

GETTING AIR

Debra Oswald



TEACHING SUPPORT KIT

by
Sarah Haley
LLB, B. Teach



RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

GETTING AIR

Teaching Support Kit

CONTENTS

NOTES

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Genre, Structure and Style	5
3.	Pre-reading Notes and Activities	6
4.	Chapter Summaries	7
5.	Themes, Motifs and Symbols	14
6.	Character Analysis	19

ACTIVITIES

Post-Reading Classroom Activities	26
-----------------------------------	----

STUDENT WORKSHEETS

Worksheets which can be distributed for student use	28
---	----

TEACHER 'CHEAT SHEETS'

Answer guides to the student worksheets	43
---	----

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Visit www.randomhouse.com.au/readingguides for information on other Random House Australia teaching support kits and reading guides.

Copyright © Random House Australia 2008

GETTING AIR

Teaching Support Kit

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Plot Summary

Getting Air is a rite-of-passage story centred on Zac Marlowe, a fifteen-year-old boy living in the rural town of Narragindi, New South Wales. Zac and his best mate Corey love skateboarding but are drawn into a conflict with Ray Stone from the town council when he uses his influence to have them warned by the police for skateboarding in unacceptable locations. Ray Stone is the chief villain for the majority of the story and is portrayed as a stereotypical 'grumpy old man'. Adding to the sense of persecution, Corey comes from a bad family and it is regularly assumed that he is a budding criminal.

The core story is a campaign to build a skatepark for the town. The campaign is centred around a video made by model student Lauren Saxelby, and over the course of the novel the entire town becomes enthused with the prospect and pressures the 'stuffed-shirts down at the council' to take on the project.

While Zac should be more excited than most at the prospect of the skatepark, he is in fact not enthused. Displaying the sense of ennui and cynicism that can be the hallmark of his age, Zac points to the fact that this is the second attempt at getting a skatepark for the town and maintains there is little point in continuing to fight a losing battle.

For Corey, the prospective skatepark is a chance to channel his efforts into a positive and popular direction. As he becomes more and more devoted to the campaign a romantic relationship with Lauren seems to be in prospect as well (Corey's advances are eventually rejected politely by Lauren). This of course simply serves to make Zac feel still more alienated from the project and his friend, fuelling his resentment.

For Corey, the skatepark is not merely a way of having a positive impact on his town or even a way to develop his romantic intentions – it is a very welcome escape from an horrific home life. Corey's de facto stepfather, Warren Beggs, is a violently abusive drunk, and although never specifically detailed it is made very clear that Corey's mother, Trisha, is regularly assaulted by Warren.

As the campaign gains momentum and plans for the park begin to solidify, the book's key dramatic event takes place. Zac is called into the principal's office and told by the police that his best friend Corey, Corey's mother and stepfather have all been shot dead. It is never specifically enunciated but the inference is that Warren and Trisha were arguing or fighting and that Corey became involved. Warren shot Corey, then Trisha and then himself.

The impact on Zac is as devastating as one would expect. Without warning his best friend has been murdered, and to further compound the feeling that he has been wronged by an uncaring

world the consensus around Narragindi is that Corey's end was to be expected – 'What would you expect from a Matthews?'

Unable to cope, Zac retreats to live with his cousin in nearby Glenthorpe.

As Zac struggles to come to terms with his own situation the skatepark campaign simultaneously spirals out of control. Lauren changes from model student to troubled teen, the town's other skateboarders are infected with a dissatisfied air and the council seizes its chance to renege on its promise.

As the skatepark seems destined to become a rose garden, Lauren seeks out Zac and challenges him to return to Narragindi and revitalise the campaign as a tribute to his friend Corey. Initially unwilling, or perhaps unable, to return to the source of his pain, Zac grapples with his demons and eventually overcomes them, enabling him to return to Narragindi and revitalise the skatepark campaign.

Zac and Lauren try to organise the town to rally at the council's grand opening of the one-time skatepark site (now to become a rose garden). As the opening begins in front of the regional media only Lauren and Zac's mother Gail are in attendance. Councillor Stone comments on this seeming apathy to Gail and she makes a moving speech about the spirit of the town's youth being crushed by the council's uncaring betrayal. As she concludes her speech hundreds of the town's residents arrive, led by Zac and the skaters, to support the protest. The council – faced with an overwhelming groundswell of support for the park – concedes and it is built.

Leading up to the park's opening, a movement to name the park in honour of Corey Matthews is again stymied by council intransigence and Zac briefly returns to his more childish ways; railing against the injustice until his newfound maturity swiftly returns and rather than run away again Zac is at the forefront of events at the park's grand opening.

The skatepark opening itself is an unqualified success in which the unified youth of the town come together happily for a skateboarding competition and day of healing.

As the novel draws to a close the school finally has a memorial for Corey and it is everything that his funeral should have been. In the final pages the skaters install a plaque in Corey's honour at the skatepark anyway and, knowing when it is beaten, the council turns a blind eye and leaves it in place.

GENRE, STRUCTURE AND STYLE

Getting Air is an adaptation of the author's stage play, *Skate*, and both are inspired by a true story of a New South Wales country town's struggle to have a skatepark built for their youth.

