



TOMODACHI

The Edge of the World

by Simon Higgins

Study Notes

Class Discussion:

- 1 What can the process of learning about another culture teach you about your own?

Think Pair Share

- 2 How do Daniel's experiences in Japan teach him what it is to be a man?
- 3 Do his life lessons, strengths and the values he discovers within himself have any relevance to young men today? Give three reasons for your answers.

Small Group Work-Freeze Frames-Curtains Up/Curtains Down

Form groups of four and create five freeze frames based upon one of the themes that arise in *Tomodachi*. Your teacher will tell the rest of the class 'Curtains Down' where they will all close their eyes. You will create your freeze frame and hold that position. Your teacher will then call 'Curtains Up' where the class will look at your frame. Your teacher will then ask a number of *why* questions of one of your characters. You must answer in role and be prepared to justify your character's attitude or behaviour. All of the characters apart from the one explaining the freeze frame must stay frozen until your teacher calls 'Curtains Down'. Continue this process until all five freeze frames have been presented.

(NOTE TO TEACHER: ensure that you limit yourself to *why* questions, eg: Why does Daniel respect Kenji? And follow up the student's answer with another *Why* question based upon their answer. You can get down to fundamental issues, values and expectations by following this process).

Individual Reflection

In a journal, reflect on the following quotation and the suggested reflection that appears beneath.

Simon Higgins says:

I tried to understand aspects of its "mind set", particularly that of traditional Japan. What a society! Medieval weapons are on sale, with no restriction, throughout the country. Refined arts of war are taught as high-school physical education. Yet it's said the same amount of crime occurs in Tokyo in one year as occurs in New York in twenty four hours. Litter, graffiti, such things are rare in Japan. About two years ago, partly owing to my wife's powers of persuasion, I chose to "come out" as a Japanophile and to connect my private fixation with my storytelling career. I felt that I should start with the tale of a lost boy, how he might be treated if thrown amongst the samurai in the days of high adventure – and risk. So Daniel was born, in part, a part of me, and from my Japanese friends – some of whom were bona fide samurai descendants – I drew elements of an inimitable personality that would steadily form into Kenji.'

What do you think this quotation tells you about the author and contemporary Japanese culture? What observations would Japanese visitors to Australia make and what they would say about our apparent values? How do you feel about your place in Australian History?