

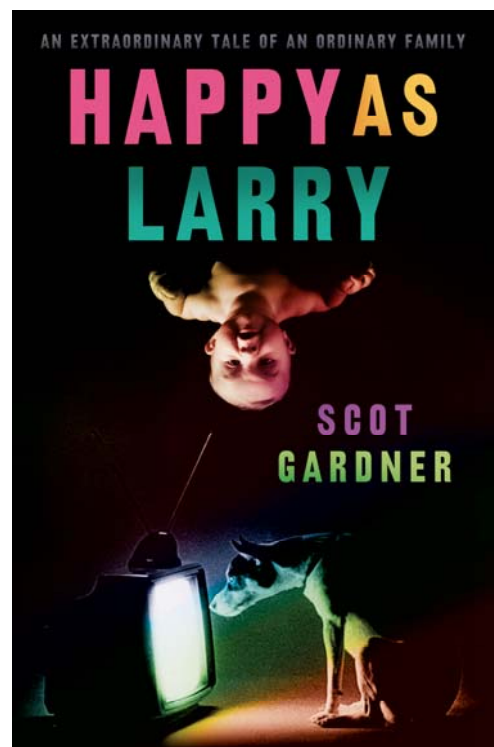
Teachers' Notes
by
Fran Knight

Happy as Larry
by
Scot Gardner

ISBN 978 1 74175 481 0
Recommended for ages 16-18+ yrs

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INTRODUCTION

SYNOPSIS

This is the story of the Rainbows, an ordinary suburban family who, nevertheless, are extraordinary in their quiet way. The novel spans almost two decades of Mal, Denise and Larry's lives, their personal losses and triumphs, played out against a backdrop of an ever-changing and complex world.

To understand Larry's family, Scot Gardner takes us back to before Larry is born: to his parents and their families, to their marriage and need for a child, suffering seven miscarriages before Larry is born. Denise and Mal are very ordinary: a family paying off a mortgage, proud of their son and finding their place within their neighbourhood. Mal has rejected the brutality of his own childhood, making sure that Larry's upbringing is as happy and content as it can be. He does not interfere, but supports the boy in what he does, offering suggestions and guidance.

Denise is a woman hovering on the edge of depression. She cannot cope with the brutality of life around her, finding cause for tears whenever the television news shows some awful event around the world. She finds life difficult, cannot make friends and dotes on her only child, her son, Larry.

It is the ordinariness of the events which make up their life together that Scot Gardner captures effortlessly. We see their attempts to build a home together, their birthdays and celebrations. Mal's postman activities go from walking the route to a bicycle then motorcycle while Larry's passage from infancy to school, making friends, and learning new things is observed. All of this makes up the fabric of their lives and as we watch them survive all the hurdles thrown at them, we empathise with their struggles as our own. Many events will parallel the readers' experiences, none more so than the bullying nature of the child who lives across the road. Clinton has a pivotal role in the breakdown of the fabric of Larry's life, which eventually has a shattering effect on Larry's family and the neighbourhood.

All the while, Scot Gardner brings in the outside world, reflecting the changes in their lives. Some of these changes cause great consternation amongst the trio; while others are just a backdrop to their existence. Each chapter begins with a TV bite, a sentence or two bringing us up to date with the happenings of the world beyond the family, bringing another dimension into their lives.

This novel is most unusual. On many levels, it is worlds apart from stories usually published for this age group. It does not follow that accepted teenage angst route, nor does it make the adults and particularly the parents, minor characters against whom the main character plays out his life. This is not a clichéd novel about a change or significant issue within the family, but rather a progressively developing set of circumstances which culminate in a death. We see Larry from birth to about 15, his parents' care, his neighbours' hidden stories and deaths, his friends' stories and his own development set against his parents' worries and concerns.

At times wry and at other times quietly humorous or nostalgic, the writing engages readers instantly with the characters. The very short chapters, deceptively breezy, move the story along at a good pace. The vivid and memorable vignettes of the life of the family, and original similes, metaphors and analogies that link the story's many strands, produce a winning combination.

