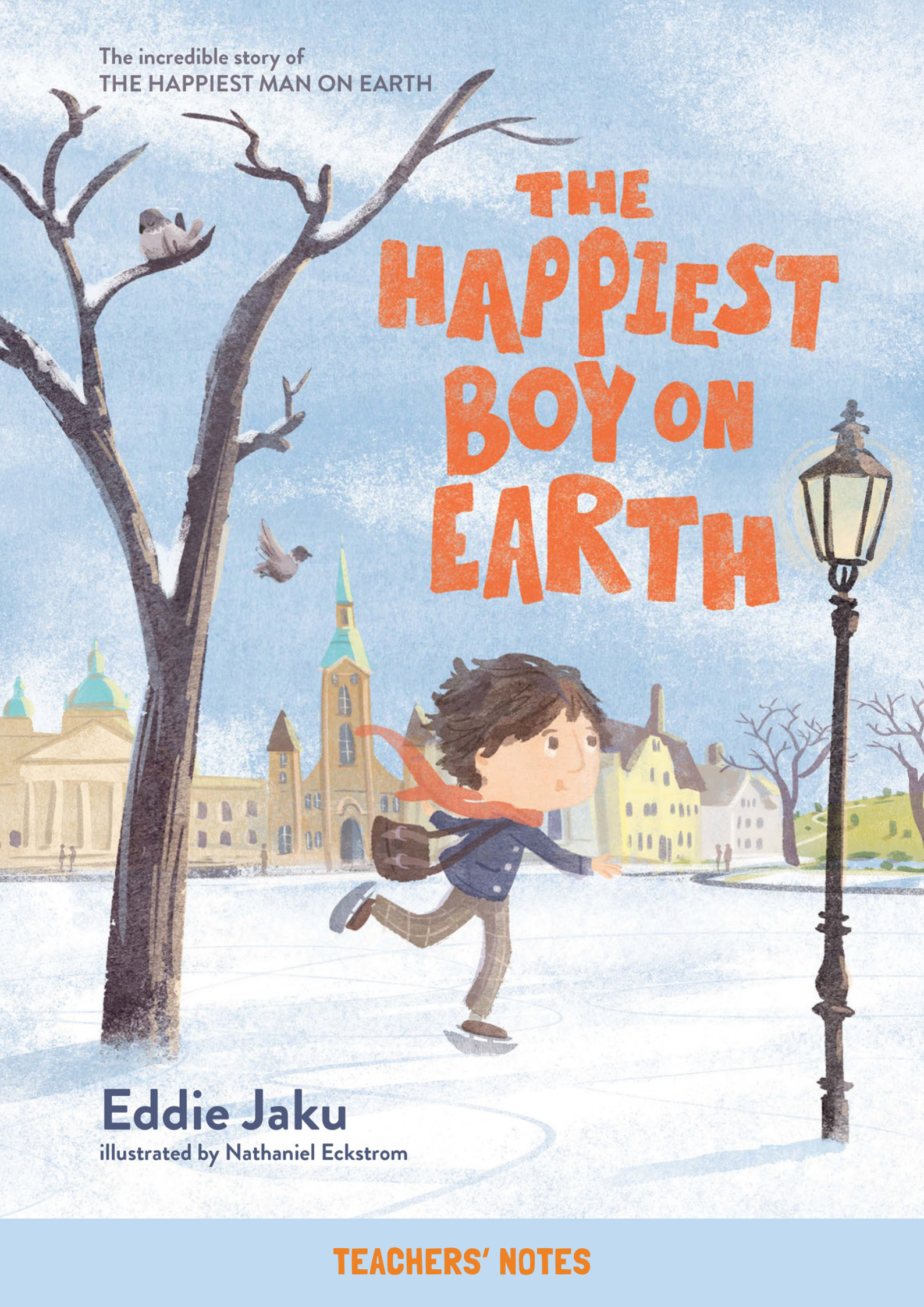


The incredible story of
THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH

THE HAPPIEST BOY ON EARTH

A colorful illustration of a young boy with dark, curly hair, wearing a blue jacket, brown pants, and a red scarf, ice skating on a frozen pond. He has a brown satchel slung over his shoulder. The background shows a snowy town square with a large, leafless tree on the left, a street lamp on the right, and various buildings, including a church with a tall steeple. The sky is a soft, pale blue with a few birds flying.

Eddie Jaku

illustrated by Nathaniel Eckstrom

TEACHERS' NOTES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Learn about and discuss World War Two
- Learn about and discuss the importance of storytelling, empathy and acceptance
- Compare the use of words and illustrations in storytelling
- Research, reflect on and discuss the historical event of *Kristallnacht*
- Create and compare positive and negative word lists and associations
- Use an illustration as the inspiration for creative writing
- Learn about personal history through the use of timelines

ABOUT THE STORY

This story for younger readers (8+ years) is based on the international bestseller: *The Happiest Man on Earth* by Eddie Jaku.

