

RANDOM HOUSE TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

Speed Freak

Fleur Beale

Fifteen-year-old Archie Barrington is the third generation of his family to drive karts competitively. He loves the speed, the roar of the engine, the tactics and the thrill of driving to the limits. He's good, and this is the year he and his dad have decided he'll have a shot at the Challenge series of six races. If he comes out the winner overall, he wins the chance to race in Europe.

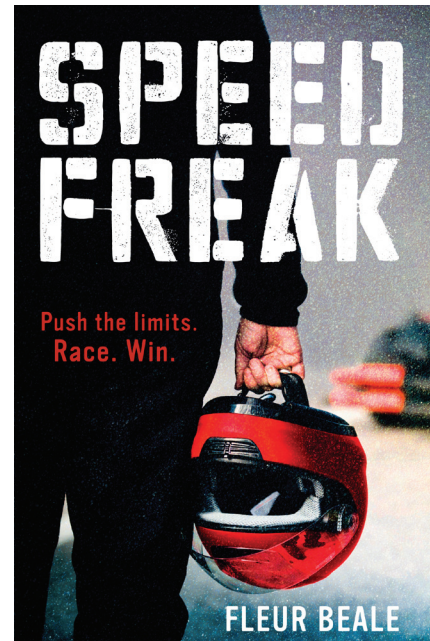
But he's not the only good driver after the prize. Craig is his main rival, and Craig's father is wealthy and prepared to spend whatever it takes to help his son win the Challenge.

Archie doesn't let Craig worry him, but Silver Adams is another matter. She's come back into karting after a two-year break and her ambition seems to be to drive her kart like a weapon of destruction to others on the track — Archie in particular.

Archie knows he'll need all his skill and focus to win. But sometimes, too, you need plain old luck. Can Archie overcome the odds and win?



Fleur Beale is a former high school teacher and the award-winning author of more than 40 books for children and young adults.



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Extent: 240pp
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RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Before Reading
- Close Reading
- Themes
- Language and Style
- Characters
- Creative Responses

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 for up-to-date information.

Before Reading

1. What does the cover picture indicate about the book's content?
2. When and where might the story be set?
3. What does the title suggest to you?
4. What do you know about kart racing? Do you think it is important that the reader know about a subject in order to read about it, or can any subject make an interesting book if the story is well told?

Refer to these questions again once you have read the book.

Close Reading

1. Archie finds himself thinking that this is 'pretty much how I lived my life now' (p. 13). How does Archie live his life and what does this indicate about the relationship between him and his father and their characters and values?
2. In chapter three the reader is given some insight into the characteristics of a few of Archie's fellow competitors and friends (pp. 19–22). Who are these characters and what are the characteristics? Find further examples of when they appear and display these characteristics.
3. Why is Erica so anti-karting (p. 23)? Do you think her point of view and/or Archie's reaction to her point of view is valid? Why or why not? Do their opinions change by the end of the novel?
4. How does Dad's colour decision for Felix's room affect Archie and Felix's relationship (pp. 29–31)? How does Felix and Archie's relationship develop? Find some examples to support your opinions.
5. As competitors, Archie and Craig dabble in some 'psychological trickery' (p. 37)? What does this involve in this chapter? Do you think it is successful? Find other examples from the book. Do their tactics change or have any effect on one another's races as the book progresses?
6. Archie notes that the winning speech was 'pure Craig' (p. 46)? What do you think he means by this? What does it tell the reader about Craig as a character and the relationship between him and Archie?
7. Archie describes himself as a 'fighting mongrel with a smart edge' (p. 53). What does he mean by this? Do you agree with his statement? Why or why not? Find examples from the novel to defend your stance.
8. How does Archie remember Silver Adams from previous races (p. 56)? Based on following chapters and events is his memory of her accurate? Why or why not?
9. What is 'the elephant in the room' Archie's dad refers to (p. 61)? Do you think Archie and his dad deal with it in a sensible and/or sensitive way? How do other characters deal with it? Does this give you any insight into Silver and her actions?

