

# The Whole of the Moon

**DUNCAN STUART**

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## RESOURCE KIT for use in schools

Includes:

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a personal statement by author,  
Duncan Stuart

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chapter by chapter approach  
for classroom study

•  
comprehension exercises

•  
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stand up and talk exercises

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suggestions for activities  
and projects

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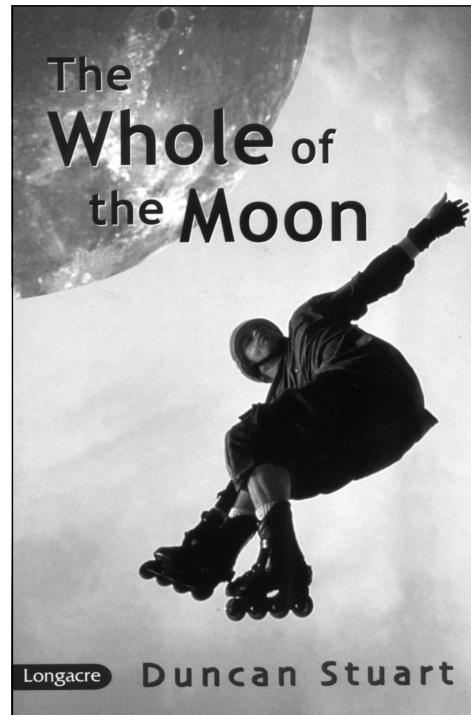
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*The Whole of the Moon* at:  
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He's smart, good-looking, rich – he's just won the speed-skating champs and has a terrific girlfriend – Kirk Mead has it all... including cancer.

Now he has to tough it out in the biggest battle of his life. In the chemo ward at Starship Hospital Kirk finds a new family: Owen the Terrible, Stevie with his crack-up wig – and Marty the street kid. As Marty says, this place is really no different from the street.

Based on the multi award-winning film by Ian Mune, *The Whole of the Moon* is a tough, unsentimental and at times very funny story of friendship found in the face of adversity.



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# The Whole of the Moon - Resource Kit

## DUNCAN STUART

### Personal Comment

**M**y first job was in television where I was a script editor. A script editor's job is to work with writers to help them make their script as good as possible but within the rigid confines of a system where everyone has to worry about costs. A writer might have a fabulous outdoor scene and my job was to get that scene "indoors" in one of the regular sets, and still make it interesting. Sometimes I felt like scum making those compromises – and sometimes the writers went out of their way to *make* me feel like scum for those compromises. Writers can be very prickly people.

Another part of the job was to read through the scripts and submissions that people sent in from all over the country. Most of these were very amateurish and only a few – maybe one or two per cent – showed the potential to make us think, yes, this person can *really* write.

One of these people was Richard Lymposs, who came in one day with an idea for a TV programme. He was supposed to be at school, but he hated the place – and what he really wanted to do was write for TV and film. My memory might be faulty on this detail, but I think he was under suspension from his college on account of his haircut. Anyway, that's how I met Richard. We actually commissioned a scene breakdown from him, but there was no money to make the programme, so that was that.

Cut in time. The scene is sixteen years later and I'm a researcher and glad not to be in television. I get a call from Richard. He'd hung in there, and had completed his second movie script, *The Whole of the Moon*, a story of his which had been worked into a full screenplay by Richard and the director, Ian Mune. Richard sent me the script and asked if I would like to write the novel of the film.

It is a great screenplay and I was hooked – but at the time I had to fit in the book on occasional weekends because of the long hours I kept in *The Job From Hell*. The only reason I finished the book was because I quit my job to become self-employed. I set a deadline and, cranking up my old Wurlitzer jukebox (it plays vinyl 45s) I set forth on the Moon voyage. I love writing with old Motown, Soul and Ska music blazing behind me – saxophones honking and vocalists shouting.

Months and months later I finished the book – much to Richard's surprise. He thought I'd disap-



peared off the face of the earth.

For me, the difference between films and novels is very clear, and I didn't have too much problem working out how to structure the book and working out which bits I would need to add or change to make the book work – especially for the reader who has never seen the movie. In fact I had never seen the movie either – only the screenplay which is different from the final cut of the movie.

