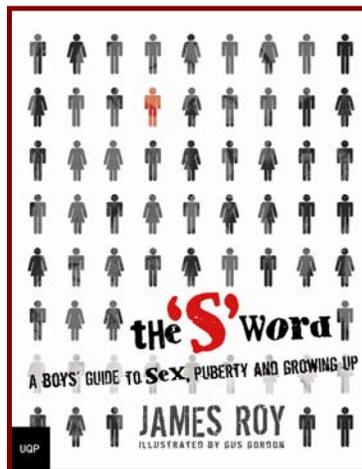


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THE 'S' WORD

James Roy

Illustrated by Gus Gordon



Teachers' Unit of Work

Written by a secondary school teacher and year-level coordinator

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SYNOPSIS

Growing up is tough, especially the bit between being a boy and being a man. It's tough because so much is changing at once. Your body, your emotions, your interests and the way other people see you. The way you look at girls, and the way they look at you.

Plus there's those dreams.

Using humour and sensitivity, James Roy presents a book that will help any young man navigate the confusing minefield that lies between boyhood and manhood. With some help from his friend 'Richard the Wise' he talks frankly about sex, puberty and relationships, and shows that becoming a man doesn't have to scare the pants off you.

THEMES**The Science of Sex**

This section deals with the anatomical elements of sex, such as puberty, anatomy and intercourse. Often student knowledge is taken for granted in this area, when in actual fact students are rarely given information outside of their friends in the playground. Obviously, these friends are as ill-informed as each other.

The Importance of Safety

Contraception, STDs and pregnancy make up the bulk of this section. Alarmingly, this generation of young people are neglecting contraception for many reasons. Myths surrounding contraception issues will be debunked in order to show students the dangers they may face.

Being a Man

This deals with the emotional aspects of sexuality and the positive behaviours that should accompany it. Scenarios will be played out and analysed.

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Girls, Girls, Girls

This theme speaks for itself and offers boys the chance to discuss girls and how they should behave in their company.

WRITING STYLE

I wrote this book specifically for middle-grade boys. I saw them in my head as I wrote it. Basically, I wanted them to pick it up, have a laugh, show it to their friends, and learn something at the same time. Obviously some readers are going to go on to other sources of information, but the first priority was accessibility. If the style was too formal or serious, the whole exercise would have been pointless, no matter how good the information.

Of course, the age of the intended audience meant that I had to tread carefully from time to time. It had to be a balance between fun and serious, without upsetting anyone with age-inappropriate language. Again, it's pointless writing an incredibly informative book if parents don't feel comfortable giving it to their boys.

Some of the intended audience will find this book is too young for them. Others will find it too old. Like any book for young people, the role of the adult putting that book in the reader's hand is to help choose the appropriate product. But the combination of informal, understandable language, a sense of fun, and the wonderful cartoons by Gus Gordon, make it a good fit for the 'average' middle-grade boy... whatever that is.

STUDY NOTES

Delivering sexual education lessons is often as confronting for the teacher as it is for many of the students. The reasons for this are obvious and numerous, so it is unnecessary to discuss them at length. One point that needs to be mentioned, however, is that sexual education lessons can not be simply driven by content. Their success is completely dependent on the teacher and their willingness 'to get down and dirty' for want of a better phrase. Preparation is the key, and the following notes will help in that preparation.

It is important to stress that the following notes have not been designed as strictly structured lessons. They have been designed to help teachers organise their own understandings and approaches to sexual education, because teachers will be directing the discussion and exploration of topics. The foundations of a sequence of lessons/sections that are linked to *The 'S' Word* are included. Various activities, hints and tips for lesson delivery are also included. Due to the many variables in the program and its delivery, the length of lessons is dictated by the teacher and the school – some schools may decide that each lesson should run over two sessions.

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It is worth knowing that we deliberately left out an index, so that *The 'S' Word* would be read in a linear way, rather than after looking up 'dirty words' in the index.