10. How and why does Archie spend the waiting time on the grid (p. 69)? When else is this mentioned in the book?
11. How does Archie react to the changes Erica makes around the house (p. 79)? What does this indicate about their relationship and her place in the family?
12. How does Archie react to Craig's letter (p. 97)? How does his reaction differ from those of his fellow competitors? What do their actions tell us about each of the characters? How does Craig respond to Archie?
13. What effect does Erica's 'detailed description of blood, shattered bone and escaping brain tissue' have on each family member (p. 112)? This appears to be a turning point for the family and the family dynamics. In what ways do you think it is?
14. What has become clear when 'light bulbs came on all over the tent' (p. 127)? What part does Felix play in exposing Craig? How is he integral to Archie's successes? Who else has a hand in Archie's success and Craig's demise?
15. Archie makes a mental list of what he knows about his mother (p. 149). What inspires Archie to visit his mother? How does this visit help him? Does it offer any resolutions? If so, what, and for whom?
16. Archie describes his competitor Jack's attitude to racing (p. 162)? How does it differ to Archie's? Why? Do any of the other competitors share attitudes or inspirations similar to either Jack or Archie?
17. What adjectives are used to describe the reactions to Craig's cheating (p. 182)? How does Archie react? What does this tell us about his character? How do the other characters, including Craig, react both immediately and in the long term? Find examples.
18. What is Archie referring to when he thinks it is 'ironical that the law wouldn't let me' (p. 199)? Why does he think this? Do you agree?
19. How is Archie's win acknowledged or celebrated by his fellow competitors, school, friends and family (pp. 222–234)? How does Archie feel about his success?
20. After a close reading of the novel, imagine you are setting one comprehension question per chapter for an English comprehension examination using *Speed Freak* as the set text. In pairs, ask and answer the questions you have written.

Themes

1. Discuss the following themes and find examples from *Speed Freak* that illustrate:
 - following your passion
 - drive and ambition
 - life balance
 - competitiveness and the importance of good sportsmanship
 - the definition and importance of family relationships
 - how success and wealth can corrupt
 - teenage sexuality and attraction
 - the impact of death, loss and abandonment
2. What do you think is the main theme of the novel? Write an essay on your choice.

Language and Style

1. What do you think the genre of this book is? List the aspects that are indicative of this genre.
2. The story is told in the first-person past tense. Why do you think the author chose to do this? Choose a passage in the book and rewrite it in third-person and/or present narrative. Once you have done this, compare the two versions and discuss their differences. Do you think the first-person narration is more effective? Is there anything you prefer about the third-person narration?
3. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that might otherwise be difficult to express. Two examples of figurative language are similes and metaphors. Examples of these are 'steady as a statue' (p. 45), 'she's driving like she's got a demon inside' (p. 90), 'Erica's face turned to stone' (p. 52) and 'that look was pure poison' (p. 99). Find more examples of each type of figurative language from the book.
4. The author uses animal imagery in some similes, for example, 'he's going to be mad as a wasp when he finds out' (p. 7) and 'Felix was like a bee in a bottle' (p. 134). Find other examples from the book. Then think of ten other animals and create a simile for each.
5. Throughout the book there are many puns, similes and metaphors relating to kart racing and its vocabulary. Examples of these are 'keep the public displays of affection on low revs' (p. 10), 'Craig's face lit up like a tail light' (p. 34), 'his eyes shone like polished axles' (p. 108) and 'that'd get right up his exhaust pipe' (p. 232). Find some more examples from the book. Use any of those above, or others you have found, as inspiration for a poem or other piece of descriptive writing about the book.
6. The alliterative nicknames 'Dangerous Damian' (p. 42) and 'Gary the Great' (p. 43) feature in the book. What is alliteration? Think of alliterative nicknames for five other characters from the novel, as well as for yourself and three of your classmates.
7. The author uses symbolism in the book. What are the phrases below typically

symbolic of? What is the origin of these phrases?