I've actually added a lot of things to the novel, including new characters and whole new storylines to give it more flesh and make it work on the page – but the strength of

Richard's basic story keeps shining through.

I enjoyed the project because I could put heart and soul into it. It never felt like somebody else's story, but Richard and Ian's screenplay was a superb starting point. I hope the story lingers in the minds of readers.

With *The Whole of the Moon* finished I have pulled out two other books that I have been working on. These are also teen-fiction – and both are now screaming at me to be completed.

People ask me why I write teen fiction and my standard answer is that I may not look it, but inside I'm still 17. I think the truth is that being a teenager is like being a writer. You dwell on the brink of so many fantastic possibilities.

Teenagers are old enough and smart enough to know how the world spins, but they haven't set out on the journey. Not all teen moments are fantastic, but there are some days when it's just like going to the beach and seeing the perfect waves and you can't wait to unstrap the board from the roof of the car and get out there. I feel the same thing when I turn up the Wurlitzer and turn on my computer. The music inspires me – all those black soul singers, belting their lungs out with pure emotion in songs about loneliness and heartache. What a challenge. "Hey Mr S!" they yell. "Beat this!" And then they launch into their rhythm and blues classics and all I can do is work harder to keep up.

One thing I always knew and respected was that *The Whole of the Moon* meant a lot to Richard. His mother died of cancer and the original story concept came directly from Richard's heart and his actual experience. I was thinking about his mum when I wrote the book.

# Chapter Study

## pp. 1–34

- At the start of the book Kirk is part of a close group of friends. Who was the newcomer to the group?
- Why don't any of them have summer jobs?
- How does Kirk end up in hospital?
- Who does Kirk watch leaving Starship Hospital after he arrives there? What does he notice about this person?

### Discuss:

- What do we know already about these characters' backgrounds?
- What do we know about Kirk's character?

## pp. 35–61

- Describe the three other patients Kirk has met so far.
- What does Kirk see on the roof of the Starship?
- What is the name of Kirk's favourite band?
- What is a portacath?

### Discuss:

- What do we know about Marty's character?
- What are some of the physical, emotional and side-effects of chemotherapy?

## pp. 62–99

- Why does Stevie wear a wig?
- What is 'Upstairs'?
- What is the operation that Kirk undergoes?
- What does Kirk find out that helps explain his father's reaction?

### Discuss:

- Why does Marty insist on reading the class roll?
- Why does Marty push Kirk into the pool?

## pp. 100–129

- How does Tory break up with Kirk?
- What reward does Marty give Kirk the first time he climbs the stairs?
- How can you tell if Marty is 'up' or 'down'?
- What is the song played for Kirk on Rhyme Time Radio?

### Discuss:

- Why does Tory break up with Kirk?
- Do you think Marty is connected to the thieves?

## pp. 130–153

- What happens when Kirk returns to Skate World?
- Why does Kirk say he can't talk to his father about cancer?
- How had Marty come into Starship?
- What does Marty mean by 'going to see the moon'?

### Discuss:

- Why does Marty escape from Starship?
- Why does Kirk decide to go with her?

## pp. 154–199

- Who is the Insect?
- Who is Tuck?
- What does Owen leave Kirk?
- What does Kirk keep to remind him of Marty?

### Discuss:

- Was Owen totally crushed by his cancer?
- Why did Marty hang out with her 'friends'?

## Stand Up and Talk!

Getting up and being able to speak confidently in front of others is an extremely useful skill throughout life. So here are some *three-minute* talk topics for the class. The challenge? Talk for *three minutes* about one of the following issues or questions from *The Whole of the Moon*.

1. Describe what life would be like if you had your left leg amputated. Don't dwell on the pain – think about life when you get out of hospital.
2. Explain why Marty calls the class roll at hospital. What point is she trying to prove? And why does Kirk call the roll for her, at the end of the book?
3. In just three minutes tell the class why you think Tory did the right thing in breaking up with Kirk.
4. In just three minutes tell the class why you think Tory did the wrong thing in breaking up with Kirk.
5. Tell the class who your favourite character is in the book – and why.
6. Tell the class who your least favourite character is in the book – and why.

