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## **Teachers' Notes**

relevant for International Polar Year 2007

### **Antarctic Dad** (Lothian, 2005)

ISBN 0-7344 0850-1

Formerly entitled 'My Dad's Gone to Antarctica'

### ***by Hazel Edwards & illustrated by Kevin Burgemeestre***

ANARE writer-on-ice in Antarctica 2001

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#### **1. Curriculum Links:**

Families need to keep in touch, especially if Dad is away working in icy Antarctica with penguins, seals and BIG vehicles.

Even if Dad isn't home for birthdays, school sports or to help with homework, he's in touch in other ways. Photos, wildlife maps, toys and e-mail help. And he e-mails home digital shots of Roo, doing funny things, on expeditions in Antarctica.

'Antarctic Dad' links with themes such as:

- Ecology
- Antarctica
- Separated families
- Technology
- Electronic communications
- Graphics
- e-mail
- School life
- Animals
- Marine studies
- Friends
- Coping with bullies

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## **Queensland Library Services recommendation for Father/Grandfathers**

**theme.** <http://education.qld.gov.au/information/service/libraries/resource/currtopics/fathers-bk.html>

Edwards, Hazel; Burgemeestre, Kevin (illus) 2006, *Antarctic dad*, Lothian Books, South Melbourne.

Paperback, 24 p.

This book is an excellent and realistic portrayal of the different ways separated families can keep in touch. Relevant for families who have someone working away from home for long periods; meaningful modes of communication are represented including emails, photographs and phone calls. Suitable for children in Years 1 – 7, it has application across a variety of curriculum areas including English, Technology, Science and Studies of Society and Environment.

A notable quality of this book is the way the father, an Antarctic research scientist, is represented – he's not a remote 'Disney Dad', instead he's a concerned and nurturing parent who participates in his son's daily life. Through various modes of electronic communication, the father contributes to such things as homework, readers, projects, footy games and birthday celebrations. Similarly, he involves his son and classmates in his life in Antarctica and his work becomes real and accessible through the digital photos he sends. A host of other issues are touched on throughout the book including Antarctica, ecology, animals, separated families, communication technology, school life and friends. Based on research, interviews and the author's own expedition, the information presented about Antarctica is factual and accurate. Additionally, a vast amount of information is represented visually through labelled photos, maps and montages. The idea of a 'travel buddy' is also modelled – 'Roo', an Australian stuffed toy, is photographed in various situations in Antarctica. This outstanding book is a must for every library and is an excellent example of a picture book show-casing the use of new media in every-day life.

**JF EDW 2006** (Level: LP-UP)

## **2. Antarctic Author Bio**

[www.hazeledwards.com](http://www.hazeledwards.com) has 'cool' facts.

Best known for her classic 'There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Eating Cake', Hazel Edwards became stuck in the polar ice while on an Australian Antarctic Division expedition in 2001 as writer. She chose 'petrol-head' Kevin Burgemeestre to illustrate 'Antarctic Dad' because he's also passionate about Antarctica. Artwork from 'Antarctic Dad' has been exhibited at Melbourne's Books Illustrated Gallery at Gasworks Park and at Mundaring Gallery in Western Australia's June 2007 'HeARTbeat' Festival. An 'Antarctic Dad' webchat exists for online students studying Antarctica and was used by Ipswitch Literary Festival in 2006

### **3. Q and A about Writing ‘Antarctic Dad’**

#### **1. Where did you get the idea for ‘Antarctic Dad’ book?**

When I went on the 2001 Australian Antarctic Division expedition to Casey station, I interviewed all the ‘boffins’ and ‘tradies’ as the expeditioners are known, and they told me how they kept in touch with their families. When you are isolated in Antarctica wintering for fourteen months, it’s a long time apart for a family.

When our ship left Hobart, I noticed the families waving and hanging onto streamers, and especially one boy of about eight in a red jumper whose streamer broke. He turned out to be the Dieso’s (expedition mechanic’s) son, and I used him as inspiration for the boy in this story who is really a composite child character of all expeditioners.

Many families send down a stuffed toy which is photographed in the parent’s workplaces in Antarctica. That idea is used in the picture book in the Roo toy.

A picture book seemed the most appropriate format for the visual impact of Antarctic ice-life.

#### **2. Why did you change the title to ‘Antarctic Dad’ from ‘My Dad’s Gone to Antarctica’?**

Shorter. Easier to fit on the cover. Also focussed more on Antarctica.

#### **3. How did you check the facts?**

By interviews. Also by having some expeditioners read the manuscript. The Australian Antarctic Division web site ([www.aad.gov.au](http://www.aad.gov.au)) is also an excellent resource.