IN THE CLASSROOM

This is an excellent novel for class study – one that teachers and students will enjoy. Lower to middle secondary students will revel in Larry's life, watching him grow up, comparing their own development with his, looking at him as if through a microscope – a frog on a slab, to be studied and discussed in depth.

I have divided these notes into 4 areas:

- I Cast of characters: Larry, major characters, minor characters
- II Themes: Darkness and Light (Families, Depression and Death)
Hope and Pain (Friendships and Bullying)
Miracles of an Everyday Nature (Birth, Life and Families)
- III The author & his craft: Scot Gardner
The Craft of Writing
- IV Extension work: Literature circle

and because the chapters of *Happy as Larry* are not numbered and are often very short, I have provided a chapter outline in the appendix.

These notes give an opportunity for the students to develop their own responses to the novel and Larry, as well as work together with a group, the class and the teacher, to better survey the neighbourhood which Scot Gardner presents to us. I hope they will then understand what a great achievement this novel is.

I CAST OF CHARACTERS

The cast of characters in *Happy as Larry* is made up of a group of suburbanites, wide ranging in their habits, family set-ups and daily lives. The novel is an astute observation of a small neighbourhood, its inhabitants, its happenings and its influences on a growing boy.

Each group of people is introduced in several of the early chapters. Some chapters are devoted almost entirely to them as they appear within the novel, and then come back only briefly until they are needed for the story. Others appear more often because they are more relevant to Larry's life.

All of the characters have a part in Larry's life: some good, some bad, some happy, some painful – but all relevant and important, showing that Larry is a 'sum of all his parts'.

1 LARRY: MORE THAN THE SUM OF HIS PARTS

The whole is more than the sum of its parts is a quote from Aristotle (Ancient Greek Philosopher, Scientist and Physician, 384 BC-322 BC)

The novel gives the reader a bird's eye view of what makes Larry, Larry. What influences him, what people and events have an impact upon him, how he grows, what values he develops from what he sees around him, and that special thing which makes him Larry. He is more than the sum of all his parts. He is more than the influences and pressures, the sights and sounds he sees, the influence of his parents. Everything he sees and hears, feels and thinks, moulds him, but something is there before he is born to help him along the way, making him into the person he is at the end of the story.

Discuss with the class the influences upon them. Ask them to question how they developed the ideas, values, viewpoints and beliefs they have now.

Task

As you read, note the major influences on Larry’s life
 Look at the impact of Family
 Friends
 Neighbours
 Extended family
 School
 Church

Discuss with your group:
 What people and events have exerted an influence over Larry?
 What things in his life have had an impact upon him?
 How has he developed the ideas that he has?
 How would you define him?
 Is he just a replica of his parents or is he more than the ‘sum of all his parts’?

2 MAIN CHARACTERS

As your students read the novel, ask them to note places where they learn of the main characters, the Rainbow family, and Clinton.

Task

Students can complete the following table (it will need enlarging) as they read

Cast	Characteristics	Role in the story	Pages
Denise Rainbow			
Malcolm Rainbow			
Vince			
Clinton			

They can then share their findings in groups.

Each student can take one character to study in detail, noting places as they read where more is learnt about that character.

Task

Develop a character outline at the end of the reading to present to the class

Character outline for	Physical Characteristics	Childhood and parentage	Motivations
Behaviour	Telling incidents	Friends & Family	Interests

3 BACKGROUND CAST

As your students read the novel, ask them to note places where they learn more about one or other of the minor characters. They can complete the following worksheet as they read, then get into groups after they have finished the novel to share their findings.

Character	Characteristics	Role in the story	Pages
Muriel			
Hooper family			
Jemma			
Guillermo			