The story unfolds through first-person narration. Readers experience life in the small town of Narragindi through the eyes of Zac Marlowe, a fifteen-year-old boy, and the book feels refreshingly honest and authentic.

The voice is highly effective and in large part makes the novel the success it is; the language is realistic and the story, which at times involves some very strong emotions, is told by Zac in the straightforward and direct manner one might expect of a fifteen-year-old boy.

The novel moves at a good pace. The plot moves swiftly, as it must to maintain engagement with the target audience of young teens.

The tragic murder of Corey Matthews is regularly alluded to throughout the text, and before the full picture is revealed it is intimated through a series of sometimes oblique references.

Story and content is excellent for teenage boys, as well as (albeit to a slightly lesser extent) girls, and the themes and issues raised in the novel are relevant to their lives – friendship, family, grief and loss all overlaid by that distinctly young-adult feeling of persecution and powerlessness in the face of a sometimes uncaring world.

Getting Air deals with a series of challenging issues in a realistic and relevant way. The story's themes lend themselves to a number of activities which encourage readers to become involved in their community.

Getting Air is an identifiably Australian story, but not overwhelmingly so. Dialogue is colloquially Australian but there are few elements to the setting or language which could not be smoothly relocated to any similarly sized town in the developed world. The gentle localisation ensures the novel has an additional 'hook' for Australian readers but also means that it will alienate few immigrant or overseas readers.

PRE-READING NOTES AND ACTIVITIES

About the Author

Debra Oswald's stage plays have been produced around Australia. *Gary's House*, *The Peach Season* and *Sweet Road* were all shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Award and *Stories in the Dark* won the 2008 NSW Premier's Play Award. Her play *Dags* has had many Australian productions and has been published and performed in Britain and the United States. *Gary's House* has been on the senior high school syllabus and has been performed in Denmark in translation. *Mr Bailey's Minder* broke the Griffin Theatre's box office record in 2004, toured nationally and will be produced in Philadelphia in 2008.

Debra has written two plays for the Australian Theatre for Young People. *Skate* was performed in Sydney, on a country tour and at the Belfast Theatre Festival. *Stories in the Dark* premiered at Riverside Theatre Parramatta in 2007.

Among Debra's television credits are *Bananas in Pyjamas*, *Sweet and Sour*, *The Secret Life of Us* and award-winning episodes of *Police Rescue*.

Debra is the author of three 'Aussie Bites' titles, including *Nathan and the Ice Rockets*, and four novels for young readers: *Me and Barry Terrific*, *The Return of the Baked Bean*, *The Fifth Quest* and *The Redback Leftovers*.

Debra has two sons and lives in Sydney. She is currently working on a new novel for teen readers.

Pre-Reading Activities:

- Undertake one or more activities to give students an understanding of skateboarding culture:
 - *Lords of Dogtown* is an M-rated docu-drama starring Heath Ledger among others which tracks the Californian skate and surf culture as it emerged in the 1970s.
 - Show an extreme sports DVD or television show.
 - Bring in (or have students bring in their own) skateboarding magazines.
- Have students discuss a hobby or interest that is important to them and why they value it so highly. This could be an oral presentation.
- Have students 'judge a book by its cover' and make predictions before reading the story. What might it be about? What do you think the title *Getting Air* means? What clues can we get about the novel's plot from the blurb? What do you think is 'about to happen'?
- Have students write a short story to match the blurb. They can compare their story to the story in the novel once they have read the book and commented on the differences.
- Ask students how they would feel if they lost someone close to them. Brainstorm different ways people might react to grief and why.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter summaries also cover character development throughout the novel; these are a great resource for analytical essays on the novel and makes reference to the novel's facts and development far simpler. Quotes are included for the same reason.

