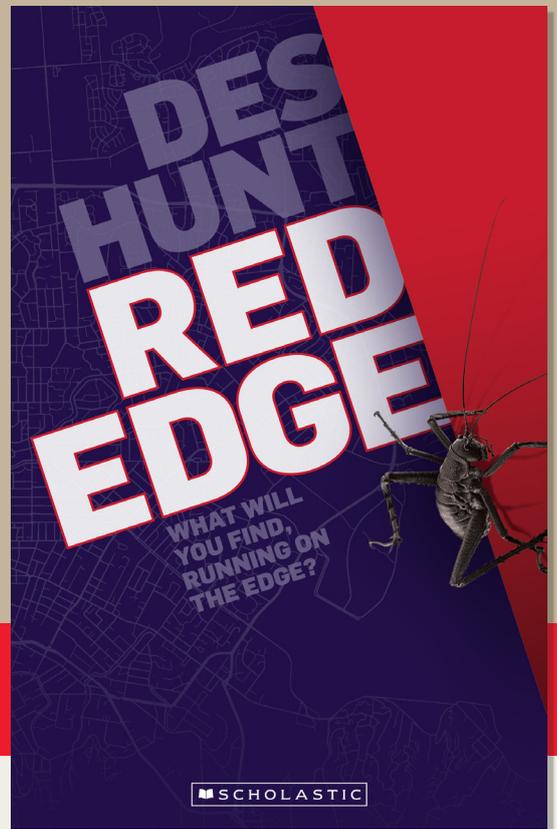


Red Edge

By Des Hunt

- Reading • Writing • Social Studies •
- Thinking Skills • Science •



Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Cassi Whelan and her dad have just moved into a repaired house on the edge of Christchurch's Red Zone. Although Cassi was only four when earthquakes decimated Christchurch, her memories still haunt her. An obsessive runner, she finds the wide-open spaces of the cleared Red Zone suit her perfectly. However, she becomes suspicious about strange comings and goings at the broken-down house next door. A chance meeting with a tech-geek boy, Quinn, who lives on the other side of the house, leads to them setting up a surveillance system to investigate what's happening. They soon find themselves embroiled in a smuggling ring. But they must get evidence before they can take anything to the police. Friends become enemies, and enemies become frenemies at school. The criminals soon catch on that Cassi and Quinn are onto them and set out to discredit them. Bike races, car races, and airport escapes hot up the tension. Cassi and Quinn are soon in deep trouble, but their innovative thinking gets them out in time to catch the thieves at the airport. Only the criminals don't give up easily . . . another car chase and investigation has to take place before they finally catch the ringleader.

About the Author

Des Hunt lives at Matarangi on the Coromandel Peninsula. Some years ago he made the transition from writing textbooks for secondary students to novels for younger readers (shortlisted for NZ Post awards three times), while still maintaining his aims of fostering young peoples' natural interest in the science of their surroundings. Des has authored many books in this genre. A widely respected figure in New Zealand educational circles, Des was a teacher for more than forty years before retiring from the classroom in 2006.

Writing Style

Des Hunt populates his books with believable characters, recognisable places and plenty of action and science. *Red Edge* includes themes of bullying, coping with adversity, exploitation and trafficking of endangered species. The author keeps up the tension with twists and turns, cliff hangers, and hooks throughout the book. The story is written in third-person point of view with Cassi as the protagonist, and Raven and Lou Watling as the antagonists. Cassi's helper is Quinn, the sage role is held by Jim Maclean, and the rescuer is Matiu. Cassi's 'want' at the start of the story is for a kitten and she gets that in the epilogue. Her inner 'need' is to feel she belongs and feels safe. The two earthquakes she has experienced have given her a fear of things above her head falling on her and the anxiety gives her an eating disorder and compulsion to run every day. By the end of the story she feels accepted by friends and family and has overcome her fears. Her sidekick friend, Quinn, has also been traumatised by the earthquake and kids at school have bullied him. His anxiety shows through his eating and inactivity, causing obesity. He also wants to feel he belongs and that is also resolved by the end of the story.

Dialogue has speech tags or actions before or after the speech, so the reader knows who is talking. The author has also included description, inner thoughts, indirect speech in italics, and action scenes to 'show' what is happening in the story. Each chapter has a catchy title that signals what is going to happen. To indicate to the reader a change in scene, the designer has typed three asterisks between the paragraphs. To convey information outside of the narrative, (e.g. a newspaper article), indents or graphics are used to separate it from the rest of the text.