- joined at the hip (p. 9)
- top notch (p. 43)
- love birds (p. 57)
- bring him out of his shell (p. 57)
- punching bag (p. 71)
- by a whisker (p. 72)
- up shit creek without a paddle (p. 84)
- made a bee-line for (p. 110)
- wrapping him up in cotton wool (p. 118)
- loose cannon (p. 123)
- roll with the punches (p. 132)
- ankle biter (p. 143)
- run for the hills (p. 153)
- his bark is worse than his bite (p. 168)
- heart of steel (p. 170)
- fair and square (p. 183)
- which way the cookie would crumble (p. 184)
- with bells on (p. 198)

8. 'Buzz' and 'fizz' (p. 134) are examples of which figure of speech? Think of five more examples. Write a poem or descriptive paragraph which includes the words.

9. Describe in a paragraph how the tension builds and falls away during the book.

Find a passage in the novel that is high intensity, such as during a race, and a passage that is low intensity. Copy both out and compare the language used (choice of words, length of sentences, the pace at which details are revealed). How is language used to create intensity?

10. Find definitions for the following words from the novel and write one sentence for each:

- monotonous (p. 18)
- peripheral (p. 41)
- famished (p. 52)
- lenient (p. 56)
- carnage (p. 65)
- blatant (p. 65)
- forlorn (p. 206)

Characters

1. Select three adjectives to describe each of the following characters:
 - Archie
 - Craig
 - Dad
 - Erica
 - Felix
 - Silver
 - Grandad
 - Kyla
2. List the qualities of Archie's personality and find examples of when he displays each of these qualities, such as good sportsmanship: 'I caught his eye and gave him a thumbs-up. It was his best result ever' (p. 101).
3. Do you think Archie is a strong protagonist? Why or why not? Which other characters do you feel display strength? In pairs, write character studies of five of the main characters. Begin by making a chart to list the strengths and weaknesses of each. How do their particular strengths and weaknesses affect the part they play in the novel?
4. Felix and Craig are characters who change in the novel as events unfold. What were they like at the beginning and how have they changed by the end? Discuss if, and how, any other characters change and develop throughout the book. How do you think their view of themselves has changed?
5. How does the relationship between Archie and Erica develop over the course of the book? What are the main events which contribute to the development?
6. Choose an important event from the novel and describe Archie's reaction to it.
7. What are the different pressures on Archie through the novel? What factors lead to the decisions he makes and how does he cope with the situations he finds himself in?
8. What does the novel say about friendships and/or family and their importance during difficult times? List examples where friends and/or family are either a help or a hindrance to Archie.
9. Do you think Archie is a realistic character? Why or why not? Do you think Archie is too good to be true? What does or doesn't make him a convincing character?
10. Which character did you particularly like or dislike? Why?
11. Which character do you most identify with?