#### **4. What other Antarctic stories have you written**

I’ve written a YA (Young Adult) novel ‘Antarctica’s Frozen Chosen’ (Lothian) which is an eco thriller on a polar voyage and is about how far you’ll go for a mate. It does include a mutiny and an eco-terrorist.

This is also on audio and has been a serial on Radio RPH Children’s Hour. ‘Frozen Chosen’ is the term used for those chosen to work in Antarctica, and titles need to give the first clue to the story.

I’ve co-scripted the play ‘Antarctica Cool or What?’ in the collection ‘Right of Wrong’ (Phoenix Education) with author Goldie Alexander.

For pre-school animation I've scripted 'Hot Ice Squad' which is about the Antarctic vehicles like Harrison the Hagg and Speedy the Quad who have to work together against the weather on a remote ice base.

The diary 'Antarctic Writer on ice' ([www.booksonwriting.com](http://www.booksonwriting.com)) is a print and electronic book with colour photos as well as being on audio and available in Braille. Auslan signed DVD 'Grandma Leaps Antarctica' is available from [www.bilby.net](http://www.bilby.net) with notes and can be used by mainstream and LOTE students.

**5. In what way is this picture book different from your earlier ones like "There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Eating Cake?"**

Although the 'Antarctic Dad' story is made up, the Antarctic facts on which it is based are accurate. 'There's a Hippopotamus on our Roof Eating Cake' is more fanciful and is a 'what if?' story about a reassuring but imaginary friend.

**6. What is the major theme in this story?**

The different ways in which families can keep in touch. Not all families live in the same place, all the time, but they can show they care, in ways such as e-mail, photographs or phoning.

**7. Are the colours symbolic?**

Since there's a contrast between icy Antarctica and home, this is shown in the artwork? In which pages is this contrast most apparent?

Examine the use of colour and perspective in the artwork.

- Imagine you are the illustrator commissioned to draw this story. Design your story board.
- Design the cover.

**8. 'Are the flaps' called paper engineering?**

Yes.

**9. In what ways did the writer and illustrator work together?**

Probably it took us about three years from the original decision for Kevin to illustrate the picture book. As he had done for his previous picture book 'B for Bravo', (Lothian) about flight, Kevin likes to immerse himself in a subject, surrounding himself in his workspace with maps, photographs and even making models.

Kevin was passionate about Antarctica, but the reason Hazel wanted him to illustrate the story was the emphasis upon the vehicles, and Kevin is a

'petrolhead' who loves the detail of engines. It was his idea to have the Antarctic vehicles on the book flaps as a kind of paper engineering.

Hazel gave him a CD of copies of all her Antarctic photos from the expedition and Kevin used them as part of his research to get the details right in the illustrations.

We live about a 30 minute drive apart in Melbourne suburbs, and we met occasionally as Kevin had sample work ready. The cover was a big challenge, as at first the boy and father didn't look happy enough together (in Hazel's opinion), so Kevin redrew the cover.

We talked about wanting to contrast the warmth of colours of the home life and the icy blues and whites of Antarctica, but to suggest there was an ongoing family link via photos and e-mails.

Hazel thinks in abstract, not in colour or shape, so she defers to the artist on design, as long as the idea of the story is conveyed.

#### **4. Classroom Activities:**

How might the ideas in 'Antarctic Dad' be explored in the classroom?

- Talk with other families who have someone working away from home for long periods e.g. in a mining camp, offshore oil rigs, night shift work or commuting interstate. Or talk about how kids can stay in touch with grandparents or separated parents by doing interviews on audio or video tapes or writing postcards.
- Use puppets or masks for the wildlife and the vehicles and dramatising the story.
- Interview a real expeditioner by e-mail. (Can be arranged via Antarctic Division web site)
- Plot a voyage to Antarctica, on a map. Working out the distances, time zones and weather.
- Interview a mechanic (dieso) about the special cold weather challenges of keeping engines running.
- For kids who love wheels and engines, make models for this story.(polar ship model attached)
  - Examine the detail on some of the flaps.

- Create a model in any medium e.g. plasticine, digital, paper mache
- Make a diorama showing an Antarctic base with tracks of vehicles and also show the vessels.
- Compose 'icy' Antarctic music or illustrating while playing Vangelis' Antarctic music.
- Each student to 'adopt' a vehicle or a form of Antarctic wildlife such as albatross or ele seal and research it.
- Find out about cool clothing worn in Antarctica. Have an Antarctic fashion parade.
- Early explorers' routes and challenges e.g. Shackleton
- Satellite communication in remote regions e.g. GPS
- Workstyles on an Antarctic Base. What are the jobs of dieso, chopper pilot, Plant operator, chef, met-guys etc?
- Search and Rescue. What training is needed?
- Fire Safety. Why might fire be such a problem? What fire training do expeditioners need?
- Imagine you'd been asked to write a sequel to 'Antarctic Dad' where the parent had gone to work somewhere else.
  - What might be the setting? (place)  
Mine?  
Oil rig  
Foreign country  
Desert?
  - What might go wrong (problem)

## 5. 'Antarctic Dad' Reviews include:

Australian Book Review (April 2006) and the Herald Sun. Feb 25<sup>th</sup> 2006. Samples are included below which cover very different uses for this title.

