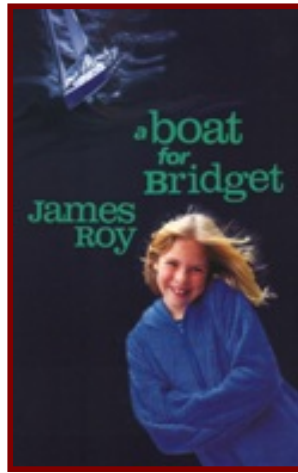


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# A BOAT FOR BRIDGET

## James Roy



### Teachers' Notes

Written by James Roy

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**OUTLINE:**

Bridget is a ten-year-old living in the Blue Mountains, only child of Will and Penny. Nearing completion is her birthday present of a boat. Will, with skill and care, is building it in the shed, shaping, planing and piecing together the wood that will, when lacquered, glow a deep red. And then and only then will Will begin to teach Bridget how to sail. For Will is a sailor — before his marriage he had sailed most of the world's oceans. Now his sailing is limited to Saturday races on his friend's boat or, when not racing, lazy sails around Sydney Harbour.

When Bridget is able to convince Will that she is old and sensible enough he arranges with his friend, Dave, that she can join them on one of their lazy sailing days. It is a revelation for Bridget opening her eyes to the joys of skimming across the water, washed by the wind, freed from the constraints of land. It is also the day on which Will falls in love with a maxi-yacht berthed at the same marina.

Thus discord enters into their lives. Will is offered the chance to crew on the maxi for the upcoming Sydney-Hobart race; Penny is terrified about the prospect, Bridget is hurt that the boat building is halted. From this discord past history emerges: Bridget learns that before she was born Dave and Will had nearly lost their lives at sea. And now past history repeats itself ending with Penny and Bridget waiting at a small Victorian town for the helicopter that is carrying the rescued men from the sunken maxi, one of whom is critically injured. That it is not Will does not lessen the drama. Nor does the tragedy change Bridget's or Will's love of sailing, or Penny's fear of the sea.

**DISCUSSION POINTS:**

**Love.** Students, in groups, can discuss if loving someone involves (a) keeping them from all harm (b) letting them do what they enjoy even though they may disagree with it? Should Penny have stopped Will from going in the race? Should the teacher, Mr Grissom, have left the school he loved teaching at in order to join his fiancée in a different state?

**Learning.** Look at and discuss the way in which Mr Grissom teaches the class to make maps. Students can make their own maps of the school, the main street of their town or suburb, a local park... In groups discuss how Mr Grissom conducts birthday celebrations. Does the group think they are appropriate? What do they think of Mr Grissom's choice of presents? What do they say about Mr Grissom? For example that he can always find a nice thing to say about the birthday person and he seems to choose his gifts with care.

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**Friendship.** (This might be suitable for girls only.) How accurate is the friendship depicted between Bridget and Tegan? In groups, find and read sections which involve the two girls and discuss how true-to-life, or otherwise, these sections are. For example the section in which Bridget and Tegan co-write a story (middle p.141-p.146); the birthday camp-over (Chapters 54-57); the phone call in chapter 82. Students can find other sections to back up their insights. List good points about friendships and any negatives.

**Craftsmanship.** Discuss the way in which Will talks about, and builds, Bridget's boat. For example on pp.127-128. Read the picture book **Woodlore** by Cameron Miller and Dominique Falla (Omnibus Books O.P.) Think of other crafts that can engender such pride.

**Literature:**

Students discuss the chapter headings the author has chosen. How do they work? Do they add to the story?

Students check the list of 'Excellent Books Which Bridget has Enjoyed' which appears at the end of the book. Groups can choose one to read and report on to the class.

Read the account of Bridget's first experience of sailing. pp77-82. Students write an account of their own first experience with a sport they enjoy.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

James Roy was born in western New South Wales in 1968, and spent much of his childhood in Papua New Guinea and Fiji, adventuring by day and reading books by night. Then, one day, tired of reading books by dead people, he decided to start writing his own.

His first novel, *Almost Wednesday*, was released in 1996 and was followed by the CBCA Notable Book *Full Moon Racing*. Other critical successes came with the CBCA Honour Books *Captain Mack* and *Billy Mack's War*, and the Notable Books *The Legend of Big Red* and *A Boat for Bridget*. In addition to writing fiction, James also drew on his years as an adolescent nurse to write *The 'S' Word - a boys' guide to sex, puberty and growing up*.

James lives in the Blue Mountains with his wife and two daughters. He doesn't like olives very much, and in his spare time he demonstrates an entirely misplaced confidence in his skills as a guitarist, painter and sportsman.

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**AWARDS****A Boat for Bridget**

CBCA (2002)

Notable Australian Book

**Full Moon Racing***Australian IBBY Award for Children and Young People (2000)*

Commended - Ena Noel Award

*CBCA (1999)*

Honour Book - Younger Readers

*Royal Blind Society Talking Book Awards (1999)*

Shortlisted

**Captain Mack***The Queensland Premiers Literary Awards (2000)*

Childrens Section

*CBCA (2000)*

CBCA Honour Book

**The 'S' Word***APA Book Design Awards (2007)**Australian Publishers' Association Book Design Awards - The Tien Wah Press**Australia Best Designed Children's Non-fiction Book***Town***The New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards (2008)**The Ethel Turner Prize*