

# Teachers' Resource Kit

# SMASHED

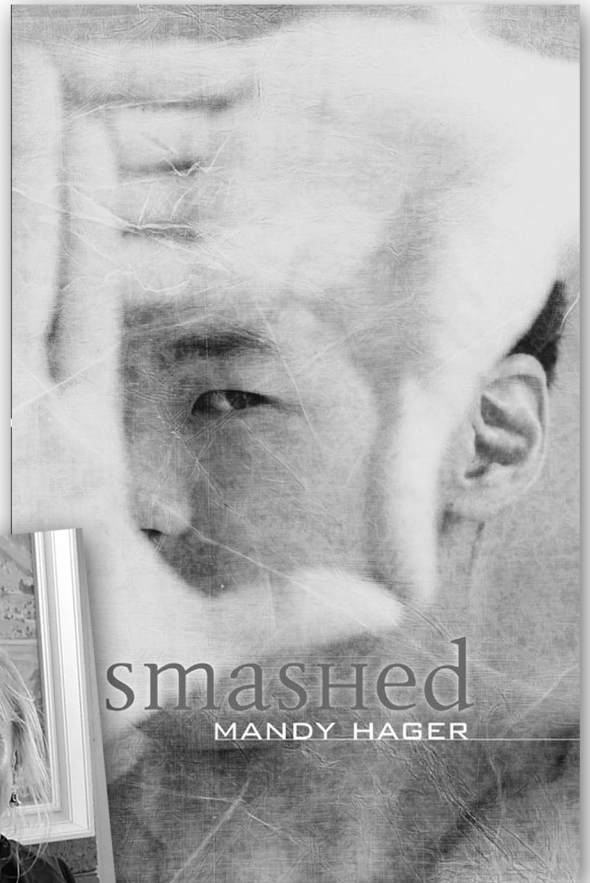
Mandy Hager

*Smashed* covers some very gritty teenage issues – like rape, alcohol, abuse and anger – in a positive and informative manner. **Mandy Hager**, the author, delivers serious content with a sense of humour and great sensitivity, in a style reminiscent of Malorie Blackman. It's thoughtful and pacy, hard to put it down, with lots of interesting detail, like genetics, that are related to the central themes.

Toby and Rita are an average brother and sister who get into some nasty situations. *Smashed* is about how they work out what to do, or what not to do. They go to a party and instead of making sure his little sister gets home safely, Toby goes off with a girl. Sadly Rita is raped and then the book deals with the repercussions of that. Toby is really angry with his friend, who raped his sister. This friend is found badly beaten – has our hero done this? Despite all of this, *Smashed* ends on an upbeat note.

DARE will use this novel in some of their education programmes.

**Mandy Hager** is a Wellington writer and educator.



#### Note to teachers:

This novel deals with rape, drugs and abuse. Sensitivity and respect are essential in dealing with students' responses.

Including classroom activities for students in years 10-13 in the following areas:

- Reading Comprehension
- Themes:
  - Nature vs Nurture
  - Evolution
  - Rape
- Character Study
- Creative Responses
- Writing Responses



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Teacher notes developed by Raymond Huber

# Comprehension Questions

## Chapter 1

- Why does Toby consider his sister Rita so cool? (pp 8–10)
- What is Toby's relationship to Jacinta?
- Why doesn't he want Rita to come to the party? (p. 15)
- Why are Don and Carl important to Toby? (p. 15)
- Why is Carl on Ritalin? (p. 16)
- 'What does 'vewy un-PC' mean? (p. 16)
- What are 'street smarts'? (p. 18)

## Chapter 2

- What is 'social death'? (pp 19, 25) Why does it matter to some teenagers?
- Why does Toby's Mum not trust him? (p. 21)
- Why does Toby say the alcohol age restriction is a 'lame excuse'? (p. 25)
- Why does Toby feel sick with himself? (p. 26)
- What is Don's dad like? (pp 27, 28)
- Is this a 'normal' teenage party? (p. 30)
- What is 'the hollow glow of a stoner'? (p. 34)

## Chapter 3

- What was Jacinta's motive (reason) for seducing Toby? (p. 38)
- Define 'reciprocal altruism' (p. 40)
- Why might mum be 'hacked off'? (p. 42) What was Mum really angry about? (p. 45)
- Why doesn't Toby confide in his Dad? (p. 43)
- Why is Toby angry with Carl? (p. 49)

## Chapter 4

- Why does he feel responsible? (p. 51) Is he?
- Why is Toby so enraged? (p. 57)
- What are his parents' reactions? (pp 57, 58)
- 'Revenge is best served cold.' (p. 64) What does this mean?