The recommended lesson sequence mirrors topics in the book and can be outlined as follows:

Please note Lesson/Section 1 has been written so as to be presented by the author, James Roy, but can also be modified for the teacher. Lessons/sections 2-5 have been written for the teacher or pastoral care person at the school to contribute to a teaching unit.

Lesson/Section 1

Introduction – Setting the Scene and the Rules

This lesson will work as an introduction to the upcoming unit of work. In the scheme of things, in some way or another you will need to cover these four objectives:

Objectives:

- Establish a set of rules for the upcoming lessons.
 - Introduce 'Richard the Wise' and *The 'S' Word*.
 - Outline the sequence of lessons to put things in perspective.
 - Introduce ideas about the prevalence of sex in society.
1. This lesson sets the scene. It is imperative that the author (or teacher) lays down ground rules for conduct in the lessons, to support the author, James Roy. Language use and behaviour towards peers should be focal issues. It is recommended that the author (or teacher) names parts of the body appropriately, as this will set a serious tone for the rest of the unit. Students should be encouraged to do so as well. It is also very important to highlight the need for a safe learning environment. There will be touchy topics flying around, and students need to feel safe enough to discuss their opinions.

Unfortunately, mixing touchy topics, uncomfortable teens and bullying can certainly see damage done if not addressed early.
 2. It is highly recommended to incorporate 'Richard the Wise'. He will be a best friend throughout the unit, as he is funny and deals with issues teachers would rather not touch. The easiest way to do this is to introduce *The 'S' Word* and explain its purpose.

'Richard the Wise' will operate as a Dear X type medium for student questions. Consequently, this is a perfect way for you to introduce the book

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and the nuts and bolts of what's in it. Reading some of Richard's earlier statements will work well with your introduction. Which ones and when you use them is dependent on you.

The introduction of 'Richard the Wise' and the book will allow you to move into an overview of the subsequent lessons/sections. The sequence is as follows:

Lesson/Section 1: Introduction – Setting the Scene and the Rules

Lesson/Section 2: Physical issues – The Science of Sex

Lesson/Section 3: Safe Sex – The Importance of Safety

Lesson/Section 4: Making decisions – Being a Man

Lesson/Section 5: Relationships – Girls, Girls, Girls

You may want to touch on each very briefly. It depends on how long you have. Time is the most dominant element in lesson design, but unfortunately in this context it is the greatest variable, so it's very difficult to give definitive answers.

3. Students always want to know what they'll be doing in the future in sexual education. This can often occupy their minds more than the lesson at hand. It pays to outline subsequent lesson topics to alleviate the curiosity about other possible topics that will be covered later in the unit.
4. Chapter 1: 'Sex and Football' – does a great job introducing ideas about the prevalence of sex in society. Have a read and frame it in personal experiences (this may help you, the teacher, feel more comfortable).

Possible Activities:

- Allow students to write down any questions they have for subsequent lessons. This can be done anonymously. It will help gauge student interests. It may be a perfect activity to thrust 'Richard the Wise' into the fray.
- Elicit ideas from students about their expectations and 'need' for sex education.
- Read a few of the earlier 'Richard the Wise' sections to students to lead into the next lesson.
- To help highlight just how prevalent sex is in society, have students refer to various media (particularly magazines such as *Dolly* or *Men's Health*) and count the references to sex.

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If all these things are covered, the rest of the unit will run smoothly.

Lesson/Section 2**Physical Issues – The Science of Sex**

This lesson will cover the odds and ends of the human body and puberty. This may be covered in Science or HPE classes, however, it is still important for it to be taught in the sex education context – students definitely have difficulty cross-referencing their knowledge across curriculum boundaries. Finding diagrams and activities may be as easy as contacting the Science or HPE department.

Traditionally, this lesson is the one in which teachers need to re-educate themselves before teaching. It is essential that the teacher has adequate knowledge of the human body to cover this lesson. Students will be very curious and ask lots of questions. The teacher will need to set their own boundaries in terms of questioning.