7. Deliver a three minute book review of *The Whole of the Moon*.
8. In your view, whose death was the sadder one. Owen's – or Marty's? Tell the class why you think so.
9. Imagine you were writing a Will, and you could leave your things (no matter how meagre!) to various members of your family and friends. What would you leave – and to whom?
10. Tell the class how you would survive for two weeks if you decided, today, to live on the street. Where would you get food? Where would you sleep? Would you do any fun things?
11. In the book, Kirk broke into a house and stole food. We know it was against the law – but did Kirk do the right thing? Tell the class your answer and explain why.
12. In the book there is a nightclub with no name. Tell the class what name you would give to a nightclub if you owned one – and describe your ideal club. What sort of music would it play? What sort of people would you try to attract?
13. If you had six months to live – what would you do? Tell the class.
14. If you had a week to live – what would you do? Tell the class.
15. Do you think Marty died happy – or tragically? Give your answer, and then tell the class what the difference is between both kinds of death.

## Essay Assignment

Here is a list of five essay topics. Choose one of the topics and write 400 words explaining why you think the characters did what they did, and explaining what you would do in the same situation – and why.

1. We learn that in the past, Marty's friend Tuck was raped and badly beaten by her friends. In your opinion, why did Marty and Tuck ever choose to 'hang around' with these people? Use examples from the book to back up your opinion.
2. Marty and Kirk grow very close in the book. Do you think they could ever have been friends if they hadn't had cancer or leukaemia? Why?
3. In the book, we learn that Stevie has turned down the chance to have his wishes fulfilled. He could have chosen to go to Disneyland or get a brand new electric guitar... Why did he turn down this opportunity?
4. In the book, Tory decides to drop her close relationship with Kirk. Why do you think she did this? Was she right? Use examples from the book to back up your opinion.
5. In the book, Owen plays games of chess between Owen the Terrible and Owen the American. Why does he do this and what does it mean? Is Owen really a chess genius?

## Comprehension Exercise 1

### The Difference Between Films and Books

When you compare *The Whole of the Moon* film to the novel you will see several changes, and these changes help point out why film writing is different from writing for a novel. In fact *The Whole of the Moon* novel was based on the *script* of the movie, but written before the author had seen the movie or heard the actors.

The biggest difference between films and books is usually the question of *point of view*. In a film, the camera can be anywhere – like a fly on the wall. We can see what happens in Kirk's life, and even when he isn't around, we can see what's happening with Marty or the others.

In a book, the writer often chooses only one person's point of view and this is called telling the book in 'First Person' (like *The Whole of the Moon* – from the viewpoint of Kirk). They can still tell some chapters from another point of view (like Tory's Diary for example) but only one at a time. The other option is called 'Third Person', which is like the fly on the wall. Each point of view has certain advantages and disadvantages for the writer. A story told in the Third Person can let us in on things about *all* the characters, but this viewpoint is less successful at describing what goes on inside somebody's thoughts. A story told in the First Person can get right inside their thoughts, but cannot tell us about things that person does not see or hear.

A movie usually gets around both problems by telling the story in third person, but zooming in to show us what people are thinking or worrying about. The director's role is to help the viewer see what they need to see in order to understand the story.

In the movie for example, we learn that Marty has leukaemia and is entering the last stages before she dies – and we know this before Kirk does. This allows us to feel a sense of tragedy as Kirk and Marty head out to the island. In the novel, because it is being told from Kirk's point of view, we only find out about Marty's situation once the two are on the island – when Kirk sees the bruising on her body.

Also – because a director can zoom in and help us understand what people are thinking in a film by concentrating on their actions or expressions – there tends to be less talk. In the novel, whole conversations had to be added – and extra characters created – so we can learn what people are thinking and feeling in part by what they say. After all, it isn't *what* happens that makes a story interesting – it is *how* the characters act that makes the impact.

In the film we hardly get to see the other people in Kirk's hospital ward. In the book, Stevie and Owen help us to see and understand Kirk's life in the hospital.

Another reason for differences between the film and book version of any story is *pace*. In *The Whole of the Moon* for example, after the tragic story about Tuck, we see Marty and Kirk dressed up in disguise. It works in the film because it comes as a surprising moment of light relief, of laughter. But in the novel, because we read more slowly than we watch a movie, the humour of seeing Kirk in a dress would happen too slowly. There would be no surprise because we would have to hear Kirk *deciding* to dress up in disguise, and the scene would then feel contrived, and the humour laboured.

