

# Teaching Resource: The Ferret

## Sergeant Eric Batelor, DCM, and Bar

**Title:** The Ferret

**Author:** Tom O'Connor

**Publisher:** John Douglas Publishing Ltd

**Resource Prepared For:** Secondary Teachers (Years 11-13)

### ***Training Plan Focus***

Understanding how to effectively use *The Ferret* as a teaching resource in English, History, and Social Studies contexts.

### ***Overview***

*The Ferret* is a gritty, compelling account of an undercover police officer's experiences infiltrating organised crime syndicates in New Zealand. The narrative offers insights into the psychological, moral, and ethical toll of covert operations, as well as a unique perspective on justice, identity, and loyalty. This training will equip educators to integrate *The Ferret* into the classroom in ways that foster critical thinking, empathy, and cross-curricular understanding.

### ***Training Objectives***

By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

Understand the key themes, structure, and narrative style of *The Ferret*.

Design effective learning activities and assessments aligned with the NCEA curriculum.

Facilitate student engagement with real-world social justice and ethical issues.

Employ discussion strategies to unpack complex ideas such as dual identity, criminal justice, and the mental health impacts of undercover work.

Incorporate cross-curricular links (e.g. Legal Studies, Psychology, and Media Literacy).

## ***Training Agenda***

### **Session Time Focus Area**

Welcome and Introduction (10min)

Overview of training goals and teacher resource scope

Context and Background 20 min

Author background, relevance of the text, historical and cultural context

Text Analysis 40 min

Themes, character study, narrative voice, genre features

Curriculum Connections 30 min

Links to NCEA Achievement Standards in English, History, and Social Studies

Resource Walkthrough 30 min

Review of pre-prepared unit plans, lesson activities, and formative assessments

Discussion Strategies 20 min

Approaches for handling sensitive content and mature themes

Assessment Planning 20 min

Designing internal assessments using the text

Q&A and Reflection 10 min

Open Discussion and Feedback

## ***Key Themes to Explore***

Undercover identity and personal cost

Justice and morality in law enforcement

Crime, power structures, and social influence

Masculinity and vulnerability

Truth, deception, and consequences

## ***Suggested NCEA Links***

### **Level 2 | 3 English**

**AS91101 / AS91472:** Construct and deliver a crafted and controlled oral text

**AS91106 / AS91475:** Form personal responses to independently read texts

**AS91107 / AS91476:** Analyse aspects of visual and/or oral text(s)

## Level 2 | 3 Social Studies

Explore how people define and seek justice

Examine the role of institutions in shaping outcomes for individuals

## Level 2 | 3 History

Investigate contemporary New Zealand history through case studies and oral histories

## **Teaching Approaches**

**Close Reading:** Unpack O'Connor's use of tone, language, and pacing to build tension.

**Role Play & Debate:** Students assume roles (e.g. undercover officer, crime boss, police psychologist) to explore ethical dilemmas.

**Creative Writing:** Students write diary entries or reflective pieces from the perspective of undercover characters.

**Media Comparison:** Compare portrayals of undercover work in *The Ferret* with television and film representations.

**Wellbeing Discussions:** Opportunities to discuss the impact of stress, secrecy, and trauma on mental health.

## **Training Materials**

Annotated copy of *The Ferret*

PowerPoint presentation

Unit and lesson plans (editable)

Student activity sheets and assessment templates

Links to NCEA standards

Support guidelines for handling sensitive content

## **Follow-up Support**

Online resource hub for teachers using *The Ferret*

Optional school visits or webinars for in-depth planning