4 AS YOU READ: STUDENT WORKSHEET ON CHARACTERISATION

Choose one character to study in detail			
As you read...	Think about and discuss...	Writing	Extension
Note the chapters which you think show significant traits of your chosen character	What is there about these chapters which reveal characteristics of that person?	Take the point of view of another character, and rewrite that chapter from this person's perspective	Find some pictures in a magazine which closely resembles the character you have chosen. Attach them to your written work
Note the chapters in which a significant incident occurs which reveals something about the character	What is there about the incident which reveals your character's personality?	What are the results for your character?	How did this incident impact upon your character?
Note the chapters in which other people talk about your character	How do other people view your character?	Is this view justified?	If you were able to step into the novel, what would you say to someone about your character?
Note the chapters where the author builds up an image of your character	How does Scot Gardner develop your character in these chapters?	List the words the author uses to differentiate your character from the others	List the images the author uses to show your person's characteristics
Note the chapters where your instincts cry out for something different to happen	Choose one chapter where an event such as this happens	What could have your character done to make a difference?	Does this event have an effect on the rest of the novel? How would your changes have made a difference?
Note the chapters where something funny happens	Much humour depends upon someone else's misfortune. Is this so for your chapter?	Why is this incident humorous?	Is this a happy story?

5 FOR THE MORE ADVENTUROUS

Scot Gardner talks about a 'cast' of characters and the 'budget' for his story in his introduction, making the reader think immediately of a film.

Discuss with the class

- What aspects of the novel remind you of a film?
- Does the novel have filmic qualities?
- Can the novel be compared with any film you have seen?
 - If this book were to be made into a film, where might it be filmed? Who might star as the characters? What problems might be encountered filming the story?
 - Many films show a character at different ages, but this is usually confined to two. Brainstorm some films which show a character at different stages of his or her life. What might the difficulties be in filming such a story? How did the producers overcome these difficulties?

Tasks

- Have the class draw up an outline for a film of the book (synopsis, cast list, settings, pace etc)
- Some students may like to create a storyboard for one or two of the scenes
- Watch the Stephen King film, *Stand by me* (1986) as a comparison, asking the students to take note of the pace, setting, characters and storyline
 - What links are there between *Stand by me*, and *Happy as Larry*?

II THEMES

A life of darkness and light, hope and pain, and miracles of an everyday nature

This is how Scot Gardner introduces his story. The themes, Darkness and Light (Families, Depression and Death); Hope and Pain (Friendships and Bullying); and Miracles of an Everyday Nature (Families, Life and Birth) figure prominently throughout the story of Larry's childhood and development.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT: FAMILIES

Introduction: There are many differing types of families represented in this novel, from Larry's family (2 adults and one child) to that of the Hollands' (two parents and 4 children), Clinton's (possibly only a mum and one child) and the Hammersmiths' (with 2 older adults and a missing daughter). Each is quite different from the other, and Gardner hints at various underlying tensions in many of them. Each family has degrees of darkness and light, certainly hope and pain, and miracles of an everyday nature.

Task

As you read the novel, use this chart to make notes on the various families.

Family name	Members of the family	Areas of darkness and light within the family	
		Darkness	Light

Task

After reading the novel, share your information with your group or the class. Others may have noticed more information which can be added to the list.

Group Work

Divide the class into groups to work with a family in the novel.

- On butcher's paper, electronic whiteboard or laptop, each group is to brainstorm all the words to describe that family. The list of words will form the basis of a description of that family, written in response to the following instructions:

You are new to the neighbourhood. Write the description offered by your neighbor of one of the families in the street.

Some in your group may want to take on the task of writing from a completely different point of view, describing the same family but from the perspective of a different neighbour.

Class Work: Families

List on the electronic whiteboard the different types of families presented and access the link to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. On this link, students can check the number of different family types in Australia today. There they will find the number of each type of family, and statistics which can be tabulated.

GO TO: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4442.0>

TASK: Access the ABS website to answer the following questions:

- What does the ABS define as a 'family'?
- How many families live in Australia?
- What about the rest of Australia's population?
- Look closely at the tabulated summary, entitled, *Household Families and Person, 2006-7*. On the right hand side is a list of all the different types of families represented in Australia. Turn this into a graph.
- Where do the families of *Happy as Larry* fit?

DARKNESS AND LIGHT: DEPRESSION

Introduction: One area of darkness throughout Larry's life is his mother's depression

Many websites deal with depression and offer assistance to those who suffer from this disease, and their families and friends. This task box will direct your students to aspects of the novel which deal with depression and websites which offer assistance.

Task

Chart Denise's depression and research where she could have gained support.