Chapter	Plot Development	Character Development
1	<p>Zac, the protagonist, tells us about his April holidays. We are signposted to the fact that something bad is going to happen.</p> <p><i>If someone had asked me at the beginning of last year, before everything spun out of control, 'Zac, what are the best things in your life right now?' I would've just mumbled and laughed like a braindead prawn. (p 1)</i></p> <p>He tells us of his small country town and how boring life is as a teenager there. He was out skateboarding with Corey and came across Warren Beggs, who was out on the street and was drunk. Warren asked Corey where 'she' was (Corey's mother) then left. They overhear some women badmouthing Corey's family.</p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>We are introduced to the main character, Zac, who is fifteen and lives in a NSW country town. He and his best friend, Corey Matthews, love skateboarding. Zac hates his town and is bored: <i>Before we get into what happened last year, you need to understand something about our town: Narragindi is a hole. If you're after movies, proper shops, a swimming pool, a go kart track, decent live bands, a dance club or any kind of major fun, don't bother coming to Narra. (p 2)</i></p> <p>COREY MATTHEWS</p> <p>Zac tells us Corey is fifteen also. His family has a bad reputation. His dad has left and his mum has a 'bad' boyfriend (Warren Beggs). He is scared of his mum's boyfriend and ashamed of his family. <i>Corey must've been able to hear her – he was only a couple of metres away. But he kept his head down and acted like he couldn't hear. Corey always acted like that: he never retaliated or let on that it got to him. I don't know how he did it. (p 8)</i></p> <p>We are signposted to Corey's troubled upbringing: <i>If anyone saw Corey Matthews wandering down the main street of Narra with a skateboard under his arm, they would've had no idea of the trouble he had to handle in his life. (p 12)</i></p> <p>WARREN BEGGS</p> <p>Corey's mother's boyfriend. He is a drunk who is talked about by the townsfolk. He intimidates people and appears to be being set up as a villain of the story.</p>
2	<p>There is no skatepark in the town, despite having many kids interested in the hobby. Zac and Corey go down to their 'special spot' outside the Town Hall where all the kids go to skate. They meet the rest of the skaters and happily go about their business until Ray Stone (a town councillor) tells them off for skating near the town hall and kicks them out. JT (a skater) stands up to Stone and makes a sarcastic comment on the lack of places to skate: <i>'Oh, sorry, sorry, you're right' said JT. We should skate at the skatepark but – Oh! Gasp! There isn't a skatepark in this town!' (p 22)</i></p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>Caring and respectful towards the skating group and doesn't have a bad word to say about them. <i>I remember being deadset keen like that when I was Riley's age. (p 15)</i> <i>I know a lot of people get annoyed by guys like JT. He did go off at the mouth too much and his jokes were generally pretty lame. But I reckoned he was good value. (p 17)</i></p> <p>COREY</p> <p>Very quiet and shy. <i>That was the thing about Corey: he could make it so people hardly noticed he was there. (p 18)</i></p> <p>SKATERS</p> <p>Stella – Year 9 girl. Initially had problems being a girl and a skater, but she was good at it and they now accept her.</p> <p>Riley – Year 7 boy who is trying hard to learn new skating tricks.</p> <p>JT (Jamie Throsby) – Year 10 boy, tall, clumsy larrikin.</p>

		<p>Travis – best friends with JT, also in Year 10. He is muscly and is in trouble a lot.</p> <p>Jycinta – in Year 10. She watches the skating as she preens herself.</p> <p>Marissa – Jycinta’s faithful sidekick.</p> <p>RAY STONE</p> <p><i>What can I tell you about Ray Stone? Apart from the fact that he was a maggot. (p 21)</i></p> <p>A councillor who appeared to hate skating and was aiming to be Mayor of the town. <i>When Ray marched around town wearing his fancy suits, he thought he was a Very Important Guy. (p 21)</i></p> <p>He is not liked by the kids and is clearly being set up as a ‘villain’.</p>
3	<p>Lauren Saxelby comes to the skating area with her video camera to film them for a film she is entering in a competition. The boys show off for the camera, but Zac stops skating as he doesn’t like Lauren. Corey tries to quietly convince Zac to skate and says that Lauren is nice.</p> <p>They are interrupted by Constable Alexakis, who asks the boys to stop. Zac disobeys her. She lets him go as far as possible, but she ends up confiscating his skateboard.</p> <p>We discover through a conversation between Corey and Lauren that a few years ago there was a large campaign to have a skatepark built, but this was rejected by the town council (Stone).</p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>Doesn’t like Lauren as he thinks she is full of herself and treats them like scum. He behaves quite out of character in front of Lauren – he is rude to her, which doesn’t fit his personality throughout the rest of the story so far, and he disobeys a police officer the skaters seem to have some respect for. <i>Alexakis was actually pretty sympathetic but in the end, she had to do her job – be a cop – and make us stop skating. (p 33)</i></p> <p>COREY</p> <p>Continues to be quiet, but firm in his opinions. Despite Zac’s opinions, he likes Lauren and chats to her. <i>‘I was in sick bay with her one time.... She talked to me. She was nice,’ Corey insisted in his quiet Corey way. (p 31)</i></p> <p>LAUREN SAXELBY</p> <p>The ‘good girl’. Gets good grades, is quite pretty and comes from a rich family. She is Ray Stone’s niece. Although we hear from Zac that she is full of herself, her actions appear to contradict this – she makes snide comments about the ‘bitchy’ girls, supports the skaters and is polite and pleasant. <i>I thought Lauren would screw up her nose at those two monkeys and walk away, but amazingly, she didn’t. ‘Yeah, “youth activity” is pretty tragic,’ she said with an embarrassed smile.’ (p 28)</i></p> <p>CONSTABLE ALEXAKIS</p> <p>A friendly, young, female police officer who tries to give the kids a break.</p>
4	<p>An old man, Mr. Proudfoot, drives into the car park where the skaters are. He loses control of the vehicle, nearly hits the skaters, hits a car, which belongs to Ray Stone, then drives away.</p> <p>Stone arrives and instantly blames the skaters for the damage to his car, first accusing Corey. Corey ran away, even though he had done nothing. Zac went with him and the two of them were chased by Stone in his car. Eventually the boys ended up escaping Stone on a small patch of beach.</p> <p>There is more signposting about a bad event: <i>I remember being really happy then. Life wasn’t perfect. (There was the Ray Stone problem waiting for us, apart from anything else.) And I didn’t know then how bad things could get.’ (p 48)</i></p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>Rather nostalgic when he thinks back to the time he ran away with Corey. <i>Flaked out there on the beach, I realised I had a big stupid smile on my face, like I was that happy little kid again. (p 46)</i></p> <p>COREY</p> <p>Is quite upset that he was instantly accused, which is why he runs away. <i>‘I guess I’m just a ratbag skater moron.’ (p 47)</i></p> <p>RAY STONE</p> <p>Seems to have it in for the youths of the town, demonstrated in the way he instantly blames the skaters, then Corey, for the damage to his car.</p>

