

## VCE English: Unit 4, Outcome 1: Reading and Comparing Texts

### Close Comparison 3

*Tracks*: **'We walked in silence... how to be part of it.'** (pp. 173-174)

*Charlie's Country*: **Charlie and Pete go hunting (2: Buffalo hunting)**

Davidson confides at one point that a significant motivation for the trip was to spend time with Aboriginal people. During a crucial part of the journey she travels with an Aboriginal man named Eddie. The relationship they form contrasts interestingly with her relationship with Rick: 'It's amazing how well one can communicate with a fellow being when there are no words to get in the way. Our greatest communication lay in the sheer joy in our surroundings.' (p. 173).

Davidson typically reveals the more rebarbative aspects of her personality when she encounters tourists, journalists or macho Australian males, but with Eddie she discovers an ideal travelling companion. In Eddie's presence, she learns to acquire a greater sense of ease in her new environment, a personal calm and rhythm of movement that is increasingly in tune with her surroundings. In this particular scene she and Eddie search for pituri, a tobacco-like plant used for chewing: 'Eddie picked the plants he wanted while I watched.' Davidson remarks on how her 'vague uneasiness' was 'soothed by the meditative way in which we searched for them' (p. 173). The scene depicts a relationship between a novice in the region and an original inhabitant of the land. Davidson makes clear the profound disparity in their knowledge and expertise, acknowledges her foreign presence, but more importantly recognises the power and depth of knowledge possessed by Indigenous people of the region. Davidson places herself in the position of student of an Indigenous elder who has inherited a timeless understanding of the land. It is a moment of profound deferral to the authentic human presence that has occupied the land for millennia, a presence that she registers as making her own journey pale into insignificance. Her respect for Aboriginal people and their history and knowledge is a hallmark of her writing; when with Eddie she takes the view that she is merely passing through this landscape while his presence and that of his people is enduring.

Charlie is not as hostile as Robyn towards those he finds disagreeable. His interactions with the community doctors and police are mostly affable. This is exemplified in his rambling interactions with Luke. But, like Robyn, Charlie holds some relationships close, such as with Old Lulu and Pete. Pete is a steady presence in Charlie's life. Their giggling belies their mutual respect. When they go hunting—a scene that takes place off camera—they support each other ('beautiful shot!') and work together to secure a healthier food supply than what is on offer in town. The importance of Charlie and Pete's relationship is evident when Pete visits the Darwin jail to see his friend. There, he can barely look at Charlie, so marked is his loss of identity.

The key difference in these relationships is that Robyn is an outsider, while Pete and Charlie are equals, with shared experience (even if they take divergent paths in the film). Robyn's relationship with Eddie serves a purpose for her: it fulfils her desire to improve her understanding of Aboriginal culture.

1. Compare how views are presented in each text of solitude as opposed to community.
2. Compare the roles of supporting characters in the two texts.