

# RANDOM HOUSE TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

## Dirt Bomb

Fleur Beale

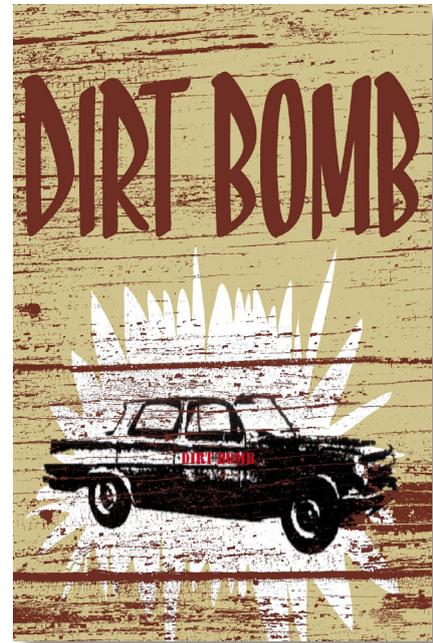
*The multi-talented Fleur Beale returns to Slide the Corner territory with this coming of age story with high revs.*

Jake's life is sweet. He's got no money and doesn't have a mobile, but he's got two best mates: Buzz and Robbie. Buzz is generous and doesn't mind buying stuff for his mates. Jake wouldn't change a thing. But then Robbie has the idea of the century: rescue the old wreck from the ditch and make it into a paddock basher. Yes!

Buzz, however, puts a spanner in the works by saying he's not paying for it all. Even stevens or no deal. Robbie gets a job. Jake refuses. It's just not his style to work for a boss. But he desperately wants to drive that car, and the others are going to go ahead without him. The summer holidays are looming ahead in a desert of boredom and friendlessness. He needs a game plan . . .



Fleur Beale has now had more than 30 books published in New Zealand. She won the 2007 Storylines Gaelyn Gordon Award for a Much-Loved Book with *Slide the Corner* and the Esther Glen Award for *Juno of Taris* in the 2009 LIANZA Children's Book Awards.



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### RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Starter Questions
- Close Reading
- Showing Understanding — Characters And Themes
- Creative Responses
- Essay Topics
- Showing Connections

Price (GST inclusive) and author details are correct at the time of writing but are subject to change without notice. Visit [www.randomhouse.co.nz](http://www.randomhouse.co.nz) for up-to-date information.

# Starter Questions

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1. What does the cover image indicate about the book's content?
2. What does the title suggest to you? Who do you think the book is aimed at?

## Close Reading

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Throughout this novel Fleur Beale uses colloquial language (that is, slang expressions or language that is informal in tone). In the close reading section of these notes students will be asked to explain these terms in their own words. You may like to suggest to the students that they should imagine they have to explain these phrases and expressions to a foreign student of their own age who has recently arrived in this country and for whom English is a second language.

### Chapter One

1. Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase 'Time to hit the road'. (Page 7)
2. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following sentences: 'We stuck together. We were mates.' (Page 7)
3. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'He could buy a car no sweat.' (Page 7)
4. Explain in your own words the meaning of the expression: 'What's biting his butt?' (Page 8)
5. Why does Jake (the narrator of the novel) think that Robbie should be the second rider in a line of three? What does he mean when he says that Robbie 'needed an electronic gizmo of some sort to keep him riding in a straight line'? (Page 9)
6. What does Jake mean when he says 'We so needed our own car. Then we could padlock Robbie into the back seat'? (Page 9)
7. Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase 'A paddock basher'. (Page 10)
8. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'If Buzz was keen, we'd be able to do it, because he was the one who was going to have to bankroll it.' (Page 10)
9. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'The thing was munted, all bashed up.' (Page 10)
10. What does Jake mean when he says, 'It was never good news when Buzz started thinking. He was the kind of guy who shouldn't think.' To what extent do you think Jake is insulting Buzz? (Page 11)
11. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'That's it then. No pad dock basher. A pity. Would've been a blast. Pile on the guilt and watch him cave.' (Page 12)
12. Why do you think Buzz and Robbie are determined that all three of them must share the expenses of fixing the car if they are to go ahead with the project? (Page 12)