5	<p>Zac and his mother (Gail) go down to the police station to reclaim his skateboard. They run into Corey and his mother while they are there.</p> <p>Constable Alexis interviews Mr Proudfoot and establishes that it was his car that damaged Stone's vehicle.</p> <p>Zac and his mum run into Corey and his mum (Trisha Matthews) at the police station. We find out the mothers both had teen pregnancies and had been in the same class at school. It is obvious Trisha has been beaten up (the assumption being it was her boyfriend, Warren Beggs), and Constable Alexis tries to convince Trisha to speak up – to no avail.</p> <p>Gail tries to make conversation with Trisha, who snaps back with a comment about Corey spending so much time at Gail's place. We find out Corey often stays there when things are tough at home.</p>	<p>ZAC Has a lot of respect for his mother. As he retells how they picked up the skateboard, he mentions his mother is grumpy, but that it is unusual. <i>It's a shame mum comes into the story here because you might get the wrong impression. (p 50)</i> He then explains how tough she has had it and that she was normally <i>funny and good value (p 50)</i>. He also appears to be matter of fact – <i>It's not a big deal and I don't want to dump some 'poor Zac' story on you. I'm just explaining why Mum had reason to be tired and pissed off sometimes. (p 51)</i></p> <p>He feels his mum got a raw deal out of life, and as a result didn't try at school. This also suggests he respects what she does.</p> <p>GAIL (ZAC'S MUM) She does seem to be funny and good value as described by her son. The police officer asks her how she is and she replies, after making choking and strangling noises, <i>'I'm overworked, disappointed by life, driven mental by my kids – y'know, great.'</i> (p 51)</p> <p>TRISHA MATTHEWS Corey's mother, who looks like most of the Matthews family (unlike Corey). <i>But Trisha Matthews looked way older than my mum – because she had a hard life, I suppose. (p 58)</i></p> <p>COREY Too old for his years; his main concern at the police station is the welfare of his mother – <i>Trisha turned her head, not letting Corey look at her swollen eye. But when she nearly fell over, wobbly on her feet, she let him steady her. (p 61)</i> A great metaphor for how Corey really bears the entire weight of his family and their mistakes.</p>
6	<p>When sitting down to dinner, Zac complains about school. His mother tries to increase his enthusiasm with her own interest in History.</p> <p>Corey arrives (we know from the last chapter he does this often) and is asked to stay for dinner. It is assumed he will be spending the night. Gail offers support to him in a non-judgemental, casual way.</p> <p>Gail decides it is time for the boys to have another go at convincing the council to build a skatepark. Corey and Amy are very excited about it and decide to ask Lauren if they can use her video to show to council. Zac, however, is uncharacteristically rude and refuses to take any part in it.</p>	<p>ZAC Appears to be a little hardened by life: <i>The Aztecs – who really cares about them? (p 63)</i>. He is showing apathy towards his schoolwork, clearly feeling it is irrelevant compared to what he is facing in the 'real world'.</p> <p>He is upset by the previous skatepark proposal being knocked back and feels trying again is useless, again suggesting he is a little hardened. <i>'We'll never get a skatepark in Narragindi!' My voice was getting louder and harder. 'You're bashing your head against a brick wall! Stop kidding yourself!' (p 69)</i></p> <p>AMY Zac's little sister in Year 7. She is not girly and loves soccer and skateboarding.</p> <p>GAIL Caring and compassionate. Although they are struggling themselves, she has no problem with Corey staying all the time: <i>She really liked having Corey around. He was part of our family, in a way. She was glad to see him having a good time, with no worries pressing on his mind. Even if it was just for a little while. (p 66)</i></p>