The teacher should also note that boys are accessing a lot of their sex 'education' from the internet, so it may be worth highlighting this with the students and discussing that what they're seeing on hardcore porn sites is nothing like sex is supposed to be.

Objectives:

- Briefly run through the anatomy of males and females.
- Run through puberty and the physiological changes boys go through.
- Explain the process of foreplay and sexual intercourse.

1. The following bits of anatomy should be made apparent:

- Penis
- Testicles
- Scrotum
- Sperm
- Vagina
- Labia
- Vulva
- Clitoris
- Uterus
- Ovaries

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2. The following issues associated with puberty should be discussed:
 - Hormones – testosterone, oestrogen
 - Erections
 - Pubic hair
 - Menstruation
 - Acne

3. This part of the lesson will be the most challenging. The teacher must set boundaries on what they feel is appropriate. Remember that this may be the first time a student has actually spoken seriously to an adult about intercourse. The teacher should discuss:
 - Erections
 - Arousal
 - Intercourse
 - Ejaculation
 - Process of conception

Obviously, teachers do not need to explicitly show students intercourse like John Cleese does in *The Meaning of Life*. Simple diagrams will suffice. Most students will know the basics, but TV can only inform so much!

Possible Activities:

- Diagrams of male and female genitalia can be used in many different ways. Firstly, a list of anatomical parts could be given and students could match them to the diagram. Secondly, students could be shown fully labelled diagrams and then be asked to write down the function of relevant parts. Thirdly, students could be given functions of pieces of anatomy, then be asked to name the part.
- Students could be asked to write a mini essay titled ‘How/why our body changes during puberty’ with reference to diagrams and flow charts.
- The teacher can facilitate a role play that deals with bullying that relates to puberty. Teachers need to be careful that this is a controlled activity.

Furthermore, in groups, students can use butcher’s paper to critique the role plays or prepare for them.

- Students could design a flow chart of the processes involved with intercourse and conception.
- ‘Richard the Wise’ could certainly begin to address the curly topics of masturbation and homosexuality in this lesson.

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Lesson/Section 3**Safe Sex – The Importance of Safety**

Recent research is pointing to the fact that young people are not using protection as much as their previous generation. This is a big problem, which

makes this lesson very crucial for students' futures. *The 'S' Word* is quite light on diseases for various reasons, however, the classroom is a perfect place for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) to be discussed.

Objectives:

- Discuss knowing the appropriate time to have sex.
 - Give an overview of birth control.
 - Explain safe sex and STDs
1. This topic is difficult, as many people have differing beliefs. Basically, as in *The 'S' Word*, the main point to get across is that if you feel you're not ready, don't do it. Ultimately, the ethos of the school will dictate the approach to this topic.
 2. The following things should be mentioned:
 - Contraception: condoms, the pill, spermicide, withdrawal method – and their drawbacks.
 - The difficulties encountered by school-aged parents.

Young people are typified by their self-perceived invincibility and the 'it won't happen to me syndrome'. Even though the purpose of sexual education is not instilling fear of possible consequences in young people, it is important to make students aware of the realities of teenage pregnancy. The focus here is to make it real – make them realise their lives will never be the same if they are not careful.

3. As mentioned previously, *The 'S' Word* only briefly touches on STDs, however, the classroom is a perfect forum to illustrate the effects of STDs and possible long-term consequences. Young people are not using protection frequently, so it is imperative that this section be raw (for want of a better word) and hard-hitting. Obviously, the school will decide what is appropriate.

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Which STDs will be discussed is dependent on the teacher, however, the following are a good start:

- HIV/AIDS (definite) – Note the differences between the two
- Genital herpes
- Gonorrhoea
- Genital warts

Discussing the effects on women is highly recommended, particularly with gonorrhoea.