## Chapter 5

- What does the story about the 'mindless ant' mean? (p. 67)
- What does Mum confess about her anger? (p. 70)
- What do we learn about Don's family? (p. 71)
- 'And then I see him...' (p. 79) What might have happened next?

## Chapter 6

- Why does Toby think the police are there? (p. 85)
- What is a 'love-hate relationship with the police'? (p. 89)
- What motive do these people have for beating Don: Toby, Dad, Sidney, Carl, Rita. Who is the most likely? The least likely?
- What does the 'bee' analogy mean? (p. 98)

## Chapter 7

- Why does Toby say that Don may be 'off the hook' now? (p. 101)
- Why does Toby feel like a 'home-wrecker'? (p. 103)
- What is 'the witching hour'? (p. 105)
- Are visitors (non-family) allowed to wander into intensive care? (p. 108)
- Why is Toby 'unmoved'? (p. 114)

## Chapter 8

- How did seeing Don help? (p. 116)
- What isn't 'fair' in Toby's eyes? (p. 118)
- What does he reveal about his meeting with Don (on the waterfront)? (p. 125)
- Why does he tell the truth to the police? (p. 129)
- Why do they want the sweatshirt? (p. 131)

## Chapter 9

- What is the police strategy with their questioning? (p. 138)
- What evidence is stacked against Toby? Do you think he's guilty?
- Why did they play him the ambulance recording?

## Chapter 10

- Why does Toby feel like he's drowning? (p. 151)
- Why do they do a body search? (p. 154) Is this normal in arrests?
- What are some of the 'unanswerable' questions about the Universe? (pp 157, 158)
- How does the cell make him feel? (pp 159, 160)

## Chapter 11

- Why does he dream about being a puppet? (p. 168)
- What argument does the lawyer use? (p. 173)
- Why is Carl suddenly turning against Toby? (p. 179)
- Why is the 'boating club' significant?

## Chapter 13

- What creative outlets do the family have? (p. 200)
- What does the Psych 'dilemma' story reveal about trust? (p. 203)
- Why does Toby say 'the bird is me'? (p. 205)

## Chapter 14

- What is Murphy's Law? (p. 215)
- What's the evidence against Toby? (p. 221)
- Why does he want Danica to talk to Rita? (p. 227)

## Chapter 16

- What dilemma does Toby face? (p. 255)
- Why does he want to plead guilty now? (pp 259–261)
- 'Women hold up half the sky' (p. 262) What does this mean?

# Exploring Language

- Toby's language is full of inventive imagery. Illustrate one of his sayings, either in cartoon form or diagram:
  - 'Knees are buckling like they've been unscrewed' (p. 20)
  - 'The blush from hell' (p. 21)
  - Music that 'nuke your kidneys' (p. 29)
  - 'Fury of an executioner' (p. 37)
  - Sobs 'drive a cross-bow arrow deep in my chest.' (p. 53)
  - 'Plod like a zombie' (p. 81)
- 'Like tightrope-walking on barbed wire' (p. 200)

# Themes

## 1. Nature vs. Nurture

- Define the issue of 'Nature vs. Nurture' (p. 10)
- 'We're all just puppets' (p. 7) Do you agree with this statement?
- 'Genes don't give a damn' (p. 7) What does this mean?
- Debate: 'We are the product of our genes, not our environment.'
- Don is 'doomed' by his genes according to Toby (p. 12) How?
- Do you have a choice about how you live, and what your personality is like? (p. 73)
- Are we 'doomed' to follow our parents? (p. 7)
- Does ethnic background play a part in people's behaviour? For example, Toby talks about the importance of 'pride' (p. 8) and 'politeness' (p. 11) for the Chinese; and the 'fiery' nature of the Irish (p. 8).
- Are some people 'programmed' to be bad? (p. 10) Or are they more influenced by their upbringing? Should we label people 'bad'? (p. 171).

## 2. Evolution

- Summarise this theory.
- What role does 'mother's love' play in evolution? (p. 22)
- What role does being attractive play in evolution? (p. 31)
- Debate: We are just 'driven by our urges'.
- According to Evolutionary theory, all our actions can be explained by the need to

'survive'. Do you have a choice about your actions? Explain 'kin-selected altruism'. (pp 59, 65) Do you agree?

