

# Slide the Corner

Author: Fleur Beale

## Synopsis

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Greg is in trouble with his parents. He has failed NCEA Level 1 and is being made to repeat Year 11. Greg is the odd one out in his family. Both his parents are scientists and his older sister and younger brother are both brainy. Greg struggles at school; according to his father he is "thick as crude oil". He finds school boring, especially since he has done it all before. Misunderstood by his parents Greg begins to rebel. He changes his subjects at school, choosing to study automotive engineering, which really interests him. He refuses to come home and study with his mother and begins looking for a part-time job. His parents are unimpressed. In fact they ban him from eating any food from the house until he "comes to his senses".

One day after school Greg does a good deed for a pregnant woman and his life changes for the better. Holly's husband Brad drives and works on racing cars. Suddenly Greg finds his niche. Brad offers him an afterschool job and, far from struggling, Greg shows a real talent for fixing cars. Brad understands Greg and fosters his talent by allowing him to become his co-driver.

Gradually Greg's mum starts coming around to the fact that her son has talents - they are just not the same as the rest of the family's. She allows him to buy a mini and begin racing himself. As Greg works with Brad to win the circuit his confidence in himself grows. For the first time ever he has friends and a sense of purpose. But Greg's father still refuses to support his son's endeavours. Will he realise that Greg is a worthy member of the family with his own strengths before their relationship is destroyed forever?

## Text Type

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Written by New Zealand author Fleur Beale, Slide the Corner was first published in 1993 and was the winner of the Gaelyn Gordon Award for a Much-Loved Book. This edition was published in 2009 and has been updated. Suitable for readers 12+ and with particular appeal for boys, Slide the Corner is a fast-paced action story that is gritty and realistic.

Greg is a credible protagonist whose difficulties at school and problems at home will resonate with many readers. Greg doesn't allow himself to be controlled by his parents. Instead he stands up for himself and starts controlling his own life

and destiny. He finds an activity that he shines at and, as his skills develop, his confidence in himself grows.

Greg is the narrator of the story and through his narration the reader learns his thoughts and feelings about what is happening in his life and how much it hurts him that he isn't accepted by his parents. Beale's youthful voice and easy to read colloquial language will keep even the most reluctant reader engaged.

Themes in the story include family relationships, friendship, following your dream and the fact that everyone has strengths and things that they are good at. Others shouldn't judge you just because you don't conform to their idea of being a success.

## Sharing the Novel

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**The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapters 1- 2 (pp. 3- 20), Chapters 3- 14 (pp. 21- 144) and Chapters 15- 22 (pp. 145- 239).**

**During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of words and ideas in the novel. Have them make inferences and predictions about what will happen next in the story.**

**Wherever possible have students relate Greg's experiences to their own lives and broader understanding. Encourage students to identify key themes raised in the text and explain how these are developed by the author. Students should also study the character of Greg and be able to explain how he changes and grows throughout the story.**

## Introducing the Novel

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Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- Why is this novel called Slide the Corner?
- Have you ever been in a racing car or watched a rally? Why do you think this sport is so popular?
- Why does the narrator's father think that he is thick? How do you think that his comments make the narrator feel?
- What does Greg want to do with his life? How do you think the Chattertons will help him fulfil his dream?

**Teacher reads Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 3- 20) aloud. Students follow along in their books.**

## Comprehension Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 3- 20)

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- What does Greg dream of doing? Why doesn't he tell his parents?
- How do Greg's parents punish him for failing NCEA Level 1?
- Why doesn't Greg complain when his mother tells him that he has to repeat Year 11?
- How do Greg's parents react when he comes home late? How do they punish him?
- Why doesn't Greg have anything personal in his room?
- What decisions does Greg come to when he climbs out his window in search of food?
- Why is it so important for Greg to get a job?
- Who gives Greg money before he goes to school? Why doesn't he have any money of his own?
- Why does Greg go and see Mr Carmody? Do you agree with what Mr Carmody says about Greg's dad? Why/ why not?

### Discussion

- How do you think Greg feels, being compared to his siblings? Why does his father call him "thick"? Do you think this is an effective way of encouraging Greg to do better? Why/why not?
- Why does Greg feel so misunderstood at home?
- How do you think Greg's parents will react when they find out that he has changed his subjects at school?