A compelling adventure and mystery novel for 10- to 14-year-old readers.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

The novel has been divided up into seven parts as follows: pp. 5-42, 43-74; 75-105; 106-131, 132-177; 178-224; 225-27

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make predictions, inferences and relate to their own experiences if relevant. Also encourage students to identify themes and explain how they are developed in the novel.

Read the passages aloud with students reading alongside or by themselves.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb.

- Who is the main character in the story?
- What do you think this story is about? Why do you think that?
- What do you already know about the Christchurch and Kaikōura earthquakes?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

pp. 5-42

1. What is the Red Zone and why do you think Cassi is living there? p. 5
2. How does the author cleverly show what Cassi looks like? p. 8
3. What's the hook in this chapter? p. 9
4. Why does Cassi not like manmade structures that rise above her shoulders? Chapter 1
5. What is the author hinting about Bella in this chapter? Chapter 2
6. Why do you think Quinn keeps an eye on everything in the neighbourhood? Chapter 2
7. What does Cassi discover in the shed? What do you think the owner keeps in there? Chapter 3
8. Why does Cassi hide in the pit and what gives her a fright in there? p. 21
9. What do you think the science equipment is used for? What does the torch reveal? Chapter 3
10. Predict why Cassi and her father move a lot. Chapter 4
11. What do you think is going on with Emma and Harmony and how would you describe their characters? Chapter 4
12. What new hook has the author laid in chapter four?
13. What does Cassi find out from the mail in the letterbox, and what is in the envelope? p. 39
14. Why do they want to take a photo of the woman? Chapter 5



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

pp. 43-74

15. Why won't Quinn give out his phone number? Chapter 6
16. What did Emma reveal about her Aunt Pandora? Do you think it is reliable information? If not, why? Chapter 6
17. Cassi seems to worry about money – what does that imply? When is there evidence of this? Chapter 6
18. Why does Quinn keep snails? Chapter 7
19. Why do you think Raven Black needs the insects? Chapter 7
20. How do they find Raven's address and what new information does Cassi find there? Chapters 7 and 8
21. What do you think is significant about the lunchbox? p. 63
22. What troubles do you foresee with Emma? p. 64
23. How would you describe Cassi's relationship with her father? p. 65
24. Why do you think Cassi is sleepwalking and where has it led her? p. 67
25. Predict what Quinn's story will be. Chapter 9
26. Why did the climbing frame keep rocking? Chapter 9
27. What does Cassi blame herself for? Chapter 9

pp: 75-105

28. What do you think Jim Maclean's role is in the story? Chapter 10
29. What is found in the lunchbox? p. 76
30. Why does Cassi not want to stay with her mum? p. 78
31. What has Cassi discovered at the café and how does it affect her? p. 79
32. Why does Cassi lie to her father? p. 80
33. What do Quinn and Cassi learn from their taping, and why is it worrying for Cassi? pp. 83-84
34. Why is Cassi worried about the sleepover arrangement? pp. 86-87
35. Why has Cassi included the Wētā Nekta on her biscuits? And what are the consequences from doing so? Chapter 12
36. What has Jim given Cassi that will help them get evidence? How do you think they'll use it? p. 92
37. What is a wētā motel and why do they matter to Cassi? p. 96
38. How did Cassi track Raven in the bush? p. 98

pp. 106-131

39. If you were shut in for the night behind closed gates, what would you do?
40. Why does Quinn think Cassi is borderline anorexic? And what is his solution? p. 113
41. Why is Cassi shocked to see who is in the car? Why do you think he has stopped to talk to Harmony? p. 115
42. What did Cassi do in the shed that could alert Raven that someone has been there and what repercussions could it have on them? Chapter 17
43. What do you think has happened to Jim? Chapter 18
44. What illness does Harmony's mother have? Does anyone know what multiple sclerosis is and how it affects people?

pp. 132-177

45. Why have the smugglers stopped capturing lizards? p. 134
46. What is the dark web and what is Quinn going to do with it? p. 135
47. How is Doctor Watling ripping off Harmony's family? pp. 139-140
48. Why had Pandora Horton been sent to prison and how do you think she is connected to Raven Black? Chapter 20
49. How did Cassi resolve the problem with Doctor Watling in the parking lot? What else could she have done?



