

The Wilderpeople Survival Guide

Junior Cycle English Revision



**WARNING:
CONTAINS
SPOILERS,
HAIKUS, AND
SKUXX LIFE**

POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

SECRET STUDY NOTES

THE BUDDY MOVIE FORMULA: TWO OUTCASTS AGAINST THE WORLD

! DON'T SHARE

① Create a character:
Ricky Baker,
troubled urban
youth.



② Create their total opposite: Uncle Hec,
gruff "Man Alone"
outdoorsman.

③ Drop them in a setting: The
dense, dangerous
New Zealand
bush.

④ Add a conflict:
State bureaucracy
(Paula) hunting
them down.



! DON'T SHARE

Exam Tip: Taika Waititi uses this formula to prove that you don't need to be similar to be family.

Aunt Bella: The Emotional Anchor



*Provides warmth and
a sense of home.*

*"Have some breakfast
then you can run away."*



*Provides softness
to a hardened loner.*

The Catalyst: Her death sets the plot in motion. Without her physical presence, her emotional gravity forces Ricky and Hec to rely on each other.

Ricky Baker: From "Skuxx Life" to Wilderness Survivor

Starting Point (City)

Trait: Defiant, troubled foster child.

Quote: "I didn't choose the skuxx life, the skuxx life chose me."

Flaw: "Ricky Town, Population Ricky" - Isolated by his own defense mechanisms.



Ending Point (The Bush)

Trait: Capable, empathetic, and resilient.

Key Action: Choosing to run away into the bush marks his active pursuit of freedom over the foster system.


Synthesis: Waititi makes Ricky likeable by giving him a tough exterior but a vulnerable core—he just wants to belong.

Uncle Hec: From 'Man Alone' to Father Figure



Starting Point (Farm)

- **Trait:** Gruff, explosive, quintessential 'Barry Crump' Kiwi loner.
- **Mindset:** Isolated from society, wants to be left alone.



Ending Point (The Bush)

- **Trait:** Self-sacrificing and deeply bonded.
- **Key Exam Moment:** Leaving the note to 'follow the majestic beast.' Waititi uses this to show Hec is finally willing to sacrifice his own safety for Ricky.

Synthesis: Hec's outward hostility hides his deep need for connection, much like Ricky's hip-hop persona.

Two Sides of the Same Coin: Comparison Matrix

	Ricky Baker	Uncle Hec
Initial State	Urban, pop-culture obsessed youth.	Rural, traditional outdoorsman.
Coping Mechanism	Running away, adopting a fake 'tough' persona.	Isolation, physical anger.
Shared Trauma	Deep mistrust of society/government. United by the sudden grief of losing Bella.	
Key Turning Point	Running to the bush to take control of his fate.	Taking the fall for Ricky during the manhunt.

Conclusion: They are opposites in style, but identical in their need for a family.

The Setting as a Symbol: The Bush

Danger & Fear

Ricky initially sees the bush as a trap where he could get lost forever. Society views it as a chaotic wasteland.

Freedom & Refuge

Quote: "Trees. Birds. Rivers. Sky."

The bush strips away urban rules. It represents disconnection from bureaucracy and a place where Ricky and Hec can truly be themselves.

The Obstacle: Institutional Bureaucracy

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WANTED FOR BUREAUCRACY



Paula

Cold, unfeeling, obsessed with her job. Represents the rigid state care system.

Mantra: "No Child Left Behind."

Andy

Comical foil, stereotyping the police as bumbling and ineffectual.



Thematic Connection: Waititi uses Paula to highlight how blind bureaucracy harms vulnerable individuals. She is 'caged' by her institutional role, while Ricky is 'released' by the bush.

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Key Exam Moments: Your Essay Ammo

Discuss: Blending modern action with Maori cultural heritage ('Poi E').



1. The Establishing Shot

Discuss: Cinematography and the awe of the natural world.



2. Catching the Wild Boar

Discuss: Humor as a bonding mechanism in the face of adversity.



3. The Climactic Chase

Discuss: Blending modern action with Maori cultural heritage ('Poi E').

Decoding Symbolism: Comfort and Expression



The Hot Water Bottle

First given by Bella, instructing Ricky to put it under his shirt.

Meaning: Symbolizes maternal warmth, safety, and the lingering presence of familial care even in the harsh wilderness.



The Haikus

*"Me and this fat kid
We ran we ate and read books
And it was the best."*

Meaning: Haikus are a recurring motif. They provide a safe outlet for characters who struggle with traditional emotional communication to express vulnerability.