How do we know that Denise shows sign of depression early in the novel?	What effect does this have on the family?
How does her depression manifest itself?	How is Vince helpful to her? And why?
What does she do to help herself?	What avenues of support are there in her community?
http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx? is the web address for Beyond Blue, the national initiative for depression in Australia? What help could Denise have received from this website?	The website <i>beyondblue</i> encourages people to share their stories. Write up Denise's story as if you are going to place it on this website.
Browse the <i>beyondblue</i> website. Check out the different forms of depression listed there. Is there anyone else in the novel who may be suffering from depression? Justify your answer.	List the ways in which some of the characters begin to contain their depression in this novel.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT: DEATH

Introduction: One theme which appears throughout the novel is Death. Larry develops an idea of death throughout his young life by watching animals die: first the fish on the jetty, then his own goldfish, his rabbit and then his dog. Larry also experiences near-death experiences several times in his short life.

Task

Death of an animal

Reread one of the chapters which deals with the death of an animal. ('Unlidded eye' pp 38-41, 'Blood soaks through' pp 195-210)

- Explain what Larry's attitude to the animal is, and how it affects him.
- When Gilligan is killed, the affect on Larry is overwhelming. Why is this death so different from the others he has experienced?
- Do these animal deaths prepare the reader for what is coming?

Task

Miscarriage

Reread the chapter where the Rainbow family lose their baby ('Fantastic brother' pp 145-153.)

- How does the miscarriage affect each of the family members?
- What happens as a result for each family member?
- What did the baby mean to Larry's parents?

Task

Death of Vince

Reread the chapter 'Knelt beside it' (pp 236-242)

- Explain how Larry is affected by Vince's death
- Why is his death ironic?
- What happens as a result of his death for the Rainbow family and Larry in particular, as well as Muriel and Hannah?

Task

Death of Jemma

reread from 'Fierce-eyed' to the end of the book (pp 267-291)

- Write a newspaper account of the crime. Imagine you are a reporter and so must get the information – when, where, how, why and who – into the shortest possible paragraph for the evening news.
- What are the implications of Jemma's death for her family, Larry, Guillermo, Clinton and the Rainbow family?
- What would have happened to Clinton? (See if you can find a legal expert who can explain what the law is with crimes such as this.)

Task

Larry's near death experiences

reread the chapters 'Moments before sleep', 'Beach' and 'Stick'.

- How does Scot Gardner explain the experiences Larry has?
- How does Larry explain them to himself?
- What do these experiences do for Larry?
- How do you think his mother might have reacted had she known?

DARKNESS AND LIGHT: SUMMARY ACTIVITIES

Discuss with the class why Scot Gardner has such a range of families within his story.

- Many stories concentrate on one sort of family, or wholly on the people within one family, so what does Scot Gardner achieve by including a number of different families?
- Recall another story studied by the class to compare the number of families represented.
- Ask the class to read other books by Scot Gardner to see how many families are represented.
- Ask the group to select an incident which involves one of the families in *Happy as Larry* and present it to the class or their group as a small play, play reading or presentation. Discuss what the incident reveals about the family.

Within the families presented is a range of darkness and pain (Denise has depression; Mal needs help with drinking; Vince needs help with reading and walking; Muriel needs help combating her anger at her child running away; Guillermo is constricted by what he saw in Bolivia, and so on)

- Ask each group to look at the instances of darkness and pain within the family they are looking at. What is Larry's involvement with these areas of darkness and pain around him?

There is much Light in these families. Larry's family, in particular is no different from many families in doing things together, sharing experiences, and celebrating events.

- Select one incident in the novel which reflects a time of Light (eg. Larry and his father go fishing, Larry's parents tell him they are to have another baby, Larry develops a friendship with Guillermo, etc) and send an email from Larry to a friend, explaining the incident and what he feels about it.

HOPE AND PAIN: FRIENDSHIPS

Friends. Larry has many friends: Clinton, Guillermo, Vince, Jemma. Friendships bring dark and light, hope and pain. Larry's friends are no different and one of the strengths of this novel is that the friendships are shown in all their inconsistencies and variations. Larry's relationships with his friends are never smooth, they have arguments and times apart.