Possible Activities:

- Students can be walked through a cost analysis of having a baby and looking after it, then make a comparison to the wages of a Year 10 or 11 school leaver.
- Even though it is clichéd, teachers can demonstrate the use of a condom on a vegetable or another appropriately phallic object.
- Teachers can bring in physical examples of contraceptives, for example, packets of the contraceptive pill and condoms. Have print outs of each contraceptive's effectiveness percentage on separate sheets of paper, and put the contraceptives and percentages in a pile. Have students match them to the contraceptive with its relative effectiveness percentage.
- Students can be given lists of STD symptoms and be asked to match them to the relevant disease. Pictures are very effective also, however, the school must decide which visuals are appropriate, as many are quite shocking.
- Students in groups can each be given an STD to research. To ensure appropriate materials are consulted, the teacher may want to give the students a pre-organised 'research folder'. Each group will then become the 'experts' on that STD, then present their findings to the class. The folder should deal with statistics, symptoms and ways the particular STD is transmitted.
- Teachers can give statistics about the prevalence of each STD. Numbers often mean little to students. A good way to make these statistics more real is to have a number of students stand to represent the statistical chance of catching a particular STD. The genital herpes statistics always get a good reaction.

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- The following websites contain great information about STDs and young people, which will definitely help tailor lessons:
 - www.reachout.com.au
 - www.health.qld.gov.au/istaysafe
 - www.stdservices.on.net/std

Note that accurate statistics are always changing, so accessing an up-to-date resource is necessary. There is also a comprehensive list of information sites and books at the end of *The 'S' Word*.

Lesson/Section 4**Making Decisions – Being a Man**

This lesson/section is highly dependent on the students that are being taught. Schools will have to address this topic in a way that follows their doctrine. Thought must go into isolating the issues that are particularly pertinent to specific clientele. This lesson is somewhat similar to 'pastoral care' in schools.

The topics in the lesson can easily be combined with those in the next section, Girls, Girls, Girls.

Objectives:

Here is a list of possible issues/objectives to cover. Please note that it is not an ordered list in any way.

- The respectful treatment of others – sexual harassment.
 - Penis size and relevance to being a man.
 - Homosexuality and myths surrounding it.
 - What makes a man?
 - Is image important?
1. The themes of this objective are very obvious. It relates to bullying and sexual harassment. Discussing the reality of puberty and differing timelines for each person is important.
 2. The focus of this objective links in perfectly with the previous one. Explaining the difference between erect and flaccid penises and the ability to be effective is the main goal.
 3. This is a topic that needs to be addressed respectfully and in line with the school's belief systems. In *The 'S' Word* on pages 75-82, there is a good overview of the myths associated with homosexuality. The importance of keeping this segment of the lesson dignified is essential, as the potential for damage to confused students is very high.

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4. Issues of behaviour and integrity should be discussed. Ideally, this objective will be covered implicitly throughout the entire lesson, and, more importantly, the entire unit.
5. Men come in many different shapes and sizes. The idea that there is no model of a man superior to another needs to be the focus.

Possible Activities:

- Teachers can discuss sexual harassment and its consequences, giving examples in the workplace and the playground. This is an important issue, as young people do not realise the extent of the implications of this form of harassment.
- The teacher could direct students to draw/design a poster/collage/word list of a stereotypical man. The teacher could then work with the information to help dispel any myths about image and being a man.
- Students could refer to popular media sources and look at the images and values that are promoted as being aligned with the stereotypical male. This could stimulate quality discussion on body image and the role of the media in young people's sexual development.
- Reading/illustrating texts that highlight the discrimination encountered by homosexual people may work as a good stimulus for discussion. Excerpts from films such as *Philadelphia* would work well.
- Students could be given 'what if' scenarios around the notion of 'being a man'. For example: if you've gotten a girl pregnant – what do you do and how do you handle this 'like a man'.
- Students could be put in groups and given a specific quality of a being a man. After discussion, students report back to the class, outlining their opinions on that particular quality. Here are some examples of qualities for this activity:
 - Integrity
 - Respectfulness
 - Tolerance
 - Truthfulness
- The teacher could generate discussion around questionable, stereotypical manly qualities, such as physical strength and aggression.