7	<p>Zac and Corey are back at school after the summer holidays. Exaggerated rumours are flying around the school about how Corey evaded Ray Stone.</p> <p>We are given backfill as to how the teachers automatically assume Corey is a troublemaker as he is a 'Matthews'.</p> <p>After school the skaters go to the petrol station to skate. Gail had called Lauren about the video. Lauren agreed and was very keen to help the skaters with their skatepark campaign. Corey and Lauren began to spend more time together, working on the campaign. Zac realises Corey is in love with Lauren.</p>	<p>ZAC We find out his last name is Marlowe. He still makes negative remarks about the skatepark campaign. He is suspicious of Lauren's eagerness to help: <i>Did she think of us skaters as a little 'project' she could take on to earn herself more Good Girl points? (p 76)</i> <i>I thought Lauren Saxelby was a snob. I thought a girl like her could never respect someone like Corey Matthews. I thought I knew everything. (p 83)</i></p> <p>COREY Although he seems quiet and shy, he is not a pushover. He knows his best friend thinks the campaign is a waste of time and dislikes Lauren, yet Corey remains heavily involved with the campaign and works closely with Lauren and even falls in love with her: <i>She pulled a goofy face, sending herself up. Corey laughed. From that moment on, he was a goner – that is, totally in love with Lauren Saxelby' (p 87)</i></p> <p>LAUREN Gets along very well with Corey and is keen to help with the campaign. We are given hints she is 'deeper' than the goody two shoes Zac thinks she is.</p> <p>JYCINTA & MARISSA Jycinta bosses Marissa around. Marissa tries to stand up to her a little, but is quickly shot down. <i>Jycinta used a tough voice, like a farmer giving a disobedient kelpie an order. 'I said let's go, Marissa.' (p 80)</i></p> <p>MITCHELL Another Year 10 'skater'. He has a very keen interest in the magazines, gear, etc, but does not actually skate – he is waiting for the perfect board.</p>
8	<p>Gail drives Corey to Glenthorpe – a larger town and hour and a half away – so he can visit his mother in hospital. Again, she does it subtly and pretends she was going there anyway. Corey's mother has a broken arm and shoulder, from 'falling down the stairs', although everyone suspects her boyfriend had hit her again.</p> <p>Later that day, Corey assists Gail and Amy with campaign business. Lauren also comes over to show them the finished video. Lauren convinces Corey to speak in public about the skatepark.</p> <p>Corey and Zac have a 'deep and meaningful' conversation about leaving school. Corey has no plans, as he wants to be there for his mum. Zac gives Corey a model of a skatepark he spent hours creating for the first campaign.</p>	<p>COREY He feels he has no future. Lauren asks him what he wants to do when he leaves school, and it bothers him. He wants to be an apprentice, but feels no one in the town would give a 'Matthews' a job. He further confirms this feeling when he says: <i>'Anyway,' said Corey. 'Right now the main thing is making sure Mum's okay and that. So not much point thinking about it – y'know, the future.' (p 95)</i></p> <p>ZAC We gain a little more insight into Zac's negativity towards the skatepark – he is protecting Corey. <i>'Nah, it's your business if you wanna help out on the new campaign. But I'd hate to see you get all psyched up and then –'</i> <i>'And then the grumpy old guys kill it dead. That's what you think will happen,' said Corey.</i> <i>'I remember how lousy it felt, that's all.' I said. (p 97–98)</i></p> <p>JYCINTA & MARISSA Marissa is approached by a house leader to enter an event. Jycinta demands Marissa not enter anything. Marissa is showing signs of wanting to join in with others, but is constantly held back by Jycinta.</p> <p>ZAC Is very proud of Corey for speaking in front of the</p>
9	<p>The kids are at the school Athletics carnival. Zac's mum leaves work in her lunchbreak to come down and watch them in their events.</p> <p>A cute, older boy arrives to do the plumbing and Jycinta is all over him. Marissa doesn't warn her a teacher is coming and Jycinta is horrible to her.</p>	<p>JYCINTA & MARISSA Marissa is approached by a house leader to enter an event. Jycinta demands Marissa not enter anything. Marissa is showing signs of wanting to join in with others, but is constantly held back by Jycinta.</p> <p>ZAC Is very proud of Corey for speaking in front of the</p>

	<p>Lauren announces to the school that they plan to re-campaign for a skatepark and sells raffle tickets. Corey gets up and speaks – he shows the school the model and talks about the campaign, with encouragement from Lauren. Some of the skaters pick on Lauren’s enthusiasm, saying her uncle (Stone) will stop it.</p>	<p>school: <i>It’s amazing when you see a friend do something you never thought he could do. (p 113)</i></p>
10	<p><i>Over the next few weeks, our house had turned into Operation Skatepark HQ. (p 119)</i></p> <p>Zac sulks in his room while Gail, Amy, Corey and a group of Year 7s Amy had recruited work on the campaign. Lauren assists by selling raffle tickets around the town. She asks her uncle to buy a ticket; he refuses; she criticises him for it.</p> <p>The skatepark committee grows even further. They sell a great number of raffle tickets and have the council agree to give them a small patch of the park to build the skatepark, providing the committee would fund it. They also apply for a youth grant.</p> <p>Corey isn’t at school and Lauren had an urgent message to give him. Zac offers to take it to Corey. We find out Zac has never been to Corey’s house before. The house is derelict and full of rubbish. Zac can easily identify Corey’s ‘room’ – a bed on the verandah – because it is the only part that is neat and has skateboarding pictures up. He hears Warren Beggs come home and hides in Corey’s room. Warren can’t find what he is looking for, so smashes a plate on the ground. Zac manages to run away without Warren knowing he had been there.</p> <p>Zac meets Corey at his own house and doesn’t let Corey know where he’d been.</p> <p>Amy announces that they got the grant to build the skatepark, so there is much excitement.</p> <p>We are again signposted to the ‘bad event’, which could have something to do with Warren and Corey: <i>Sometimes, now, I wonder if things would have turned out differently if I had said something that afternoon. But it wasn’t as if I was going to tell Corey something he didn’t already know plenty about. I thought maybe I was being a panic merchant about Warren Beggs. Anyway. I don’t honestly think there was any chance Corey would ever leave his mum. The point is, I’ll never know for sure. (p 139)</i></p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>He warns Lauren about hurting Corey’s feelings, again showing how protective he is of Corey. He also neglects to tell Corey he visited his house – possibly to save Corey some embarrassment about his living conditions.</p> <p>LAUREN</p> <p>Perhaps she is not such a goody two shoes – she stands up to her uncle when he refuses to buy a raffle ticket: <i>‘I guess not, since you voted against every skatepark proposal in the last seven years.’ She looked him straight in the face, not exactly aggro but defiant. (p 121)</i></p> <p>WARREN BEGGS</p> <p>Is clearly aggressive and has a temper, which makes us think he probably is beating up Corey’s mother: <i>Ropable because he couldn’t find what he was looking for in the kitchen, Warren chucked one of the greasy plates onto the floor and smashed it.’ (p 135)</i></p>
11	<p>The skaters and the committee go to the local pizza place to celebrate (it’s owned by Stella’s parents).</p> <p>Mitchell ends up winning the raffle, which is the skateboard he always said he was waiting for. He is obviously stressed as this now means he has to skate.</p> <p>The cute plumber (Matt) is nearby and Jycinta follows him again. After being left alone by Jycinta, Marissa has a go on Riley’s skateboard and accidentally rides into Jycinta and Matt. Jycinta is furious at Marissa ‘ruining’ her chances</p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>He feels guilty about his lack of commitment to the committee: <i>All the kids and adults who worked on the skatepark campaign showed up, plus a lot of bludgers who never did anything to help. Bludgers like JT and Travis. Bludgers like me. (p 141)</i></p> <p>COREY</p> <p>He finally feels good about life: <i>‘Ha! I can’t believe how good this feels. Like, we did it and it worked.’ He squeezed his eyes shut. ‘I don’t wanna ever forget feeling this good, you know?’ (p 160)</i></p> <p>He even chooses to stay at his own place that night so he can share the news with his mum.</p>