- a. Psychologist's review
- b. Aussiereviews.com Sally Murphy

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<b>Author</b>	Hazel Edwards
<b>Illustrator</b>	Kevin Burgemeestre
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<b>ISBN</b>	0734408501
<b>Publication</b>	February 2006
<b>Publisher</b>	Lothian Books

### **Families in Transition: Relevance of 'Antarctic Dad'**

**By** psychologist Judy Parker

As an educational psychologist, I work with many families in transition where a parent may be away from home for extended periods, and the family has to make special adjustments to retain regular contact.

- Third Culture Kids e.g. European families in an Asian country where the child attends an international school.
- An international household with a parent who may be flying to other Asian countries and maybe home only a couple of nights per month.
- Some Asian students in Australia live with grandparents here while their parents are in business in Asia.
- Third Culture kids preparing to shift to another culture with an additional language.
- School of the Air students often have parents working for extended periods in the outback or remote regions. They may be mustering, flying or even sailing. Plotting the parent's GPS locations can be a link.
- Oilrigs and mining camps often have two week on/off rosters, so working parents may be away for concentrated weeks and then home fulltime.
- Travelling fathers constantly on overseas trips are the norm for some transitional families.
- Families where servants cook children's meals and they eat separately, missing out on family conversations with a parent about daily 'good' and 'bad' things.
- Shift workers with changing rosters.
- Some families have to prepare to move to a new country or travel for extended periods. To reduce the alienation and dislocation, having the students research on the Internet, get pamphlets and do family projects on their destination are useful strategies. Often the parent without a work permit can be more involved.

The family issues and electronic contact portrayed in 'Antarctic Dad' are realistic. The Dad is not a remote 'Disney' father but the immediacy of e-mail means fast accessibility, everyday. 'Real' family issues such as homework, readers, projects, footy games and celebrations such as birthdays are illustrated as part of the story.

The parents are modelling interest in a wider world by making Dad's work real and accessible with digital photos. Dad is involving his family in his work in an intimate sense, like young children going to his office each day. Involvement of the class in the project related to the absent parent's destination makes it into 'virtual school'.

In some client families in transition, the Dad takes the kids to school and does the reading THAT week he's home and then they cycle home together and chat about daily news. Some families write notes in envelopes for the Dad's suitcase and he opens one per day when he is away.

Nightly mobile contact or e-mails and digital photos such as in 'Antarctic Dad' are realistic ways in which families in transition retain contact by discussing homework or school

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**news. Families often send a soft toy to travel with the father or be photographed in his changing workplaces.**

**'Antarctic Dad' provides global modelling of compassion for people in different lands and for environmental issues on a wider scale. That is relevant for all families.**

## **2. Aussiereviews.com Sally Murphy**

Families need to keep in touch.

'Where's your dad?' ask the kids at my new school.

'He's gone to work in Antarctica,' I say.

They don't believe me, at first. But then I show them the photos.

Having an absentee father is never easy – but when Dad is off working in Antarctica, this presents its own set of problems. The dad in this story makes sure he's still involved in his son's daily life by exchanging emails and photographs and by sharing the adventures of Roo, the soft toy which has accompanied him to Antarctica. At home, his son misses his dad, but enjoys sharing his new-found knowledge of Antarctica, and his dad's adventures, with the class.

Antarctic Dad is a fictional story which deals with issues of separation, but also provides information about Antarctic life and the animals and landscape of Antarctica. It is enjoyable as a simple story, but also has educational benefits for home and classroom use.

Author Hazel Edwards has been to Antarctica, and draws on her experiences to give this story authenticity.

Illustrator Kevin Burgemeestre brings the story to life with watercolour illustrations filled with plenty of detail to be discovered by the viewer.

An excellent book.

Antarctic Dad, by Hazel Edwards and Kevin Burgemeestre

Lothian, 2006

## **6. Availability of web chat**

**A web chat on 'Antarctic Dad' is available for remote students who wish to study this book and then discuss issues with the author. Contact [hazel@hazeledwards.com](mailto:hazel@hazeledwards.com).**