### Chapter Two

13. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: "It wouldn't kill him to part with some of his money," I said. "He's gotta be loaded." (Page 13)
14. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Life was sweet the way it was. I sure didn't want to muck it up by chaining myself to a boss. *Yes sir, no sir. Kick my butt sir.*' (Page 14)

15. Why do you think Jake is so unwilling to get a job, despite encouragement from his friends and his family? (Page 14)
16. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Robbie was like a foxy after a rat when he got something stuck in his head.' (Page 14)
17. Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase 'So I'll cadge some dough.' (Page 15)
18. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Which he would have done, except for brainy old Robbie throwing a fecking great spanner in the setup. Traitor. Saying he would get a job too.' (Page 16)
19. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'It was an invitation of sorts, so I tagged along, my brain in overdrive.' (Page 18)
20. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: '*Hell will freeze over first. Pigs will take to the air. Mum will win Lotto.*' Why are italics used for these sentences? (Page 19)
21. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Robbie high-fived me; Buzz yelled, "You beauty!"' (Page 19)

### Chapter Three

22. Explain in your own words the meaning of the expression 'Got a learning curve ahead of you, boys.' (Page 21)
23. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Chill, bros. We'll crank it along with the starter motor.' (Page 23)
24. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: "'Houston, we have lift-off", Robbie said.' (Page 23)
25. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Robbie was off in happy-happy land . . . (Page 25)
26. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Then I cheered up. I had the Brownie points from the starter motor idea.' (Page 24)

27. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Buzz was more clued up. Well, he'd grown up around engines, so fair enough.' (Page 25)
28. Why does Jake feel he has been 'cornered' by his friends' expectations of him? (Page 26)
29. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Life was for cruising through; don't make waves, slide around problems, don't worry. It was a damn good recipe — had carried me along sweetly for nearly seventeen years.' (Page 26)
30. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Gramps rolled in at around six. "What's eating you, young fella?" he asked.' (Page 27)
31. Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase 'Bully for you.' (Page 28)

### Chapter Four

32. Why does Jake think his friends have betrayed him? Do you agree with Jake's view of what being a mate means? (Pages 28 and 29)
33. Explain in your own words the meaning of the expression 'Hell in a bucket!' (Page 29)
34. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Well, that was a new one. A variation of *the cheques in the mail*, but I had to hand it to him. It was about the best brush-off he'd tried yet . . .' (Page 30)
35. Describe the relationship Jake has with his father. (Pages 30–31)
36. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'If he lasted the week at work it would be a bloody miracle.' (Page 32)

### Chapter Five

37. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'What I thought was that Frank was getting a kick out of seeing me put some effort into something.' (Page 37)

38. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: "One seatbelt and one starter motor", he said. "We're smoking." (Page 40)

## Chapter Six

39. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'She was fond of offering choices. Both of them always sucked.' (Page 44)
40. From the evidence provided in this chapter, do you think Jake has a good relationship with his mother? (Pages 43–45)
41. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Could have been a fluke, but we didn't feel like testing it.' (Page 49)
42. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'I didn't tell them that years of trying to get money out of my father had made me an expert bargainer.' (Page 51)

## Chapter Seven

43. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'We were gutted. So near, so much work and the bloody thing wasn't going anywhere.' (Page 53)
44. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: "How can you tell if one's any good if it's in a wrecked car," I said. "Don't think you can", he said. "Luck of the draw." (Page 55)
45. Using the information in this chapter and in the earlier chapters, to what extent do you think Buzz's dad, Frank, encourages the boys? Why do you think he offers the help he does? (Pages 56–60)

## Chapter Eight

46. Describe Jake's relationship with his grandfather. Use the information in this chapter and in earlier chapters to support your opinions.
47. Explain in your own words the meaning

of the following: 'We didn't want our party crashed by boy-racer wannabes.' (Page 65)

48. Explain in your own words the meaning of the expression 'Talk about cow-handed.' (Page 66)
49. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'We kept our mouths shut. No pain, no gain . . .' (Page 66)

## Chapter Nine

50. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'When in doubt, Google for answers.' (Page 68)
51. Why does Jake's grandfather say to him, 'Your dad's a fun person. Charming . . . But he's got no sort of life. You don't have to be the same'? Why do you think Jake reacts to this statement the way he does? (Page 69)