	<p>with Matt, even though it is obvious he doesn't like her.</p> <p>Corey tries to kiss Lauren, but she turns her head and says she just wants to be friends.</p> <p>There is another reminder of the bad event: <i>Everything felt good at that moment. Really, heaps of things were complicated but at that moment it didn't matter. I wish I'd paid more attention, tried harder to burn it into my memory. Maybe if I'd known what was going to happen, I would have concentrated more on the good feeling.</i> (p 161)</p>	
12	<p>Zac is in class when he sees Constable Alexakis walk through the gate: <i>She was walking in a strange heavy way and even from a distance, you could see her face was grim.</i> (p 163)</p> <p>He is called into the principal's office and Constable Alexakis tells him that Warren Beggs, Trisha Matthews and Corey had all been found shot. Investigators concluded that Warren shot Corey, who was protecting his mother, then shot Trisha before shooting himself.</p> <p>Gail leaves work and takes Zac and Amy home.</p> <p>Zac doesn't go to school. They attend Corey's funeral, then Zac comes home, packs and moves in with his cousin in Glenthorpe, much to his mother's disappointment.</p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>Obviously upset by the death of his best friend. He is also upset by the nasty things the town gossips have to say and is offended by the funeral service, which is organised by a distant relative who really didn't care: <i>The way the relatives organised the funeral seemed like they were putting out the garbage. Embarrassing garbage.</i> (p 176)</p> <p>He needed to get away from it all: <i>'Have you seen the vultures in this town all round the carcass?' I said. 'It's bad enough people never did anything to help Corey when he was alive but now he's dead, they pour mud all over him and tear down who he really was.'</i> (p 178)</p> <p>GAIL</p> <p>She is also protective of Corey: <i>'That Trisha. I hate her guts right now,' Mum said, her voice hard and thick with anger. 'If Trisha were here right now, I'd shake her, I'd shout. Why couldn't she be a better mother to that boy?'</i> (p 170)</p> <p>She is really feeling her son's pain. She is grieving herself over the loss of Corey and is watching her son move away. She tries to talk him out of it but lets him go, trying to do what is best for him.</p>
13	<p>Zac is living in Glenthorpe and has a job packing shelves. He calls his mum every day (at her insistence). He hears that his sister is very angry with him for leaving, as it hurt their mum.</p> <p>He also hears that Lauren has changed since Corey died and is being rebellious. The kids also stopped skating, which meant Travis was bored and got himself into trouble. As a result, the council reneged on construction of the skatepark.</p> <p>Zac visits the Glenthorpe skatepark and runs into Lauren. They chat and Zac suggests they name the skatepark after Corey. Lauren tells him of the council's plans and tries to convince him to come back and help them get it back on track. She gives him back his skatepark model. He becomes angry.</p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>Is initially content 'sticking his head in the sand' by living in Glenthorpe. He loses further hope after hearing of the skatepark: <i>I stared at the model through the night, trying to conjure up the tiny imaginary skaters whooshing up and down the balsa-wood ramps, the way I used to. I saw wood and plaster and paint but no tiny skaters.</i> (p 192)</p> <p>LAUREN</p> <p>She is still determined to get the skatepark built for Corey: <i>'... I mean, you know how important the skatepark was to Corey -'</i> (p 191)</p>
14	<p>Ray Stone and the council decide to plant a rose garden where the skatepark was supposed to have gone, and make a ceremony of it.</p> <p>Lauren films the event, as she had planned with Gail to hold a demonstration. Hardly anyone shows up. Gail gets into an argument with Ray</p>	<p>GAIL</p> <p>Very supportive of the kids, even though her son had moved. She helps with the demonstration and confronts Stone when he jokes about the poor turnout: <i>'Because you old bigots wore the kids down!'</i> said Mum. <i>'You made them lose any faith that things could be fair.'</i> (p 196)</p>

