characters who were involved and your feelings about the incident.

17. This book has been made into a major movie, *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, directed and written by Taika Waititi, and starring Sam Neill and Julian Dennison. Watch the film and write a comparative review.
18. Which is your favourite chapter in the book? Why? Write a plot summary of it.
19. Create an illustrated timeline of the main events of the novel. Then choose one important event at or near the end of the book and describe how it helped you understand a key idea of the novel.
20. Did you like the ending of the book? Why or why not? Either re-write the ending of the book or write a plot outline for a sequel.
21. Design your own cover for the novel, including a blurb.
22. Write a review of the book, aiming it at the readership of your favourite magazine, newspaper, website or blog. Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten. Consider the following questions:
  - Which characters appealed to you the most? The least?
  - How did the story make you feel as it unfolded?
  - What ideas in the book awakened your interest?
  - What did you dislike, or find boring?
  - Do you think this is a significant book?
  - Why is this book important for today's readers?