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Lesson/Section 5
Relationships – Girls, Girls, Girls

Many male students at same-sex schools have had very little experience with girls outside of their mothers and sisters, and that's assuming they've had that experience. These young men often have no idea how to impress a girl. When faced with the prospect of interacting with the opposite sex, they can undoubtedly revert to vulgarity and forms of chest-beating to win them over.

Excerpts from *The 'S' Word* will work brilliantly in this lesson. 'Richard the Wise' uses examples that will cut close to the bone for many of the students. Due to the personal nature of the topic, the way teachers work through the objectives is highly dependent on many variables.

Objectives:

- Overview of girls and how they 'will become attractive' if they aren't already.
- Impressing a girl.
- Going on dates.
- Having a girlfriend.
- Breaking up.

These objectives explain themselves. It is recommended that this lesson take on a jocular tone in some sections, as there will be many interesting opinions shared by the boys. Chapter 10 in *The 'S' Word* will be your best resource for this section.

Possible Activities:

- Teachers can facilitate the creation of a comparative list of things that girls like and what boys like to stimulate discussion. The boys need to be as empathetic as they can.
- 'Richard the Wise's' comments on pages 98–101 can be used to highlight how 'not' to impress a girl. This can be a very funny activity. The teacher may want to get shows of hands about who has done some of these things. Alternatively, boys may like to act out a role-play looking at how these scenarios may pan out in reality – interestingly, teenage boys seem to get a kick out of playing women in dramatic scenarios, so you shouldn't have any trouble getting someone to play the role of the girl.
- The teacher could demonstrate good and bad dating scenarios using students as actors. This is always an extremely funny activity. The teacher could create scripts or let the students organise scripts for themselves. Don't forget that scenarios could include the actual asking out of a girl on a date.

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- These two role-play activities could easily be rolled together through teacher instruction.
- The teacher could instruct students to write down some possible date venues, as well as their positives and negatives, then discuss them as a class.
- Discussion about the responsibilities that come with being in a relationship is a very good activity, stressing the fact that boys need to respect girls' bodies and their cycles. This section would link in well with Lesson 2: 'The Science of Sex'.
- The teacher can use excerpts from *The 'S' Word* to illustrate issues surrounding break up. Breaking up in a civilised manner needs to be discussed as length. Teachers need to remind students that creating an enemy during a break up can definitely make life difficult in the future, especially if the girl goes to the same school.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

The motivation for writing this grew out of the James' discovery that there is very little for boys about puberty and a plethora of books for girls – heaps of choice. While there are excellent sex education programs within the school curricular, boys have been supplementing this with access to hardcore porn sites they log onto when they get home.

This tends to distort the way they learn about sex. James is concerned that 'a generation of curious boys are becoming a generation of men with such a crippled and distorted view of human intimacy'.

James says, 'Here's what I wish for: I'd very much like the boys who pick up, buy or are handed *The 'S' Word* to find at least a little information that will help them stride confidently into the beginnings of their manhood, so that the next generation of men is generous, understanding, loving, respectful, and proud to be male'.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

On his way to being a children's author, James Roy worked for many years as a paediatric and emergency nurse in various hospitals, and spent five years as a registered nurse on the adolescent unit of the Children's Hospital at Westmead, in Sydney. In addition to his work with young people in the health setting, he has written several award-winning books for children and adolescents, such as *Captain Mack*, *Billy Mack's War*, *Full Moon Racing*, *Town* and most recently, *Edsel Grizzler: Voyage to Verdada*.

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Each year he spends a great deal of time in schools talking to young people about books and writing, and particularly enjoys the challenge of engaging boys and young men on their level.

James lives in a slightly creaky house in the Blue Mountains with his wife, two daughters, and two Jack Russell terriers, one of whom has a brain the approximate size of a peanut.

The S Word is James' first work of non-fiction.