	<p>Stone about the lack of turnout.</p> <p>Eventually, the skaters arrive, as well as a few teachers and locals, making a total of 150 supporters for the skatepark. We discover Zac had heard of the rose garden idea and decided to do something about it, so he called up the skaters and organised a petition.</p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>He has finally decided to do something about the skatepark and support his friends and family, which suggests he now has hope and is working through his grief.</p>
15	<p>The newspaper reports on the skaters' turnout and the council agrees to go ahead with the skatepark.</p> <p>Zac decides to move back to Narra with his family. He apologises to his sister. Gail also convinces him to return to high school.</p> <p>He and Lauren plan the opening of the skatepark and decide to hold a skating competition. Gail tells them they have approval to place a sign there saying 'Corey Matthews Memorial Skatepark'. They spend a lot of time working together on the opening.</p> <p>The skatepark is finished the day before the opening; however, they find out they were not allowed to name the skatepark after Corey as it was 'inappropriate'. Zac becomes angry and goes to leave. Gail tries to calm him down, but he runs away and skates by the river.</p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>He realises Lauren isn't as stuck up as he thought and begins to really like her: <i>I was supposed to be doing some other work, but I kept sneaking looks at Lauren ... I was beginning to think she wasn't as full of herself as I'd thought. (p 208)</i></p> <p>He is feeling some guilt over what happened to Corey.</p> <p>GAIL</p> <p>She is desperately trying to reach out to her son. She opens up and admits to Zac that she feels guilty for not protecting Corey more and she tells Zac what a good friend he had been and how proud she is of him.</p>
16	<p>Lauren goes after Zac and they sit down and have a good talk and a good cry. They kiss.</p> <p>Zac wanders down to the skatepark and has a vision of Corey skating on it.</p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>Is becoming closer with Lauren and feels she really understands him: <i>It's as if she could put my thoughts into words better than I could. (p 218)</i></p> <p>He comes to the realisation it is time to get on with his life, but didn't know how to go about it: <i>The truth is, terrible things can happen and sometimes you just have to stand there and let the terrible things wallop you in the guts. Then you have to find a way to get up again. That was the part I wasn't so sure how to do. (p 223)</i></p>
17	<p>Zac attends the skatepark opening and the day is perfect. The weather is great and everyone has a good time. Gail is applauded for her efforts and the skatepark is officially opened by Stone.</p> <p>Marissa and Mitchell are taught how to skate.</p>	<p>JYCINTA & MARISSA</p> <p>Marissa is having a great time learning how to skate. Jycinta screams at her, calling her a 'retard' and telling her to get off the board. Marissa ignores her, suggesting that Marissa has developed enough confidence to stand up to Jycinta.</p>
18	<p>Six months or so later. The skaters have landed on their feet – JT and Travis are working in good jobs and Stella is doing well on the professional skating circuit.</p> <p>Gail goes back to university.</p> <p>Lauren and Zac are still at school and dating.</p> <p>The school holds a memorial on the anniversary of Corey's death, with Lauren's video footage, and they place a plaque for Corey at the skatepark.</p>	<p>ZAC</p> <p>He is trying at school, mainly due to pressure from his mum and Lauren. This is significant, indicating that he sees a point in it and a future for himself.</p> <p>He and Lauren have a settled relationship: she is the only one who understands him in relation to how he is affected by Corey's death: <i>Sometimes, if Lauren and I are having a laugh about something, I can suddenly feel this twist of guilt in my guts. How can we laugh and have a good time when Corey is dead? But at least I can talk about it with Lauren and she understands better than anyone. (p 240)</i></p> <p>SKATERS</p> <p>All the skaters are happy, settled and working towards the future.</p>

THEMES, MOTIFS AND SYMBOLS

MOTIFS AND SYMBOLS

The Skatepark

The skatepark and associated campaign is the most vital symbol in *Getting Air*. The skatepark symbolises the hope for a future better – the dream of a populist society being attainable.

The campaign serves to demonstrate that determined peaceful action by the disempowered majority can effect change; that democracy works.

Youthful Hopes and Aspirations

If the skatepark represents the hope for a better future, then Zac's attitude towards it must be seen as a reflection of his own hopes and aspirations. Throughout the early stages of the story Zac is overwhelmingly negative towards the skatepark campaign, and this reflects the despondency he feels more generally towards his future. Zac's depression is beautifully captured in the following quote: *I stared at the model through the night, trying to conjure up the tiny imaginary skaters whooshing up and down the balsa-wood ramps, the way I used to. I saw wood and plaster and paint but no tiny skaters.* (p 192) Zac can no longer imagine his own future.

As the skatepark becomes a reality, Zac's imagination returns, culminating in an imagined vision of Corey skating in the park, and Zac's efforts at school improve – a clear reflection of a boy whose hope for the future is returning.

The symbolism of the skatepark as hope for the future is demonstrated through the other youths in Narragindi as well. JT and Travis, the generally well-meaning larrikin skaters, are initially presented as well-behaved. When, in Chapter Thirteen, the skatepark development is cancelled, the boys swiftly descend into aimlessness and troubled behaviour. Their hope for the future has been taken. As the story closes, and the skatepark is a completed reality, JT and Travis have settled into apprenticeships and steady, settled lives. The boys have had their hope delivered back to them and the future seems worth striving towards.