- Are love and sacrifice just an automatic response? (pp 60, 65)
- What is the 'ancient reptile' part of the brain which Toby talks about?
- Explain 'fear of the dark' (p. 106) in evolutionary terms.
- Is life fair? (p. 117) Should there be a reward for goodness and a punishment for badness? Is there evidence for this?
- What role does 'free will' play in our responses? (p. 24)
- How can 'kindness to strangers' be explained? (p. 257)

## 3. Rape

- What would your reaction be in similar circumstances? Violence? Revenge? Forgiveness?
- What is Rita's initial reaction? (p. 69) What are the after effects? (pp. 165, 199)
- Rita is the victim — so why does she blame herself?
- What does Toby mean by: 'It's not just Rita who he's raped'? (p. 77)
- Why doesn't Rita want to go to court? (p. 102) Does the victim have to take the stand in court in rape cases?
- Discuss: 'Men can't help it', rape is a 'natural part of male behaviour'. (p. 193)
- Is it true that men can't control their sexuality? Is this an excuse for rape? Is

- 'leading someone on' (e.g. with 'skimpy' clothing) an excuse for rape? (p. 54)
- How is rape explained by evolution — according to Toby's tutor? (p. 194)
- How has Danica reacted to her rape? (p. 195)
- Do the effects of rape 'go away' eventually? (pp 208, 214)

## Character Study

### Toby

- List the clichéd characteristics of a 'geek'. (p. 8)
- 'I'm nothing but a cliché'. (p. 8) What does this mean? What does it tell you about Toby? Do you think he likes being a 'geek'?
- How does Toby see the world? (p. 22) Why does he think science explains everything?
- What's his attitude towards alcohol? (p. 25) What happens at the party? (p. 31)
- Why does he think saying 'no' to drugs is 'nerdy'? (p. 34)
- Why is he so aware of his weaknesses? (p. 27) How does he cope?
- Why does he feel like a loser?
- Describe the struggle between his mind and body. (p. 39)
- When does Toby feel most 'comfortable'. (p. 47)
- How does he feel about his parents? (p. 126)

- What eventually makes him feel like an 'adult'? (p. 162)
- Why does he say that 'IQ counts for nothing'? (p. 199)
- What has Toby learned about himself by the end? (p. 271)
- Do you think he's a realistic character? Why? Or why not?

### Carl

- Carl is described by his actions: 'jiggling up and down as though he's riding an invisible horse' (p. 11) and 'moon-walking' (p. 12), 'fighting a rattlesnake'. (p. 13) What impression does this give?
- How does Carl's ADHD affect his life? (pp 119, 120)
- Does ADHD excuse his behaviour?
- Why does Carl confess? (p. 243)
- Why doesn't he feel in control of himself? (p. 247)

## Creative Responses

- Find a photo of, and sketch a radiolarian. (p. 41)
- Research 'Cubist' art and paint your own creation. (p. 47)
- Read Toby's vivid description of the effects of alcohol on page 79: draw a cartoon or pastel sketch that uses his images (sandpaper, rotting fish etc).
- Design a poster or diagram showing what alcohol does to the body and brain. (p. 80)
- Paint Toby's dream imagery. (pp 168, 169)

# Writing Activities

- Look at Da Vinci's Last Supper painting (mentioned on page 162) and write a personal response to it.
  - Who was Darwin? (p. 59) Research his life and ideas.
  - Write a one-page essay on one of these current teenage issues: alcohol use; violence; parental authority and trust; sexual freedom.
  - Write a review of the book. Consider the following questions:
    - What situations had a ring of truth for you?
    - Which characters appealed to you the most? The least?
    - How did the story make you feel as it unfolded?
    - What ideas in the book awakened your interest?
    - What did you dislike, or find boring?
    - Did the ending surprise you?
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The DARE Foundation of New Zealand (who operates as a partnership between Police and the community) has adopted “*Smashed*” as the basis of their new programme “*DARE To Move On*”. This programme is designed to support young people who have been identified “at risk” and who are in need of help or guidance to allow them to take control of their lives. They may lack social and interpersonal skills, display poor anger management skills, be in trouble, have been abused, have low self-esteem, be lacking in self discipline and performing badly at school. Specialist trained facilitators guide the sessions, which use the characters and storyline of “*Smashed*” to explore the topics of

- Identity
- Peer pressure
- Trust
- Revenge
- Consequences
- Responsibilities
- Powerlessness
- Assumptions
- Truth
- Expectations
- Inner strength

The programme aims to help build and reinforce young people's own sense of who they are – their own unique skills and qualities. It also challenges them to look at the areas of conflict and turmoil in their lives, and to help them overcome the obstacles in their path that have impacted on their behaviour to date, in order to empower them to lead more healthy, peaceful and fulfilling lives.

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