Creative Responses

1. Archie states that doing laps in his kart is his 'idea of heaven' (p. 15) and his school friend Colin is so passionate about playing rugby that he'd 'chopped the cast off his own wrist so he could keep on playing rugby' (p. 8). Write an extended description of a place or activity you consider heavenly, or write a poem about how it feels to watch or participate in your favourite sport or hobby. Use descriptive and emotive language so that those who read your description or poem can feel your passion.
2. Archie had spent the holidays chasing sponsors and then had to present his spiel to them (pp. 24–28). Find potential sponsors for your favourite sport or hobby. Create a powerpoint presentation for a panel of these sponsors in order to convince them to sponsor you.
3. Throughout the book, Dad gives Archie motivational lectures and words of advice. Study the language, form and common elements of motivational speakers and lecturers. As an example, you could listen to *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading* talks (www.ted.com). Then, using one of Dad's quotes below as a title or subject, write your own motivational lecture. Present it to your class.
 - 'Keep your cool and wait till the other bugger makes a mistake.' (p. 13)
 - 'Watch your diet. Keep fit, keep lean, keep strong.' (p. 18)
 - 'Focus. It's all about focus. Being calm. In control. Goal in sight.' (p. 24)
 - 'Give it everything. If it doesn't work out, you'll know you put your heart out there.' (p. 47)
 - 'Keep your temper.' (p. 49)
 - 'Breathe. Relax. Focus.' (p. 69)
 - 'Consistent. Be consistent.' (p. 99)
4. Erica 'sees all motor sports as dangerous' (p. 23). Divide the class into teams and debate this statement.
5. *Speed Freak* is set in New Zealand. Archie tours around the country and also skypes his friends who live all over New Zealand (for example, Kyla in Wyndham; p. 21). He also reads about Portugal (p. 138) and meets Kyla's great-aunt who had worked in the Philippines (p. 139). Locate these and any other places that are mentioned in the book on a map of New Zealand or of the world. Choose one of the places mentioned. Create and design an entry for a travel book of your chosen place. Include information such as population size, geography, history, things of interest, weather, etc.
6. Archie is studying subjects to get him into engineering at university (p. 49). What do engineering jobs entail? What job do you want to do? Where would you like to work? What qualifications will you need? What would the work entail? See if you can arrange to be an intern or shadow a worker at the company of your choice. Write a report of your experience and present it to your class.
7. Archie discovers that a drunken driver killed Silver's mother on Christmas Eve (p. 60). Are there any campaigns currently being screened on television to warn against drink-driving? Do you think they are successful? Why/why not? Discuss as a class. Create your own anti-drink-driving marketing campaign. The campaign could include elements such as pamphlets, scripts for school talks, radio jingles, posters, slogans, etc.

8. Kyla's great-aunt teases Archie about 'the perils of passion' (p. 148) and love that 'blows away on the wind' (p. 148). Choose one of these quotes from the novel and use it as a springboard for your own creative response. Your response can take the form of a short story, poem, dramatic monologue, description or script.
9. Write a dramatic monologue from Archie's point of view, retelling the experiences he's had in the novel, such as his feelings about his mother's revelations (pp. 150–153). Perform it for your class.
10. Archie catches up with his mates via Facebook (p. 156). Create a Facebook profile for one of the characters from the book.
11. The novel is full of suspense-filled action race sequences, including the exhilarating race final (pp. 218–222). Choose one of the race sequences from the book. Study the language the author uses in the sequence, then write a suspense-filled action sequence of your own about something that has happened to you. Alongside your written description also present your sequence in either a comic strip or a movie storyboard format.
12. Imagine you are a film producer attempting to gain financial backing to turn *Speed Freak* into a feature film. Write up your proposal. Include one or two scenes from the novel in film script form; your choices for the soundtrack; casting; location, etc. Or imagine the novel is going to be turned into a stage play. Design a suitable set, programme notes and an advertising poster for the play.
13. Did you like the ending of the book? Why or why not? Either rewrite the ending of the book or write a plot outline and back-cover blurb for a sequel.
14. Find other books which have young adult characters dealing with competitive sports. Write a comparative review where you compare and contrast *Speed Freak* with at least one other novel dealing with this theme.
15. Create a timeline that shows the main events of the novel.
16. Write a series of diary entries about one of the main events in the book from the point of view of each of the following characters:
 - Craig
 - Dad
 - Erica
 - Felix
 - Kyla
 - Silver
17. Rewrite one of the climactic scenes as a video script. If your school has filming equipment, produce your scene.
18. Fleur Beale is an award-winning author. Research and write a short biography about her and her other books.
19. Write a review of *Speed Freak*, aiming it at the readership of your favourite magazine, newspaper or website. Consider the following questions:
 - Which situations had a ring of truth for you?
 - Which characters appealed to you the most? The least?
 - How did the story make you feel as it unfolded?
 - Which ideas in the book awakened your interest?
 - What did you dislike, or find boring?
 - Who do you think is the target readership?