

THE WORSENER'S TALE

ROBERT EDESON

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this third Richard Worse adventure, centuries-old secrets and modern-day danger collide in a heart-pumping race to uncover the truth. Richard Worse, an intelligence analyst, is pulled into the investigation of a murder in the same parish where an unspeakable evil occurred 600 years before. As Worse and his partner, Emily Misgivingston, delve deeper into the case, they uncover a shocking secret that has been hidden for centuries. Lovers of historical mysteries and witty, surprising crimes will enjoy this book, which is perfect for fans of Dan Brown or Agatha Christie.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Edeson was born in Perth, Western Australia, and educated at Christ Church Grammar School, the University of Western Australia and the University of Cambridge. He has been a consultant anaesthetist and researcher, publishing in the neuroscience, biophysical and mathematical literatures. He is the author of the Richard Worse trilogy: *The Weaver Fish* (winner of the T.A.G. Hungerford Award – now the City of Fremantle Hungerford Award – in 2012), *Bad to Worse* and *The Worsener's Tale*. These three marvellous mysteries may be read as standalone titles.

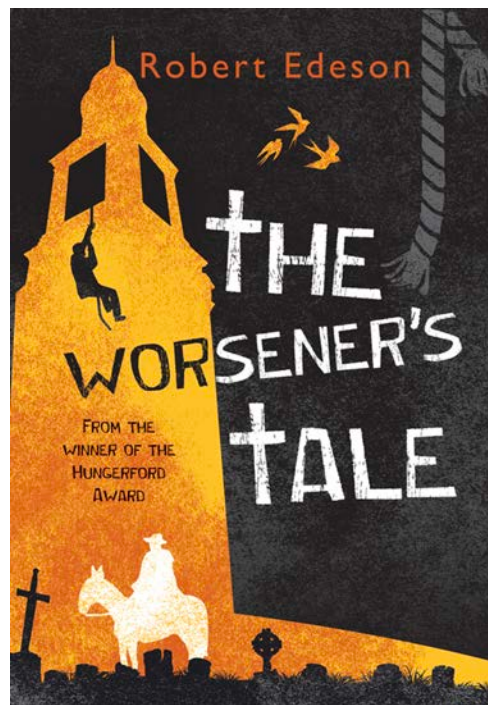
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is this novel described as 'ulterior fiction'? What other genre labels would you apply?
2. How would you describe the character of Richard Worse in terms of:

Psychology	Masculinity
Emotionality	Ruthlessness
Kindness	Intelligence
Self-insight	Cynicism
3. Worse shares with Canon Simony that 'criminal investigation is ten per cent looking and ninety per cent thinking' (p. 312). Does the unfolding story of events in St Eke's, and Worse's progress in uncovering the criminal activity, accord with this statement?
4. Explain the Index entries:

insulin	light speed
Monet, C	Tarkovsky, A
continuity equation	Barbara, Barbara
catenary	cricket match
5. What might explain the following names?

Gaisen	Gowse	Whencely
Andrieus	Leche	Hebe
Lusco	Sucher	Rence
Atlo Ixas	Kohl	
Oscini	St Alonzo's	
6. What are Mill's Canons (p. 207), and what is their relevance to Worse?
7. Can you identify the real 'Nymphéa' (p. 328)? Discuss your reasoning.
8. Worse seems to be quite familiar with the Scriptures. Is he religious?



Above: An image of the elusive author, at a stretch

9. '... the defining state of mind of the pilgrim was never certainty, but anxiety' (p. 138). Debate this assertion, remembering to situate your perspective in mediaeval times.
10. Explain the author's choice of the phrase 'determined resistance' in Endnote 1, Chapter 4.
11. 'Undone day' (pp. 6, 62, 117, 185 and 325) is a recurring motif. What does it mean?
12. Discuss Worse's 'alchemy of fiction' as a controlled titration of deception into credulity (p. 60). Does it describe the present work?
13. Who was the Vicar of Bray (p. 169)?
14. What is Buridan's donkey (p. 169)? How does it relate to the 'staircase dilemma' (Chapter 34)?
15. In the Restoration comedy *The Grammarian's Daughter*, the heroine, Ursula, argues at one point: 'Father dear, there is no reason to suppose that casual syntax, between consenting adults, endangers family values.' How true do you think this is? (Read the play to find out.)
16. Then later, to Reginald, she whispers 'Don't tell Father, for I cannot but see the greater purpose of language to be seduction'. Could this be true? (Read it again to be sure.)
17. Forget seduction: In the modern era, Edvard Tøssentern has observed 'Before all else, language is memory' (p. 32). Critique this idea, using examples and thought experiments. Differentiate the personal from the social.
18. 'I've always thought that the subversive functions to refine our polity' (p. 168). Does Worse have a point?
19. What is the importance of each of the following characters to the story?

Millie	Nicholas
X X Grimly	Angela
George Borrell	
20. 'Shift, pay, forget: the moral economy in society at large' (p. 232). How true is this?
21. 'The act evidences the belief, not necessarily what is real' (p. 107). Discuss examples from your own observations in life.
22. Speaking of the *Malison*, Worse refers to 'those who suffer a belief in it' (p. 306). How true is it in general, that we 'suffer' our beliefs? What does it mean, philosophically?
23. 'These days, it is authors who imperil humanity, and also preserve it' (p. 55). How seriously should we take Worse here?
24. Do you see aspects of yourself, or others whom you know, in any of the fictional characters?
25. You are workshoping *The Worsener's Tale* into an adapted screenplay.
 - What are the novel's foremost filmic elements?
 - What scenes would you omit?
 - What characters would you omit?
 - What characters might you develop further than the novel takes them?
 - How would you accommodate both mediaeval and modern stories in the one film?
 - How would you portray on screen Worse's interior world?
 - Would you change the ending?
 - Which contemporary actor would you cast as Worse? As Millie? As Simony? As the Archdeacon?



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