In the book there is no quick cut to a character's worried face with tell-tale background music, or a stabilising shot of the sun rising through the Harbour Bridge to say it's morning. The words must do *all the work*, describe everything you need to know – and it takes much longer. That changes the pace of the story enormously. *The Whole of the Moon* is a 120 minute film which you can watch on a Saturday night, or a wet afternoon between buying your mother a birthday present and going to your friend's house for tea. *The Whole of the Moon* novel is a 200 page book that takes most people at least a few days to get through. You read it over a period of time, pausing to eat, sleep, live your life, and then go back to it again. You live with the characters and story for a lot longer. And if a book is good, it should go deeper, and stay with you longer for exactly that reason.

The final reason for the differences between films and books is purely practical. When a movie is made a large number of people are involved – from writers

and actors to the director and the camera and sound crews. Everybody contributes to the look and feel of the movie and any film is a result of the special chemistry between these people. The director may choose to shoot a scene in a certain way and an actor may choose to say their lines with a particular emphasis or tone. Even the background music will add another dimension that may not have been thought of when the script was first written.

In a book, the writer is the only person creating the effects. There is no soundtrack, no visuals, and there are no actors, or anybody else to set the scene and help tell the story. The chemistry is inevitably different from the film: it is the chemistry of the writer's own imagination. The story may be similar, but the telling of that story will always be quite different.

### QUESTIONS:

1. From the essay above, list three differences between the film and book versions of *The Whole of the Moon*.
2. Describe the difference between telling a story in First Person and telling it in Third Person.
3. What are the advantages/disadvantages of each point of view?
4. What are some ways in which a film lets us know what the character is thinking?
5. True or false:
  - The Whole of the Moon novel was written after the author saw the film.
  - In the novel, Kirk learns about Marty not having long to live before he and Marty head out to the island.
  - Stevie and Owen are featured in the film, but they are slightly different than in the book.
6. The essay mentions several jobs associated with film-making. List four.
7. According to the writer, what is more interesting in a story – the actual plot, or the way the characters behave?
8. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
9. What example from *The Whole of the Moon* does the writer use to describe why *pace* makes such a difference between the film and the book?
10. The writer maintains that films are the product of the chemistry of a film crew. In your own words, describe how the following people could affect the outcome of the final movie:
  - the actors
  - the music composer
  - the director

## Comprehension Exercise 2

Kirk thinks he's 'pure street'. But is he?

It's clear Kirk Mead sees himself as a cool individual – not spoilt, not rich, just pure street. After all, he does pretty much as he pleases, doesn't have a job, listens to a band called the Urban Slackers and spends his hours – sometimes the early hours of the morning – roller blading around the alleyways of the neighbourhood.

But Marty disagrees. She thinks that Kirk is a spoilt rich kid who doesn't know the meaning of 'street'.

So who is right?

In Marty's view, Kirk is definitely richer than most kids. She sees his expensive Italian roller blades on the very first night he comes to hospital. She sees his parents and his friends and the way they are dressed. She criticises Kirk for having things too easy. For example, she is contemptuous when Kirk accepts the nurse's offer to push him in a wheelchair to chemotherapy. Isn't that proof that he's a kid who's used to having things easy?

Marty even criticises Kirk's taste in music. The Urban Slackers? In her opinion just another noisy group of rich white kids who probably got given a drumkit for Christmas. That doesn't sound very 'street' to her.

And later, when Kirk spends a fortune on a cab fair – enough to last Marty and a friend at least a week on the streets – she is disgusted. Money doesn't seem to mean much to Kirk because he's always had money.

But let's not write Kirk off. Doesn't he tough it out when the gang attacks him? Doesn't he sneer at the wealth and opulence displayed by Tory's parents at Casa Meridien? And doesn't he borrow and steal just as freely as Marty would, when the two of them get to the island?

Somewhere in the middle, perhaps, is the truth. Marty certainly makes Kirk question his own values and see his own luck in being born to a wealthy North Shore family. After all, he *chose* not to have a job that summer. Isn't that the choice of a privileged person? And let's not forget that Kirk's family, although not as wealthy as Tory's, can still afford a powerful outboard boat.

