

These notes are for:

- Upper Primary / Secondary
- 9+yrs old

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- HSIE / SOSE

Example of:

- Junior Fiction
- Novel

Experience of:

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening & Speaking
- Viewing

Themes:

- Survival
- Courage
- Environment
- Understanding
- Care & Compassion
- Perseverance
- Faith
- Myths

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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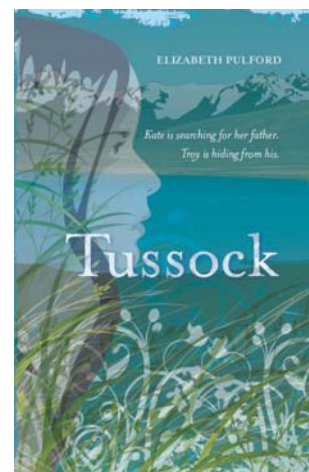
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Tussock - Overview

Tussock

By: Elizabeth Pulford
ISBN: 9781921529450
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NZRRP: \$17.99
No. of Pages: 192
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Outline:

When Kate and Madeline's father goes missing on a routine local flight, family life is thrown into chaos. While the close rural community help the family deal with their grief, Kate lights a lamp every night in the window of the old tin hut on the hill in the hope that it will help her father find his way home. Madeline invests her hope in building a replica of the fabled Stone Man. But it is the appearance of the troubled Troy that brings comfort to Kate in the most unexpected way. To Kate, Troy seems nearly as lost as her father and the mystery surrounding him leads Kate into dangerous territory.

This atmospheric story of survival and courage, from an award-winning New Zealand author, is perfect for classroom use and will have readers engrossed.

Author / Illustrator Information:

Elizabeth Pulford was born in Hamilton, Canada, but was brought up in New Zealand from the age of two. She began writing in her early 40s. Since then her publications have included articles, poetry, short stories in newspapers, magazines and on the radio. Many of her adult short stories have won national competitions. Her children's books range from early readers through to YA novels; two of which have been finalists for the New Zealand Post Awards. Elizabeth has always loved books. In fact some of her best friends are books and she couldn't imagine life without them. She is a believer that the world is full of enchantment and that there is magic all around if only we care to look.

Other titles by Elizabeth Pulford include *Castlecliff* and *the Fossil Princess*, *Blackthorn* and *Blackthorn's Betrayal* also published by Walker Books.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

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Classroom Ideas for *Tussock*:

About these notes:

The below questions are designed for students to use with a close reading of *Tussock*. After reading each chapter students are invited to answer questions about the chapter and to develop their knowledge of the themes and subject matter. Alternatively these questions can be explored together in class.

Before Reading

- View the front cover of *Tussock*? What do you think this story is about? Where do you think it is set? In groups discuss these questions.
- Read the blurb on the back cover of *Tussock*. Discuss in groups what a blurb is. Does the blurb give the story away? Does the blurb make you want to read the book?

Chapter 1

- Read Chapter 1. Which characters are identified in this chapter? Write down the information you are given about each character. What do you know about them? What don't you know about them?
- What problems are identified in Chapter 1? Write down the issues that the characters are facing. How has the author set the scene for the book?

Chapter 2

- Write a description of the tin hut based on this chapter. Be sure to include the different objects that are mentioned and the location of the tin hut.
- The Stone Man is an integral part of this book. Draw a picture of the Stone Man using a variety of circles for the body, head, hands and feet. As you read *Tussock* write down words, one in each of the circles. The words should be interesting words from the text or words that you associate with the emotions conveyed in the story.
- What is the myth that is identified in this chapter? Describe this myth. Do you know any local myths? Research one myth from your country and provide a brief description.

Chapter 3

- What is a boot camp? Why would anyone object to a boot camp being located in their area? What are your thoughts on this topic? Would you agree to a boot camp for troubled kids in your neighbourhood?
- What is the mood of this chapter? Write a brief description of the emotions that are conveyed in this chapter. Waiting is often referred to. Does this chapter make you feel as if you are also waiting?

Chapter 4

- How is this chapter about 'knowing'? Identify what Kate's Mum says about knowing. What else does Kate want to know about and how does she investigate this?
- Think about knowing and understanding. How are these two things different? Does Kate understand Troy when she knows where the boot camp is?