Decoding Symbolism: Identity and Connection



Urban Clothing vs. The Suit

- **Start:** Bright red hoodie = Urban upbringing, disconnection from nature.
- **End:** Ricky in a suit = Reintegration into society, but worn with independence, showing he won't be solely defined by his past.

Tupac the Dog

- **Loyalty:** Sustains them through hardship.
- **Cultural Link:** Named after the rapper, but originally honoring an Inca king. Waititi subtly connects two minority groups (Maori and Inca) to critique government interference.



The Director's Toolkit: Camera & Edit

The Montage

Quick cuts combining newspaper articles, Buzz Bars, and armed defenders.

Effect: Condenses time and visually links Ricky and Hec's growing bond to their rising infamy.

The Time-Lapse / 720° Pan

A complex long take where the camera pans around the action twice.

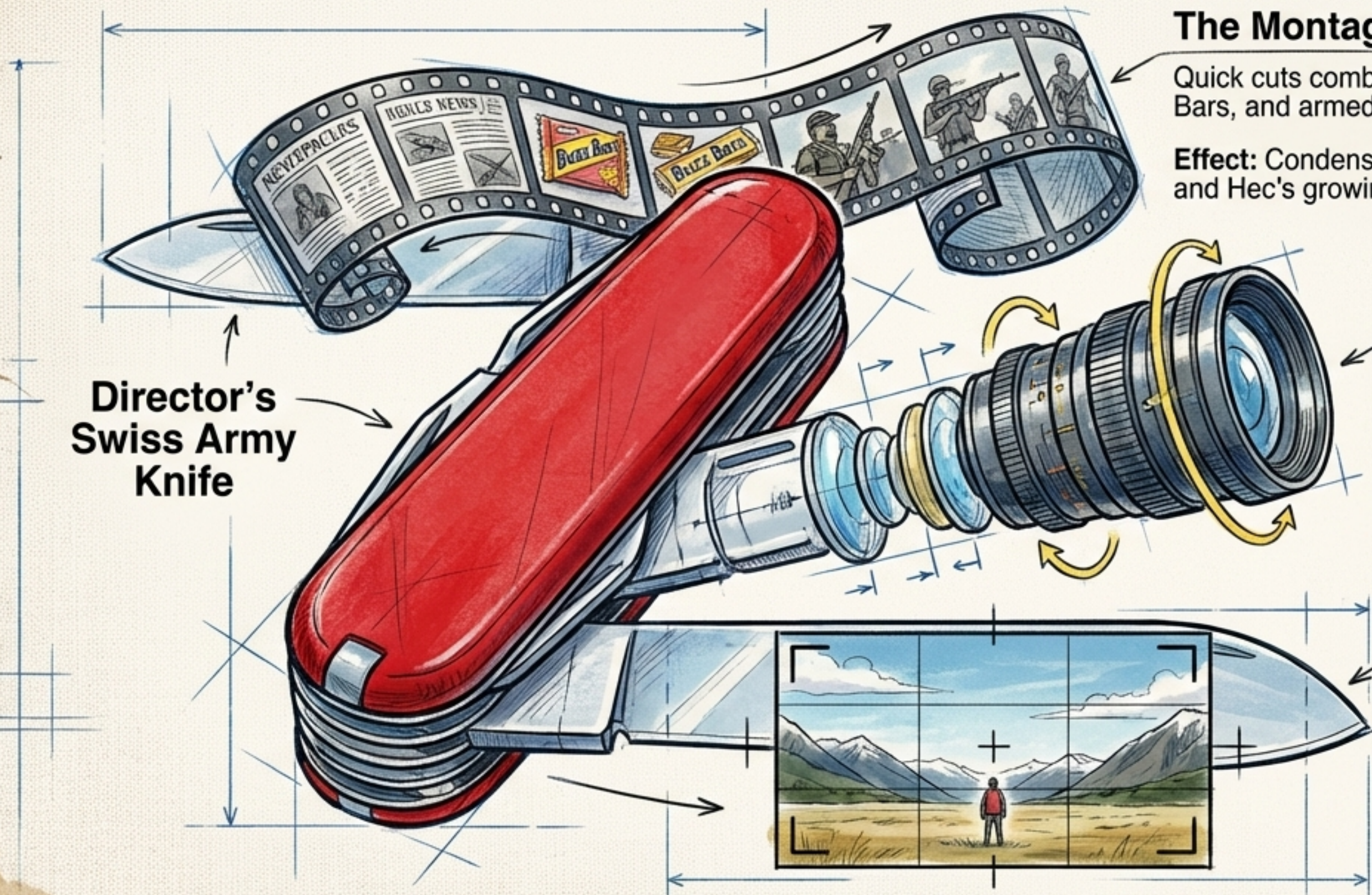
Effect: Creates a visceral, visually striking sense of passing time in the wilderness.