## Chapter Ten

52. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: "Looks like you think I should sell my soul," I said to her. What does Jake's relationship with his cat Speck reveal about his personality? (Pages 76–77)
53. Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase 'Nearly nailed it that time!' (Page 79)
54. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: "Unknot your nightie," Buzz said. (Page 81)
55. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Then Buzz did a run that made me and Robbie think he'd lost his marbles.' (Page 83)
56. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'I was going to look a proper wally if I kept up my granny-driving and never got any better.' (Page 87)
57. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Nothing like a bit of competition to spice things up.' (Page 89)

## Chapter Eleven

58. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'I go home to find Gramps all hyped up and waiting for me.' (Page 90)
59. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'My school shoes were on the floor and polished. They'd probably died of shock.' Do you know what figure of speech is being used in this description of the shoes?
60. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'I was going to make mince on toast out of them or bust a gut trying.' (Page 96)

## Chapter Twelve

61. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'He'll have to scrub up for the wedding too.' (Page 101)
62. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'Again I had the feeling of my mates changing and leaving me in their dust.' (Page 104)

## Chapter Thirteen

63. Explain in your own words the meaning of the expression 'I was caught like a cow in a bail.' (Page 115) What figure of speech is being used in this sentence?
64. Why did Jake hate it when his grandfather 'got all understanding and caring'? (Page 115)
65. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'I wished Buzz would get home. Tail-gating that thought was another one: when Buzz got home I'd have to face up to the milking idea.' (Page 116)

## Chapter Fourteen

66. Explain in your own words the meaning of the expression 'Okay. Keep your hair on.' (Page 121)

## Chapter Fifteen

67. Jake decides to drive the ute when he realises that both Robbie and Buzz are drunk. What other choices could he have made and why do you think he decided to drive, even though he didn't have a license? Was he being a responsible friend? (Page 127)

## Chapter Sixteen

68. Why are the other boys' parents so quick to blame Jake for their own sons' drunken state? (Pages 133–134)
69. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'The Trings thought I was the scum of the earth, and as for Robbie's old man — according to him I was Dracula mixed with the devil.' (Page 134)
70. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'He let the axe fall right across my neck.' (Page 140)
71. Do you think it is fair that Jake had to pay a third of the fine when he was only trying to help his friends? (Page 140)

## Chapter Seventeen

72. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'I had a freaking great hollow where my gut was meant to be.' (Page 143)
73. Explain in your own words the meaning of the expression 'I snatched at a couple of cast-iron excuses.' (Page 144)

## Chapter Eighteen

74. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: '*Yeah yeah. Pile it on.*' (Page 154)
75. Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase 'Come on, man. Where's your mojo?' (Page 156)

## Chapter Nineteen

76. Explain in your own words the meaning of the expression 'And I had a hot date with a cowshed'. (Page 159) Find out the meaning of the term 'irony', if you don't already know it, and explain how this quote is an example of irony.
77. Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase 'You're not just a pretty face'. (Page 161)
78. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'That earned me a scorcher of a look.' (Page 162)

## Chapter Twenty

79. Why does Jake eventually agree to do the milking for Louise? (Page 171)
80. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'The rat race was grabbing me by the throat and slowly choking the life out of me.' (Page 174)

## Chapter Twenty-one

81. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following: 'That might be piling it on

too thick, but hey, if it made her happy.'  
(Page 179)

## Chapter Twenty-two

82. Why do you think the girls want to have a go at driving the car? (Page 183–185)
83. Explain in your own words the meaning of the expression 'Gramps looked right chuffed'. (Page 188)

## Chapter Twenty-three

84. Why does Mr Watene treat the three boys so differently when they all basically want the same opportunity — to do engineering class? (Pages 191–193)
85. Explain in your own words the meaning of the phrase 'One foot wrong and you're out'. (Page 193)

## Chapter Twenty-four

86. Why do you think the boys decide to trash the car?

## Showing Understanding – Characters

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1. Come up with a list of adjectives to describe each of the three boys. Which adjectives appear in all the lists? You can use this information to create a chart or poster for each of the boys.
2. Write a personal profile for each of the boys, explaining their family backgrounds, their physical appearances and their interests.
3. In what ways did each of the three boys change over the course of the novel? What motivated these changes? Who changed the most?
4. Which character do you most identify with and why?
5. Why do you think that the adults in this story seem to be tougher on Jake than they are on Robbie and Buzz? For example, the other boys' parents immediately assume that Jake was responsible for the boys getting drunk, and the engineering teacher is initially reluctant to accept Jake in his class.
6. Write a story explaining how the three boys first became friends. You will need to use your imagination as there are no hints in the novel itself!