Task

Look closely at the relationship between Larry and one of his friends. Reread one of the chapters where this friendship figures highly.

Chapter:	Characters:	What happens:
List the words which show the positive and negative sides of this relationship:	How do the characters interact?	Look closely at what happens in the chapter you have chosen.
What imagery does Scot Gardner use to parallel the relationship?	Look at a list of your friends. Do you have the range of friends that Larry has? Why is his friendship group so diverse?	Is there a world event introducing this chapter? Does it in any way parallel what happens in the chapter?
	Are there instances of hope and/or pain in this chapter?	Look for examples of cruelty and bullying in your chapter

HOPE AND PAIN: BULLYING

Larry is bullied by his neighbor, Clinton. The things which Clinton does escalate throughout the novel, culminating in a death. Discuss the issue of bullying with your class. (Be aware that some of your students may be bullied, and this could cause some consternation. Check with your student counsellor and librarian for advice and support.)

Task

Trace the increasingly violent bullying which Clinton engages in and its effect on Larry and his family.

Chapter	Clinton's behaviour	Larry's response	Effect on family
Grass			
Brandy			
Santa			
Blood soaks through			
Fraying fabric			
etc			

Look at what Larry's father tries to teach his son in dealing with Clinton. Reread these chapters and discuss within your group the success of Mal's help. (Particularly chapter 15 'Trying to fly'.) Complete the following table:

Chapter	What advice is offered to Larry?	How helpful do you think this is?	What could have been done?

- Where can people go if they are being bullied?
- Discuss the avenues of support within the group and the class
- Research the website, **Bullying, No Way!** <http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/> for clues about standing up to bullying. Click on the section 'For Students' and browse the area to see what you can find out. On the Quick Tour, the site makes it clear that bullying is about Power.
- How is Clinton exerting power over Larry?
- What could Larry, his parents, Vince or the Hollands have done about Clinton? (Check the website.)

MIRACLES OF AN EVERYDAY NATURE

There are many other events in the novel which are miracles of an everyday nature. Many could happen many times to many people, but are wonderful, positive and give happiness. List some of them with the class.

Task

Select one of the miracles from the list below or the list you have developed. Write a short story around that miracle.

Birth: Larry's birth is a miracle to his parents, Mal and Denise

Reunion: Vince's daughter gets in touch with her father

Film Club: Denise joins a group to watch films, and makes friends

Guillermo: Larry becomes friends with Guillermo

III THE AUTHOR AND HIS CRAFT

SCOT GARDNER

Scot Gardner is a full time writer, living in rural Victoria. In a past life he worked in schools with students with little inclination to attend. He has worked with young men and Aboriginal youth, disadvantaged and high-risk teens. As a counsellor, he has had first hand experience from which he's drawn heavily to create some of the memorable characters within his books. Scot has been involved in creating programs for these young people, and as a result has been heavily booked by schools and other institutions where an informed, energetic speaker is needed.

For more information about this author, websites such as http://www.bookedout.com.au/authors/Scot_Gardner/index.html are invaluable. Booked Out is a booking agency for authors and so gives a detailed but concise blurb about his achievements.

Websites of the publishers, Pan Macmillan <http://www.panmacmillan.com.au> and Allen and Unwin <http://www.allenandunwin.com/> also have author information and links to other sites.

But the best website is that of Scot Gardner himself, and is candid and open <http://www.scotgardner.com/> This website gives:

- information about Scot and his life and family, his writing experiences, and tips on how to write
- information about all of his books
- a blog
- upcoming books
- teachers notes

Task

After reading **Happy as Larry**, set your students one of the following tasks to do with the author and his writing. Use the above websites.