Wide Framing

Symmetrical, central shots with lots of headroom.

Effect: Creates Waititi's signature quirky feel while capturing the vastness of New Zealand.

Director's
Swiss Army
Knife



The Director's Toolkit: Sound & Tone



Irreverent Humour

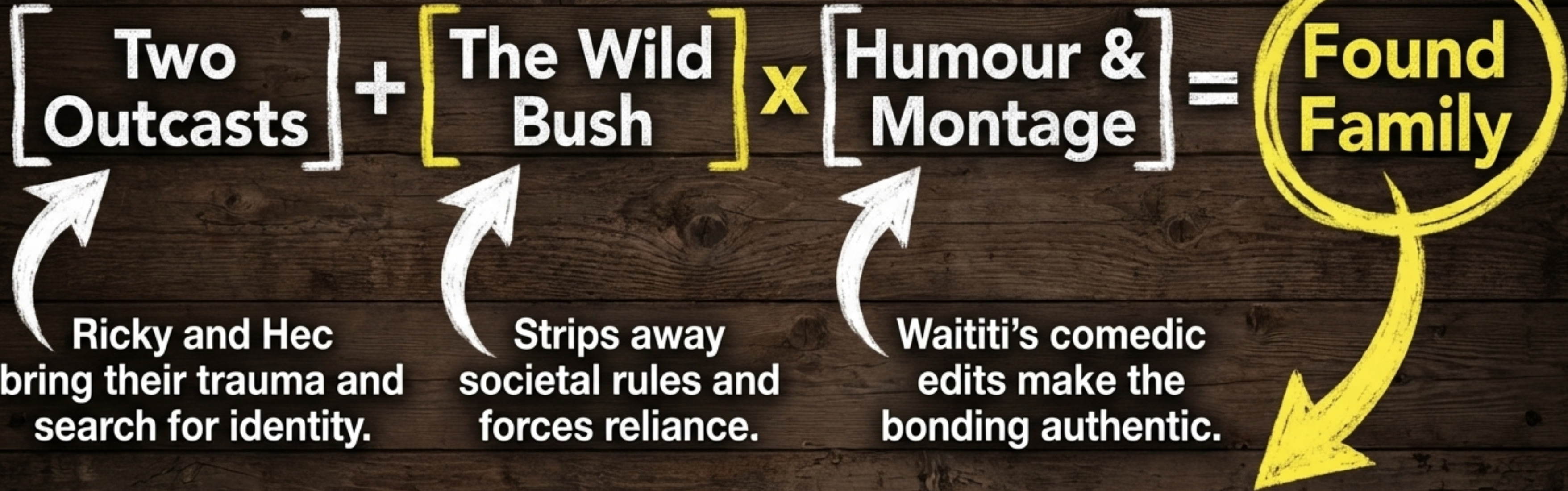
- Witty banter and deadpan one-liners.
- **Key Exam Point:** Humor isn't just for laughs; it is used thematically to balance serious moments of grief and shows laughter as a tool for surviving adversity.

Soundscape & Music

- Waititi uses an eclectic mix of choral chants, cheesy pop, and retro synths.
- **Key Exam Point:** Blending modern hip-hop with traditional Maori music ('Poi E') creates a unique cultural identity.



The Synthesis: Tying it All Together



The Theme: Family is not defined by blood or state assignment, but by shared survival, trust, and love.

The Wilderpeople Exam Checklist

- Link characters to themes:** Never just describe Ricky; explain how he represents the theme of Identity and Belonging.
- Name the techniques:** Don't just say "time passes." Write: "Waititi uses a montage sequence to demonstrate their growing bond."
- Contrast the duo:** Use the "Two Sides of the Same Coin" matrix to compare Ricky's skuxx life persona with Hec's reality.
- Reference specific symbols:** Drop in the hot water bottle, Tupac the dog, or Ricky's red hoodie to show deep film knowledge.

Stay skuxx, and good luck on the exam.