## Showing Understanding – Themes

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1. Themes explored in this novel include family relationships, responsibility, determination, self-belief, identity, personal challenges, friendship, trust and overcoming negative attitudes. Choose five themes from this list and find one quote for each of the themes selected (five quotes in all). Explain why you chose those quotes to illustrate the themes. Can you think of any other themes explored in this novel?
2. The need to keep yourself and your friends safe when driving is another important idea explored in this novel. Do you think the boys have a responsible attitude to driving? Refer to specific events in the novel to support your opinion.
3. Do you think that the boys will be safer drivers on the road because they have been able to practise stunt manoeuvres in a paddock or do you think they are more likely to engage in risky driving on the open road?
4. Were you surprised by Jake's decision to join the army? What appealed to him about the army? Do you think he will cope well with the discipline in the army? Explain why or why not.
5. In a 'rite of passage' novel the main character is seen to undergo changes in personality or attitudes in response to events or contact with other people who in some way act as mentors or agents for change. A rite of passage novel usually traces a character's development from childhood to adulthood. To what extent do you think *Dirt Bomb* could be regarded as a rite of passage novel?

## Creative Responses

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1. When Jake starts applying for part-time jobs he does not have a CV or a reference. Write a CV for him. Pretend you are one of his teachers and write a reference for him.
2. Go on the army website and download an application form. Fill it in, imagining you are either Jake or Mary Lou. (Just don't send it!)
3. Imagine that you are Robbie writing a letter to Jayna now that she has returned to England. Alternatively, imagine you are Jayna writing a letter to Robbie, telling him about her life in England.
4. Describe and/or design your dream car. Go into detail about the exterior, interior, engine capacity and special features. You may like to draw a picture of it or build a model.
5. Imagine that you are the policeman who stopped Jake when he was driving his drunk friends home. Write a report of the incident.
6. Design your own front cover and write your own version of the back cover blurb for this novel.
7. Write a review of *Dirt Bomb*, aiming at the readership of your favourite magazine, newspaper or website.

# Essay Topics

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The following essay topics commonly appear in the Level 1 English external exam for Achievement Standard 90849 (1.1): *Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), using supporting evidence.*

1. Describe a character or individual you enjoyed reading about in *Dirt Bomb*. Explain why this character helped you understand an important idea in the text.
2. Describe at least one idea or theme in *Dirt Bomb* that you found interesting. Explain why you found the idea(s) or theme(s) interesting in the text as a whole.
3. Describe at least one important aspect of setting in *Dirt Bomb*. Explain why this aspect helped you understand a key idea or theme in the novel. Setting could include time and/or place.
4. Describe at least one important conflict in *Dirt Bomb*. Explain why the conflict helped you understand the key idea(s) in this novel.
5. Describe at least one key event at the beginning of *Dirt Bomb*. Explain why the event helped you understand a key idea(s) in the novel.

# Significant Connections across Texts

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The following texts could be used in association with *Dirt Bomb* for those students working on Achievement Standard 90852 (1.8): *Explain significant connection(s) across texts, using supporting evidence.*

## Novels

- *Thunder Road* by Ted Dawe
- *Hover Car Race* by Matthew Reilly
- *Slide the Corner* by Fleur Beale
- *Stand By Me* by Stephen King
- *Violence 101* by Dennis Wright
- *What I Was* by Meg Rosoff
- *October Sky* by Joe Johnston
- *Alex* by Tessa Duder
- *Breath* by Tim Winton
- *Jetty Rats* by Phillip Gwynne
- *Confessions of a Liar, Thief and Failed Sex God* by Bill Condon

## Short Stories

- '8 doz beer and nowhere to go' by Richard Hobo
- 'Ka Kite, Bro' by Willie Davis

## Poetry

- *4 V8 Poems* by Peter Olds

## Films

- *Holes*
- *Stand By Me*
- *October Sky*