Draw up a list of questions you would like to ask Scot Gardner that relate to the novel you have just read.	Check out Scot Gardner's blog to see what other questions people have asked about this novel.	Are there clues in his childhood that may have given rise to some parts of this novel?
Can you find signs that the novel was written by a teacher?	What in Scot Gardner's background as a teacher is relevant to this novel?	If you are able to, watch the Youtube trailer for Happy as Larry , noting the events which take place.
Click onto Scot Gardner's blog. Read through one of the entries, and tell someone else in your class about it.	Read the blurbs of his other novels, and make a brief list of those that may have some connections with <i>Happy as Larry</i> .	Choose one of the events on the Youtube trailer and research it further. Find out enough about it to present to your class. How many in your class can remember or know about this event?
Go to Rants, and read one of them. What sort of person do you think Scot Gardner is?	Compile a list of words to describe Scot Gardner after reading one of his Rants.	Read the Rant called 'Chopping wood and carrying water', to list what Scot Gardner says about writing.

THE CRAFT OF WRITING

The title says it all! Succinct, memorable, funny and an idiom! But how does he do it?

- a. Plot Development
- b. Humour
- c. Idioms
- d. Brevity, the soul of wit
- e. For the more adventurous

A PLOT DEVELOPMENT

Task

As the class reads, have them do one of the following tasks to share at the end of their time reading.

Jot down the main ages for Larry, (eg. birth, school, high school) and jot down points which show what development has occurred for him at each.	Jot down what happens in the street – new neighbours, changes of address, births, deaths and marriages etc.	Chart the changes in the lives of the Rainbow family.
Chart the course of Clinton's behaviour.	Show the developing relationship with Guillermo.	List, in chronological order, the happenings in the world outside their home.
Show the changes in Mal's working life.	Chart the changes in Larry's friendship group.	Relate the changes in Mal and Larry's Sundays.
Can you graph these sets of changes?	Reread one life-changing chapter, and look closely at how the chapter develops to a climax.	See if there are instances of the outside world impinging on the street.

B HUMOUR

Scot Gardner uses a range of styles of humour. Have the class use a dictionary to find a meaning for each of these. They could add an example from the novel.

Satire	
Irony	
Situation comedy(sit com)	
Sarcasm	
Ridicule	
Mockery	
Picaresque humour	
Spoof	
Slapstick	
Farce	

Discuss with the class : Are there any other forms of humour that could be added? Some of these are used to put people down, or are used by those who wish to be funny at another's expense.

Task

One chapter which reflects many of these types of humour, is *A peg and a penis* (pp 59-62). Reread the chapter.

- What forms of humour are obvious to you?
- Share your findings with a group.
- Storyboard this chapter (or another of your choosing).
- Discuss with your group how this chapter might be staged or filmed for TV.

C IDIOMS

The title is an idiom that uses the structure of a simile. Check that the class knows what an idiom and a simile are. Ask them to provide examples of their own.

Idioms are a direct route to everyday life: they are often not at all literary; instead, they reflect the oral tradition, with all its mysteries. (Who the heck is Larry? Why is he happy?)

Task

'Happy as Larry' is an idiom.

- What does it mean? Find out where this expression came from. A search of Google may help, or the library may have a dictionary of sayings.

- Write out the meaning of 'happy as Larry'. Check how many words you took to explain what it means. Can you see why idioms like this are useful?
- Find some other idioms based on the structure of a simile that are in daily use (eg. 'large as a whale', 'slow as a tortoise', 'cunning as a fox', 'dry as a bone', 'right as rain'). Share the ones found amongst the class. List them on the whiteboard. How many are to do with animals? How many make sense because they really are a simile and how many are just idioms that use the structure of a simile?

D BREVITY, THE SOUL OF WIT (HAMLET)

This Shakespearian quote alludes to the fact that humour and indeed stories, cannot be wordy. Scot Gardner's work is divided into small bites; chapters are brief and get to the point readily. It is amazing that we can read the sum of one person's life in 200 pages; we feel we know him well, and get many laughs along the way, too.

Task

Reread one chapter and look closely at how the author achieves humour, character development and storyline in a few pages

Chapter :		
Two characters are:		
What do you learn of them?		
What world event occurs at the start of the chapter? Does this have a part in what happens in the chapter?		
What funny incidents occur in the chapter?		
How is the storyline progressed?		
Can you find examples of where the author has been brief or concise?		