If Kirk isn't 'pure street' to begin with, perhaps he learns what 'street' really means. He begins to criticise the sound of his favourite group, the Urban Slackers. At Marty's club – a far cry from the pop music and popcorn of Skate World – Kirk hears what Marty describes as the real sound of the street: the thumping, pumping 'Yo Brotha – Yo Sista!' chant played by the spider-like DJ.

He doesn't reject these things. But does that make him street, or does he retain the middle-class values he was brought up with? Perhaps the answer is made clear when Kirk describes Marty's friends in a similar way to his description of the drink driving victims at hospital, right at the start of the novel. Perhaps that's why he still doesn't, in the end, really understand why Marty stayed with her violent 'friends'.

### QUESTIONS:

1. In your words, describe what is meant by 'street' in this essay.
2. Kirk thinks he's pure street and has some evidence to back up his case. List three things that make him – in his eyes – 'pure street'.
3. List four things that hurt his street image in Marty's eyes.
4. True or false? Discuss the following statements:
  - Kirk likes the Urban Slackers throughout the novel.
  - Kirk's family is quite poor.
  - Marty's club has, in its way, a similar feel to Skate World.
  - Kirk would never steal.
  - Kirk always likes to do things the easy way.
5. Write down two things towards which Kirk's attitude changes throughout the novel.
6. Write down one thing towards which Kirk's attitude remains unchanged throughout the novel.
7. Does Marty see 'street' as being anything to do with ethnic background? What phrase of hers demonstrates this?
8. List five things which you consider to be definitely 'street' and five things that are definitely 'not street'. Explain why your second list fails the 'street' test.

# Class Simulation Game: The In-Depth TV Talk Show

**OBJECTIVE:** Questioning skills and articulation skills, understanding of issues

## WHAT TO DO:

Set up four chairs in the front of the class, three chairs in a row and another separated from the others.

One student is the interviewer on a TV talk show, and sits in the separate chair. Three other students are on the programme and are going to be interviewed.

The interviewer has a ten minute slot in which to conduct the discussion, and after that another interviewer is chosen with three new interviewees.

The aim is for the interviewees to imagine themselves in one of the situations nominated below. They must answer clearly and articulately. They must use their imagination to become the person involved.

The rest of the class is going to score them out of 10. How believable were they? How interesting were they?

They are going to score the interviewer out of 10 for the quality of questions. How interesting? How clear?

(Clue: by asking What, Where, How, Why, Who and When questions you will get better, more specific answers.)

In each round of 10 minutes, all three interviewees will be people who (choose one):

- have cancer and have 6 months to live.
- once had cancer –but now have beaten it. Their lives have been changed.
- work in a children’s hospital with accident victims as well as the terminally ill.
- were once street kids.
- *are* street kids.
- are the parents of street kids.
- are members of a band – all of whom met in hospital.
- are friends of Kirk’s and are asked about how Kirk changed after he got cancer.

(You may wish to mix and match different interviewees if you prefer.)

## QUESTIONS:

What makes an interesting question?

What makes a good interviewer?

What makes an interesting answer?

What makes a good interviewee?

# Suggestions for further activities and projects

1. You are the Big Cs. Write a song they might sing, and perform it in front of the class.
2. Find a song you think links in with *The Whole of the Moon*, and make a music video about life in a cancer ward. Act the characters from the book – Owen playing chess, Marty gliding the corridors, Kirk in chemo etc. and use them as clips.
3. You are Marty. Before you die, you find the address of your father in Queensland. Write him a letter.
4. Write and act a scene in the future, when Kirk comes back to Starship to visit Stevie. How is Stevie? Who else is in the ward now? What happens?
5. Write up and act the funeral for Owen or Marty.
6. Think of what it would be like to be in hospital with cancer. What would you like to see on the wall in the lounge, gym or ward? Ask patients and staff at your local cancer ward and make a poster or work of art to present to them.
7. Is there such a charity as the Make A Wish Foundation? Anything similar? Find out what you can about them, who and how many people they’ve helped, and how they choose their recipients. Make up your own mind about their worthiness and explain what you think and why.
8. Find out what you can about child and teen cancer in New Zealand. Is it increasing, decreasing, getting more or less funding, government or private? What organisations or charities are there and what do they do? Write up your findings and present them to the class.