In *The Happiest Boy on Earth*, 101-year-old Eddie tells his curious great-grandchildren about his life.

Eddie lived with his family in the beautiful city of Leipzig in Germany. It was a happy time filled with joy and celebration, but everything changed when Adolf Hitler came to power.

Eddie's father sent him away to boarding school so he could continue his education, but when Eddie was 18, he was arrested and taken to a concentration camp. Eddie used the skills he had learned to keep himself alive. Eddie met Kurt, another young German Jew in the camp, and the two become great friends.

When Eddie was finally freed, he moved to Australia to begin a new life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eddie Jaku OAM, was born Abraham Jakubowicz in Germany in 1920. During World War Two, Eddie was imprisoned in Buchenwald and Auschwitz concentration camps. In 1945, he was sent on a death march but escaped. Finally, he was rescued by Allied soldiers. In 1950 he moved with family to Australia where he lived for the rest of his life. Eddie was married to Flore for 75 years. They have two sons, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Eddie volunteered at the Sydney Jewish Museum when it opened in 1992. The Sydney Jewish Museum is a repository of people's stories who, like Eddie, endured the horrors of the Holocaust. It holds this history so that people remember these stories and learn from them.

At 100 years old, Eddie published his first book, the bestselling *The Happiest Man on Earth*.

Eddie passed away in October 2021, aged 101.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Nathaniel Eckstrom is one of Australia's leading children's illustrators.

He has illustrated over twenty titles, including Meg McKinlay's *DUCK*, *The Dress-Up Box* by Patrick Guest and *The Hole Idea* by Beth and Paul MacDonald.

A number of Nathaniel's books have been shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year Awards.

BEFORE YOU READ THE STORY

As a class, consider the front cover illustration: what do you think the boy is doing, how is he feeling and what do you think his life might be like? Read the back cover quote: what do you think this means and how might it relate to the blurb and Eddie's story?

Contextual activity: Eddie's story takes place during World War Two.

- i. In small groups, discuss and then write down what you already know about World War Two.
- ii. Research World War Two. Write down facts you have learned from your research. What are your thoughts about World War Two?
- iii. Discuss responses as a class.

QUESTIONS

1. Read the dedication on page 5. Who is Eddie dedicating this story to, and why do you think this is?
2. Compare the illustrations on pages 12–13 and 19–21. How do they show us that *'things were changing'*?
3. How do the illustrations on pages 38–39 tell the reader that the people are angry and upset?
4. What are some of the acts of love and kindness shown in the Eddie's story?
5. What helped Eddie survive the concentration camp?
6. Even though Eddie experienced great sadness and hardship in his life, why do you think he considers himself the happiest boy, then the happiest man, on Earth?
7. The words and illustrations can sometimes tell us different things about a story. How do the words and illustrations in this book work together to tell Eddie's story?
8. What is your favourite part of the book and why?
9. Why do you think Eddie shares his story? What benefits do you think Eddie gets from telling his story? What benefits do we, as readers, get from reading Eddie's story?
10. At the end of the book, Eddie says, *'Now it's time for you to make the world a better place.'* How will you do this? How will you make the world a better place?
11. What is important about Eddie's story? What message does it convey to the reader?
12. Imagine Eddie has just finished telling you his story. What questions would you like to ask Eddie?

ACTIVITIES

1. Using the illustrations on pages 6 and 7 as examples, draw yourself growing up at different ages. For instance, begin with a drawing of yourself at your current age, then at 20, 50 and 101 years old.
2. Eddie tells us about his life growing up in Leipzig. Write a brief paragraph describing the city you live in and the things you enjoy doing there.
3. Research *Kristallnacht*: the Night of Broken Glass. Write down some facts you discover about this historical event. Reflect on what you have learned. What are your thoughts about *Kristallnacht*? Do you think it was easy or hard for people to watch what was happening and do nothing? Why or why not? Discuss responses as a class.
4. Choose a passage from the book and draw your own illustration.
5. List 10 words or phrases Eddie uses to describe his life with his family in Leipzig. Now list 10 words or phrases Eddie uses to describe his life in the concentration camp. Compare and discuss these two lists as a class.
6. Imagine a conversation between Eddie and his friend Kurt. The conversation can be about anything; their time in the camp, their families, favourite foods, what they want to do when they're older. Write down this imaginary conversation as a dialogue.
7. Choose an image from the book and write your own creative story about it.
8. Draw Eddie's story in a timeline, marking the important events. Then draw your own timeline – past, present and future, marking the important events.