50. Why was Quinn upset, and who does Cassi suspect really sent the messages? Chapter 21
51. Who ripped up Harmony's clothes and what does it say about the person who did it? pp. 150-153
52. Why is it illegal to capture giant wētā in New Zealand? p. 154
53. Why do you think Emma has been sending bullying messages to Quinn and why has she made fun of Harmony in the past? What does it say about her character? Chapter 22
54. What does Cassi see at the market that makes sense of what is going on with the smuggling and what is happening at school? pp. 164-165
55. What message does Lou Watling leave at the market and what does he want? pp. 168-169
56. What have Raven and Lou done in the shed and what message do they send to Cassi? Chapter 24
57. What happens to the shed? Do you think someone has intentionally done it? If so, who and why? pp. 175-177

pp. 178-224

58. What do you think is going to happen when Cassi is taken into the principal's office? pp. 179-181
59. What important information does Quinn have? p. 187
60. What is the two young sleuths' plan to capture the smugglers? What else could they do? Chapter 26
61. How have Emma and her mother ruined Cassi's reputation at school? pp. 195-196
62. How has the author stepped up the tension and Cassi's need to solve the case? Chapter 27
63. How has the author increased the danger for the kids' mission? Chapters 28 and 29
64. How has their drone videoing been wrecked? How is this a problem for the kids? Chapter 29
65. Why does Cassi want to take copies of the video? pp. 219-220
66. How have the crims been able to keep track of where Cassi is, and what does that suggest for her safety? pp. 220-221
67. How can Cassi, Quinn and Mark get out of their dire dilemma? pp. 222-223

pp. 225-227

68. What inner fear is Cassi having to face as she climbs up the chimney? p. 226
69. How has Quinn used his technology skills to save the day? pp. 229
70. What do you think has happened to Jim? And how can they help him if he is in trouble? Chapter 32
71. Why do you think the author has taken out the adult helpers (Jim and Mike)? Chapter 32
72. What do you think Raven is saying to Cassi on the video and at the airport? Why has the author kept this secret from the reader? Chapter 33
73. What do Cassi and Quinn have to do to convince the customs officer? pp. 245-246
74. What does Cassi say that ensures the bags would be searched? p. 249
75. How has the author kept up the tension in chapters 33 and 34?
76. How has Raven escaped and how will Cassi and Quinn catch her? Chapter 34
77. How do they capture Raven and keep her in one place until police arrive? Chapter 35
78. What was Cassi's biggest 'want' throughout the story, and how is that fulfilled in the epilogue?



Activities

ACTIVITY 1: RESEARCH IT!

1. Choose a type of wētā, lizard or gecko mentioned in the book.
2. Write down 3 to 5 things you would like to find out about it.
3. Draw up a KWLDS chart (see template below) for you to record information.
4. Find information from two different sources, e.g. internet and books.
5. Write up your notes on the KWLDS chart.
6. Summarise your information and draw a picture of your animal and label its parts.

WHAT I ALREADY KNOW	WHAT I WANT TO LEARN	WHAT I HAVE LEARNT
DIAGRAM	SUMMARY	

ACTIVITY 2: READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Jim writes two articles and a book about the smuggling ring. How are those two different styles of writing the same and different? What do you need to include in an introduction for a novel? What do you need to include in an introduction for a newspaper article? (Who, What, When, Where)

Ask the students to write an article about Cassi and Quinn capturing the smugglers.

Include a heading, and a lead line that will hook in the readers. In the introduction explain what is happening. In the conclusion, summarise the key information.

HEADING	
LEAD LINE:	
INTRO: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN	MIDDLE:
	CONCLUSION:

ACTIVITY 3: BOOK TRAILER TIME!

Design a book trailer for the book. Use a software package like 'Animoto', using one of their free templates. Brainstorm what you want to say in the book trailer, then write down the text you will use. Collect photos, illustrations and videos (if needed), and then insert it into the Animoto template you have chosen. Download it to YouTube. Show it to the class. See if the school library or website would like to include it on their site.

ACTIVITY 4: CHARACTER TRAITS

Ask the students to pick two contrasting characters in the story and write down each character's likes, dislikes, traits, inner wants (what they think they want in the story), and inner needs (what they need), and what they look like.

	CHARACTER 1	CHARACTER 2
LIKES		
DISLIKES		
TRAITS		
INNER WANTS		
INNER NEEDS		
WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE		

ACTIVITY 5: THINKING SKILLS

What if it hadn't been a small insect or animal they were smuggling? What if it was a large bird like a kākāpō? How might smugglers try to get them out of the country? And what animals would they most likely choose? Ask the students to discuss in groups how that would have changed the story.

Written by Maria Gill