**Students read Chapters 3- 14 (pp. 21- 144) independently before the next shared session.**

## Comprehension Chapters 3- 14 (pp. 21- 144)

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- What kind of job does Greg want to do?
- What surprises Greg about the woman with the flat tyre? How does he feel when she invites him over to meet her husband?
- Why doesn't Greg have any friends?
- Why do Greg's parents think that he will cave in to their demands?
- Why doesn't Greg like his father? Why does he decide to stop trying to please him?
- Why does Greg refuse to do the chores that his father gives him?

- Who sticks up for Greg with his parents? Why does he think that his parents are being unfair?
- What kind of car does Brad own? How does Greg feel while he is looking at it? What does Greg spend his day with Brad doing? Why does he offer to mow the lawns?
- Why does Greg's dad accuse him of stealing? How does Greg react to this accusation?
- What does Greg spend Sunday doing? What are the three things the Chattertons want to talk to Greg about?
- Why does Greg get upset when Brad mentions that he would like to help him improve his driving? How do Holly and Brad convince Greg that he is capable of learning?
- What does Brad teach Greg during the driving lesson? How does Greg feel when he praises his efforts?
- Who is at the Chattertons' house when Brad, Holly and Greg arrive home from the driving lesson? How does Greg react when Brad asks him if he would like to co-drive? What formalities does he have to go through? Why does this present a problem for Greg?
- How do Holly and Brad respond when Greg tells them about his problems with his parents? How is talking to them different from talking to his parents?
- Who convinces Greg's parents to listen to what he has to say after dinner? How do they react to Greg's news?
- Why do Greg's parents take away his bike? Is this fair? Why/ why not? What does this action inspire Greg to do? How does he convince his mother that he is serious about becoming a mechanic?
- Why does Brad choose not to enter into an argument with Greg's dad? How does he allay Greg's mother's fears? What does Brad tell Greg's mother about her son? How does this make her feel?
- What responsibilities does a co-driver have? Why does Greg begin to doubt himself when Holly goes through the requirements with him?
- What do Holly and Brad name their baby?
- Describe the incident that occurs when the stranger comes to pick up the Commodore. Who helps Greg deal with the situation?
- How does Greg spend his first pay cheque? What does he buy his mother? How does she react when he gives her the gift?
- How does Greg's mother justify spending money on gear for Greg to his father?
- Why is William impressed when Greg explains his responsibilities to him?
- How does Holly make Greg feel better before the race?

- How does Jason react when he learns that Greg is co-driving in the rally? How does Mr Shepherd react? What does the class spend the rest of the period doing?
- Who are Ted Allen and Andy Eliot?
- What feelings does Greg experience during his first race? What things does he have to try and remember? Why does Brad slow down when he comes across the spectators? What is Shane and Lindy's role?
- What are the highlights of the rally for Greg?
- Who rings Greg to discuss the race?
- How does Greg's dad react when he offers to do the work on his car? Why do you think he agrees?
- What does Greg decide to do with the photos that Holly gives him?
- How do Greg's brother and mother react when Greg brings the car home? What does his dad say?
- What advice does Brad give Greg about dealing with mistakes during the second rally?
- Why is it so important that Brad does well in class N?
- What technique does Brad use for crossing the ford?
- Where do Brad and Greg come in the second special stage?

### Discussion

- In what ways does meeting the Chattertons change Greg's life? Why do you think he begins to feel so much happier when he is hanging out with them? What do they offer him that he doesn't get at home?
- How do Greg's parents react when he tries to talk to them? Why do they react like this? Can you relate to Greg's problem? Why/ why not?
- How does Greg's parents' constant criticism make him feel? Why is it so important to offer praise when someone does something well?
- Why do you think William sticks up for Greg? What does this suggest about his character?
- Why do you think Greg's mum changes her mind about supporting her son?
- Predict what will happen next in the story.

**Students read Chapters 15- 22 (pp. 145- 239) independently before the next shared session.**

### **Comprehension Chapters 15- 22 (pp. 145- 239)**

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- What does Greg spot the day after the rally? Why is it so cheap?