Chapter 5

- Do you think it is right for the media to report on Kate's family problems? Think about the media and when you feel it is important for them to report news and when you feel it is intrusive. Provide one or two points for each argument.
- How has Troy intruded into Kate's life? Provide evidence of this. Why do you think he has intruded into her thoughts?

Chapter 6

- Identify the simile in this chapter (p 65). Write two similes of your own. One of these should describe the Stone Man.
- What does it mean to be superstitious? What is Kate's ritual? Can you think of any other superstitions? E.g. the number 13. Provide examples of some other well known superstitions.

Chapter 7

- "Sometimes lying is the only way to go". Where is this phrase used in the chapter and in what context? Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
- What is tussock? Research and provide a rough sketch of it. In particular look at the tussock grasslands of New Zealand.

Chapter 8

- Kate asks a lot of questions and also speculates about Troy's character and the boot camp. What do you think are the answers to her questions? Write a few sentences about what you think is going to happen.

Chapter 9

- How does Kate deal with her anxiety and panic? How does the Stone Man help her? Write a brief description of these events.
- Why do you think it is important for Madeline to finish the Stone Man? How is the Stone Man different for Madeline than it is for Kate?

Chapter 10

- What is the symbolism of the key? How can inanimate objects hold stories and importance? Do you have any objects of your own that hold significance for you?
- After reading this chapter watch the evening news. Write down three different stories and how they make you feel.

Chapter 11

- How does Kate see things from Madeline's perspective? What does this make her do? What does it mean to put yourself in someone else's shoes?
- What do you see out of your window? After reading this chapter write a brief description of the view from a window in your home.

Chapter 12

- View a topographic map of your area on Google Earth. Are there any things that you learn about your area, which you did not previously know?
- Do you think that the police should stop searching for the escaped criminal? Why?

Chapter 13

- What does ominous mean? Are there any ominous elements in this chapter? How does this chapter make you feel that there is something more to come?

Chapter 14

- “Forewarned is forearmed”. Where is this phrase used in the chapter and in what context? Can you think of any situations in your own life where this saying would be helpful?
- Compare and contrast the relationship that Kate has with her father to the relationship that Troy has with his. Create a wordbank to describe each of these relationships.

Chapter 15

- How does the author use the atmosphere and weather conditions to build the tension in this chapter? Provide examples.
- What does it mean to be pious? Is this the right word to describe Troy? Can you think of any better words?

Chapter 16

- Draw the map that Kate has to draw for the policeman. Compare your maps in class. Do you have similar or different visual representations?
- How does the author use imagery in this chapter to show the good things to come?

Chapter 17

- How can humour help in a time of pain or trouble? Give examples of when humour is used in this chapter.

Chapter 18

- How does the last chapter bring the events to a close and tie up loose ends? How would you have felt if there wasn't this last chapter in the book?
- Write a list of words/emotions that you could associate with the final paragraph.

After Reading

- After reading *Tussock* write a review of the book, paying special attention to the themes and issues that it raises.
- To extend the book report research the author. Visit Elizabeth Pulford's website – www.elizabethpulford.co.nz – and read the information below.

Elizabeth Pulford's inspiration for writing *Tussock*

“A couple of years ago I was fortunate to be awarded by the NZ Society of Authors a two-week stay at Ohau House, situated in Ohau alpine village. This was a wonderful time for writing, reflection and generally absorbing the stunning scenery of what I like to call tussock land, which includes Lake Ohau and the mountain Ben Ohau. Out walking by the lake one morning I could ‘see’ in my mind two girls at the water's edge. One was collecting stones, the other just standing and staring into the distance. What they were doing there I had no idea until I started writing. I also certainly hadn't a clue as to who else was in the story, and I have to say I got quite a shock when at the end of the first chapter a boy appeared. Then whilst heading back to the house a small plane buzzed overhead and even though I knew it was there, I didn't pay much attention until I began to write. Some may wonder at the title ‘Tussock.’ For me it represents the land where the story is set. Barren and lonely, which is the way Kate feels whilst waiting for news of her father. The tussock plant is tough and unyielding. This is both Kate and Troy, as they face their own battles. Both needing to keep strong and unrelenting in their belief that all will be okay.”