

STUDENT WORKSHEET 5

EDDIE MABO FACT SHEET

WHO WAS EDDIE MABO?

Full Name:	Edward Koiki Mabo
Born:	29 June 1936, Mer (Murray Island), Torres Strait
Died:	21 January 1992
Occupation:	Indigenous land rights activist, community leader and educator
Legacy:	Led the landmark Mabo Case, which overturned terra nullius and recognised Indigenous land rights in Australia.

WHAT WAS THE MABO CASE?

Background: Before 1992, Australian law was based on the idea of terra nullius (Latin for “land belonging to no one”), meaning that when the British arrived, they claimed Australia as if it were empty.

Legal Challenge: In the 1980s, Eddie Mabo and others from the Meriam people of the Torres Strait took their land claim to the High Court of Australia.

The Decision (1992): The High Court ruled in favour of Mabo, recognising that Indigenous Australians had traditional ownership of the land before British colonisation.

Impact: This led to the Native Title Act 1993, allowing First Nations peoples to legally claim traditional lands.

CHALLENGES EDDIE MABO FACED

- ✓ **Racism & Discrimination:** As an Indigenous activist, he faced opposition from the government and legal system.
- ✓ **Legal Battle:** The case took over 10 years, and he sadly passed away before the final decision.
- ✓ **Personal Cost:** Mabo’s activism put pressure on his family and career, but he remained determined.

CONNECTION BETWEEN EDDIE MABO AND GOLDIE WILSON

Representation & Leadership: Eddie Mabo fought real-life legal battles to secure recognition for Indigenous rights and land ownership, while Goldie Wilson symbolises the aspiration for underrepresented groups to achieve leadership and challenge social norms.

Challenging the Status Quo: Both figures, though one real and one fictional, represent defiance against systems that have historically marginalised certain communities. Mabo’s court case overturned deeply entrenched legal doctrines, and Goldie Wilson’s character challenges the norms of his era by striving for a position of influence.

Inspiring Change: Their stories inspire discussions on the importance of diverse leadership and the transformative power of representation in both historical contexts and contemporary society.