E FOR THE MORE ADVENTUROUS

On his blog, Scot Gardner says: *So I'm making up for it now using stories and language that is real and from the mouths of young people to put a spin of realism in my work. Writing is good and clean. Sometimes it's bloody hard. Sometimes I can't keep up with my thoughts. When it all comes together it feels like jumping off a really high ledge into water and the buzz can last days. When it turns to shit, I wish I never gave up life modelling.*

- **Debate/discuss:** Do you think Scot Gardner should have stuck with life modelling?

On his blog Scot Gardner advises writers to 'Write brutal, write brief'.

- **Debate/discuss:** Does Scot Gardner follow his own advice?

Some of the class may have read some of Scot Gardner's other books. Ask those that have to give a synopsis of the novel they read, with emphasis on the brutal writing contained in it. Some of Scot Gardner's writing has been criticised as 'over the top' by some people

- **Debate/discuss.** Does Scot Gardner offend some of his teenage readers or just the adults who buy the books?

Names are always significant in novels. Many authors spend a lot of time researching the meanings of names before putting a name to a character.

- **Task:** List the names in the book. Do you think they have any significance? What about the surname Rainbow? Why might Scot Gardner have chosen this name?

IV EXTENSION WORK: LITERATURE CIRCLE

While reading the novel, or once the novel is finished, insight may be gained by doing a Literature Circle with a group of novels which can be discussed alongside *Happy as Larry*, or used for comparison.

Allow your class to form groups of 4-6 students and after a show and tell session, chose one novel their group will read. Following is a selection of recent novels which may well compare with *Happy as Larry*.

Title	Author	Brief blurb
<i>Anonymity Jones</i>	James Roy	Precarious position at home when mother's boyfriend moves in.
<i>Headgames</i>	Casey Lever	A group of teens play a game where truth is always told, undermining the lives of several of the group.
<i>Hostage</i>	Karen Tayleur	A day in the life of a girl, kidnapped from the chemist by a boy who lost control while demanding to be served.
<i>Liar</i>	Justine Larbelestier	A fascinating look at a story of a werewolf where the narrator is unreliable.
<i>Lord Sunday</i>	Garth Nix	Fantasy, the last in a series, with a swashbuckling plot.
<i>Somebody's crying</i>	Maureen McCarthy	Crime fiction for teens with a young girl killed in a country town where a number of people have returned after being away.
<i>The reformed vampires support group</i>	Catherine Jinks	The best vampire book ever with a group of people trying hard not to fang.
<i>Genesis</i>	Bernard Beckett	What does it mean to be human? A story which has the reader guessing all the way to the end.
<i>The ant colony</i>	Jenny Valentine	A boy flees to London, trying to lose himself after an incident on his family farm.

ABOUT THE WRITERS

SCOT GARDNER

Scot wasn't born reading and writing; in fact he left school in year eleven to undertake an apprenticeship in gardening with the local council. He has worked as a waiter, masseur, delivery truck driver, home dad, counsellor and musician.

Scot's first fiction for young readers, *One Dead Seagull*, was published after he attended a writing camp and writing conferences with John Marsden. Kids and critics loved the honesty and authenticity of Wayne Armond, a voice developed and inspired through years of counselling and group work with disaffected youth. Scot's many books since include *Burning Eddy*, shortlisted for a CBCA award and for the NSW Premier's literary award, and *The Legend of Kevin the Plumber*, a CBCA Notable Book.

Scot's hobbies include pushbikes and power kites, kayaking and taking photos of the world around him. He is licensed to handle explosives and venomous snakes and got an 8 out of 10 from Red Symons on *Hey, Hey, It's Saturday's* 'Red Faces'. He lives with his wife and children, two dogs and some chooks in the bush in Eastern Victoria and spends half the year writing and half the year on the road talking to mostly young people about his books and the craft of writing.

FRAN KNIGHT

Fran is a semi-retired teacher librarian who loves to read adolescent fiction. She has read and reviewed children's books since the 1970's, for magazines such as *Magpies* and *Fiction Focus*, as well as newsletters for English teachers, history teachers and teacher librarians around Australia. Her love of reading has led her to talk at conferences about her reading and enthusing kids to read. She has written teacher notes for many books published in Australia, and her articles about using books in the classroom are often found in *The Literature Base*, and sometimes in *Magpies*, *ACCESS* and *Viewpoint*.