- What advice of Greg's does his mother follow? How does his father react to this?
- How much money has Greg saved? What does he decide to sell to raise the rest of the money? Why do you think his mother lends him the money so that he can get the car straight away?
- Where does Greg take his car the day after he gets it?
- What does Megan ask Greg that surprises him? Why does he enjoy talking to her so much?
- Why does Holly tell Brad that he can't drive in the Tokoroa rally?
- Why is Greg reluctant to ask Mr Shepherd to be his co-driver? How does his teacher react to his request?
- Who offers to be Greg's service crew?
- What tests does Greg have to complete during the gymkhana? Which test does he enjoy the most?
- Why do you think Greg's dad asks him to drive to Auckland? What happens on the trip? What compliment does Greg's father pay him? How does this make Greg feel?
- Why was Kitty worried about Greg before she left home? Who did she tell to look after him?
- Who is Chris Broadbank? Why is Greg so surprised when he finds out that Chris is interested in cars?
- Why does Chris ask to speak to Greg's dad when the group meets before the rally? Why is Greg's dad surprised by Greg's new friend?
- What happens to Greg's car during the rally? Who fixes it?
- Why does Greg decide not to drive too fast during the race? How does he get into trouble on the second stage?
- Why does Greg feel so triumphant when he finishes the rally?
- Why is Greg disappointed when the holidays arrive?
- Why is it so important that Brad does well in the next national championship rally?
- Why does Greg decide to upgrade his competition licence?
- Why is Greg's mum reluctant to let him and his brother stay at home by themselves while she is away? Who sticks up for Greg? Why is this surprising?
- Who does Greg take with him to try and figure out what is wrong with his dad's car?
- What proposition does Holly make to Greg about his future?
- How does Greg feel about navigating at night?
- Describe Brad's reaction when he finds out that Ted Allen has been rallying in the South Island. How does this affect Brad's chance of getting sponsorship?

- Why does Greg lie to his mother about what happened at the club rally?
- What promise did Greg make to his father about school?
- Who does Greg travel to the rally with? How does Lindy convince the spectators to move? Why does Greg enjoy watching the rally so much?
- How does Greg do in his exams? What does his mother bring him home after he receives his report?
- Who does Greg invite to the school ball? Why does he enjoy the night so much?
- What does Greg want for his birthday? What presents does he receive?
- Why does Greg's mum decide that the family should go and watch Brad and Greg in the rally? How does Greg's dad react to this suggestion?
- What slows Brad down during the rally? How does he injure himself? How does Brad react when he learns that Greg has the appropriate licence? Why does Greg begin to question himself again during the race? What restores his confidence? Where do Brad and Greg come in the rally?
- What exciting news does Brad give Greg the day after the rally?
- What does Greg's dad give him? Why is this so important to Greg?

### Discussion

- Describe Greg. What qualities and attributes does he possess? How does he develop and change during the story? What lessons do you think he learns?
- Describe Brad and Holly. What do they give Greg that his father doesn't? How would Greg's life have been different if he hadn't met them?
- What do you think it took for Greg's mother to stand up for him to his father? Why do you think she decides to back up her son? How does her support make Greg's home life easier?
- What events in the story suggest that Greg's father is beginning to accept his son? Greg's father reaches a kind understanding of his son's interest at the end of the story. How do you think this will affect their future relationship?

### Activities

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**Monologue** - Create a monologue for Greg in an important part of the novel. What is he thinking and feeling in that moment? Why?

**Epilogue** - Write an epilogue for the story. What is Greg doing now? What are Brad and Holly doing? Is Greg still friends with Megan? How is Greg's relationship with his parents?

**Movie Pitch** - Write a one-page "pitch" to a producer explaining why the story would make a great movie.

**Static Image** - Design a static image that illustrates a theme from the novel. Remember to combine verbal and visual features to convey your idea.

**Book Review** - Write a book review for Slide the Corner. Include a brief plot summary, describe the setting and explain why it is important. Describe the characters and explain how they develop and change as the story progresses. Identify major themes and ideas in the story. Remember to give your personal opinion about the book.

**Character** - Imagine that you are Greg and have been asked to give a speech about your experiences when you return to school. Write the speech and present it to the class in role.

**Writing** - Write a letter to Fleur Beale explaining what you liked about the novel.

**Drama** - Choose an important event from the story. Write a script that depicts the event. Remember to include a cast of characters and stage directions in your script. Practise your play and present it to the class.

**Plot** - Design a storyboard that illustrates 10 important events from the novel in the order that they occur. Under each picture write a brief summary of what is happening.

**Plot** - Choose an important event from the story and explain how this event affected the outcome of the story. If this event hadn't happened, how would things have turned out differently?

Notes written by Vicki Ladd