



Golden

JADE TIMMS

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Fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 14+

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CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.



Credit: Honey Atkinson

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jade Timms lives in a small town on the southern New South Wales coast. *Golden*, her debut novel, was shortlisted for the Text Prize.

SYNOPSIS

Three years ago, Eddie witnessed an accident that shattered her world. She lost someone she loved—but so much more. Gone are her friendships. Her mother. Her sense of safety. Her connection with her popular twin brother. All that remains? Her guilt. Her grief. Her art. Her dog. Her job at a juice bar. And her regular visits up the road to make sure her older sister is coping. Eddie's life in her coastal town is solitary, tight and controlled—that is, until she meets Howl.

Inspired by Howl's creativity, and drawn to his lack of connection to her past, Eddie begins to make choices that open up her world—starting with the decision to train for the town's annual Mud Run. Bit by bit, Eddie is able to unfurl from her grief and step back into the messy, passionate chaos of new love and teenage life. But being seen and known requires radical honesty. Not only with Howl, but also with her family—and herself.

With its vivid coastal town setting and endearing cast of characters, *Golden* is a relatable and uplifting story of loss and love, friendship and healing.

BEFORE READING

1. Consider the front cover of *Golden* with all its elements—the title, illustration, colour palette, font choice. What feelings does it evoke in you? How do you think the designer has achieved this?
2. Read the blurb and the epigraph from Nathaniel Hawthorne opposite page 1. Predict what you think the thing that 'happened three years ago that you can't talk about, but everything makes you remember it' might be.



3. The blurb is written from the second-person point of view, which means it uses the pronoun 'you' instead of 'I' or 'Eddie'. Read it and consider why this choice was made. Do you think it's effective as a device?
4. Why do you think the plots of young adult novels often feature a new character coming to town?

WHILE READING

1. Who is Howl and why does he catch Eddie's interest?
2. What is the Mud Run and why does Eddie really decide to enter?
3. 'I'm just not one of the shiny people.' (p. 94) What do you think Eddie means by this? Do you think this is a universal feeling?
4. What changes Eddie's mind about going to the New Years Eve party?
5. What do you think Eddie means by her 'girl instincts kicking in' when she checks in with Stevie? (p. 110)
6. What is the Wagon Wheel and what purpose does it serve in terms of the story?
7. What reasons does Howl give for not keeping in touch with Eddie while he is away? Do you agree with his intentions?
8. What happens between Joss and Pat, and how does Eddie feel about it?
9. Is there a specific event that finally enables Eddie to confront what happened at the beach?
10. Eddie chooses to help Joss rather than win the Mud Run. Do you think this was the right decision for her? Would you have done the same? Why or why not?

AFTER READING

Setting

1. Describe Eddie's family home in as much detail as you can. How has the author used this setting to explore and reflect the dynamics in Eddie's family?
2. What are the advantages of setting a book in a seaside town? How do you think the book would be different if it were set in the city or the suburbs?
3. What do the settings of the Break and St Albans hill represent?

Style and structure

1. Eddie is grieving the death of her sister's husband three years ago. How does the author reveal what happened. Why do you think she chose to include flashbacks? How do they also tell us about Eddie's grief now?
2. There are many descriptions in the book of Eddie cooking and making smoothies. What do these moments reveal to us about her character?
3. The Mud Run could be seen as a metaphor for Eddie's path to healing. What aspects of the race and Eddie's training show her personal recovery?

THEMES

Grief

1. How has grief altered the relationships in Eddie's family since Jackson's death?
2. Eddie is angry that most people haven't reached out to Vivian since Jackson died. What do you think stops people from reaching out to those who are experiencing pain and trauma? Have you experienced this situation—either as a person going through a tough situation or a person who didn't know how to respond?
3. 'I was so focused on how Viv was reacting to Jackson's death, and how badly Mum was handling it, that I never considered how it has been for [Dad].' (p. 262) What other things does Eddie miss seeing because of her grief?
4. Eddie's mother's book about Jackson's death is the catalyst for change in Eddie's family. Do you think Mum had a right to tell this story? Are there right and wrong ways to deal with grief? Do some people who have more or less right to express it?

Friendship

1. George says she and Eddie are 'surface friends'? What does she mean by this? Do you agree with her? Is this situation familiar to you? What other kinds of friendship are depicted in the book?
2. Kristin observes that Eddie 'dropped me and Pat and Hazel for no reason'. (p. 142) Why did Eddie end her friendship with Hazel? Do you think it was justified?
3. Eddie believes that Pat is 'the fun one with all the friends'. How true is this observation, and what other factors are at play in this situation?



Are there other things Eddie believes about herself that are not entirely true or are not taking into account all angles of the story?

Art

1. Eddie tells us: 'I'm not someone who has any real artistic talent.' (p. 11) What does she mean by this and do you agree? Are there pursuits that you enjoy but feel you're not talented enough to do properly? Might your self-assessment also be harsh?
2. There are a number of characters aside from Eddie who use different types of art and creativity to express themselves. Find as many examples as possible in the book of people using words, images, design, construction, etc. What role does art play in their lives—and in yours?
3. What does sea glass symbolise in the novel?
4. 'I don't know why I like pastel colours so much. My life would be easier if I could get into dark colours, but what can I say? My heart is made of pastel confetti.' (p. 11) What do you think Eddie means by this statement?

RESPONDING

1. Many assumptions and misunderstandings lead to the breakdown of the relationship between twins Pat and Eddie. Imagine Pat had written an email to Eddie explaining his side of things. What would he say about his relationship with Hazel, Jackson's death and his thoughts on their family situation? Craft this email, or write one to a person in your life with whom you've had a misunderstanding, giving your side of the story.
2. Turn the Mud Run chase scene at the end of the book into a chapter of a graphic novel or comic strip.
3. Eddie's sister, Vivian, is a children's author who writes books about two best friends living in a beachside town who travel to parallel universes via a secret cave. Come up with a plot for one of her books, and write a blurb that would entice young readers to pick it up.
4. Eddie uses art as a form of comfort and expression, even though she doesn't feel that she is talented or 'artistic'. Create your own artistic response to the word 'golden', using the experience to express something about your own life?