In 2005, her book, *Ngadjuri: Aboriginal peoples of South Australia's Mid North Region* was published, following 20 years of research into this group. Pledger Consulting has published five books which reflect Fran's reading. Each of the five contains lists of books she has read, placed under subject headings which can be used in schools to help students find novels that reflect their interests.

Now living in the City of Adelaide, where a short walk takes her to a range of libraries and bookshops, Fran continues to answer queries about what books to give students; talks to students about good books to read; writes teacher notes, articles and reviews; volunteers at several schools where there is no teacher librarian; and reads.

Fran's contribution to teacher librarianship has been recognised with the South Australian Teacher Librarian of the Year awarded in 2005, and Honorary Life Membership of SLASA (School Library Association of South Australia) in 2007.

APPENDIX: CHAPTER OUTLINES IN *HAPPY AS LARRY*

Chapter	Heading	Pages	Story
	Introduction	1	
1	Smile	3-6	Larry is born
2	Toes	7-12	More about mum. Incident at the shopping centre
3	Fishing	13-15	Mal and Larry begin a family tradition
4	Birthday	16-17	Larry is one
5	Clean white teeth	18-22	Their house burns down
6	Your head is not a hammer	23-28	A new house means neighbours. Vince appears
7	Grass	29-37	Clinton appears. Larry learns to fish
8	Unlidded eye	38-41	Larry has a rabbit – for a while
9	Stop	42-47	School fete
10	Earthquake	48-50	An earthquake in Japan affects each family member differently
11	Wet bottom	51-58	A family picnic sees them holding off kangaroos
12	A peg and a penis	59-62	Larry, Mal and Denise cavort naked in the rain
13	Satisfying bruises	63-65	Larry and Mal do some floor surfing
14	Gilligan	66-70	Clinton plays with a lighter in the shed
15	Trying to fly	71-78	Gilligan's lead is thrown onto the power line. Mal tries to teach Larry to stand up for himself
16	Drama queen	79-82	More about Denise and her friendship with Anita
17	Moment before sleep	83-87	Larry falls into the sea, and knows what it is like to drown
18	Magic finger	88-94	Larry burns his hand
19	A tooth in the hand	95-103	Rainbow family out bike riding, Larry loses a tooth
20	Crack	104-108	Millennium bug: Larry and Clinton leave a doll on the road
21	Good eyes	109-118	Larry is 10, Vince does his clown act, Clinton tries fire eating with dire results
22	In time	119-124	Clinton comes home, shows how he treats animals
23	Beach	125-130	Larry is buried in the sand. Begins to run with Vince
24	A hand to hold	131-144	A new friend, Guillermo, Mum has news
25	Fantastic brother	145-153	Miscarriage
26	Brandy	154-160	Clinton plays brandy with a golf ball
27	Santa	161-173	Clinton spoils Christmas for Larry
28	Hair	174-180	Tim finds his Game Boy in Larry's backpack
29	Secrets	181-184	Hollands end their friendship with the Rainbows
30	A gentle man	185-188	Vince and Denise talk
31	The coming war	189-194	Larry shows Jemma his cave
32	Blood soaks through	195-210	Gilligan is killed
33	Rope	211-216	Vince tells Larry about his daughter, Hannah
34	Fire poker	217-225	Mal talks about his mother
35	Skewered toadfish	226-231	Jemma is growing apart
36	I'll be blowed	232-235	Larry rings his grandmother
37	Knelt beside it	236-242	Vince dies
38	All fall down	243-254	Mal in hospital
39	Fraying fabric	255-261	Guillermo is beaten up
40	Wedged like art	262-266	Larry tells his father that his mother had stopped drinking when he was born
41	Fierce-eyed	267-272	Larry invades Clinton's house. Jemma is missing
42	Junk	273-274	Larry searches for Jemma
43	Steam train	275-278	Hollands and Rainbows search for Jemma
44	Bound	279-281	Accident on the road
45	Roadkill	282-286	All is revealed
46	Stick	287-288	Larry is revived
47	Goodbye	289-291	Survival of the Rainbow family