Again, echoing the theme of the skatepark as a symbol of hope, the school's model student Lauren even begins to find trouble as her hope is drained from her when the park is cancelled. Unlike some of the other youths, Lauren has an abundance of other reasons to hold on to her hope for the future (a wealthy family, solid scholastic results) and is able to fan the sparks of hope in others so they can bring the campaign – and hope – back to the town.

Utopian, Populist Society

As well as a symbol of hope, the skatepark demonstrates a society in which everyone is welcome and equal. As Zac describes it: *'A skatepark might look disorganised but under the surface, there's a system operating, with unspoken rules. People take turns and make space for each other without making a big deal out of it.'* (p 187)

The skaters and youths repeatedly demonstrate this utopian outlook in their behaviour. Everyone who is willing to join the society is welcome and this inclusiveness can be seen when the older boys help Riley, a younger Year 7 student, learn new skateboarding tricks (Chapter two), when Stella teaches Mitchell to skate, despite years of near-bullying from him (Chapter seventeen) and when Riley teaches Marissa to skate (Chapter seventeen).

Individualism

Although the book strongly features themes of community and societal inclusion, it also carries a message of individualism and the importance of judging people on merit.

The best example of this theme is Corey Matthews, the good-natured and diligent son of a broken and ill-regarded family. Corey is judged by and unwelcome in the very society for which he works so hard – even as he brings it hope in the form of the skatepark, the town still thinks poorly of him after his death. Corey is a clear symbol of the need to judge on merit and to respect a person's individualism.

Corey's sleeping area is also a significant symbol of his individualism. Corey's parents do not provide him with a bedroom, rather a section of the porch. The 'room' outside the house is a symbol of the way Corey exists outside his family; it is representative of his division from them.

While the Matthews house is filthy and falling apart, Corey's sleeping area is kept very tidy and clean – again demonstrating how he is different to the rest of his family. In simple terms, Corey is a clean-cut boy working to better his own environment striving to distinguish himself from a family trapped in squalor, negativity and hopelessness.

The Council's Rose Garden

The rose garden the council plans in place of the skatepark is symbolic of the council itself – old-fashioned (or tradition-bound), and, while at first glance it seems simply an attractive addition to the community, if one were to look past the first impressions it is full of dangerous thorns.

THEMES

Friendship and Family

The importance of solid family relationships and friendships is clearly shown when contrasting the Marlowe family and the Matthews family. Zac experiences difficulties, but gradually learns to overcome them due to the support of his mother, sister and friends; the novel ends with Zac settled and focusing on a happy future, despite having to deal with losing his best friend. Corey, on the other hand, comes from a family with an abusive stepfather and a mother who relies on Corey for protection. Although it is an extreme comparison, Corey rarely looked to the future and ended up dead, despite the potential for a bright future. The only time Corey experienced success was when he was on the skatepark committee – organised by Zac's mother.

QUOTES:

- *It's amazing when you see a friend do something you never thought he could do. (p 113)*
- *Sometimes, if Lauren and I are having a laugh about something, I can suddenly feel this twist of guilt in my guts. How can we laugh and have a good time when Corey is dead? But at least I can talk about it with Lauren and she understands better than anyone. (p 240)*
- *It's a shame Mum comes into the story here because you might get the wrong impression. (p 50)*

Grief and Loss

Different reactions to grief and loss are evident through the petition for the skatepark and after the Matthews tragedy. We experience Zac's initial reaction to loss when the skatepark campaign begins – he withdraws, as he had been burnt once before.

Grief is also explored when Corey dies. We see how Zac deals with the loss of the only person who understands him; Gail deals with the guilt of not having done more as well as having to watch her son grieve; and finally how a community can be affected by a tragedy.

QUOTES:

- *'That Trisha. I hate her guts right now,' Mum said, her voice hard and thick with anger. 'If Trisha were here right now, I'd shake her, I'd shout. Why couldn't she be a better mother to that boy?'* (p 170)
- *Sometimes, if Lauren and I are having a laugh about something, I can suddenly feel this twist of guilt in my guts. How can we laugh and have a good time when Corey is dead? But at least I can talk about it with Lauren and she understands better than anyone.* (p 240)
- *The truth is, terrible things can happen and sometimes you just have to stand there and let the terrible things wallop you in the guts. Then you have to find a way to get up again. That was the part I wasn't so sure how to do.* (p 223)

Prejudice

The novel shows how dangerous prejudice can be. Corey and his family are victims of prejudice. Most townsfolk assume Corey is a criminal, because the family he belongs to is 'no good'. Corey is misjudged and as a result he withdraws and is killed because no one is willing to help him.

Although Gail is very angry with Trisha for 'not being a better mother to that boy', Trisha would most likely have experienced the same prejudice from the townsfolk. This (and fear) possibly explains why she was reluctant to come forward about the abuse she was dealing with at the hands of her boyfriend.

The Narragindi youths are also victimised by Ray Stone and a number of adults in the town; he instantly assumes they damage his car with their evil skateboarding, when it was in fact an elderly gentleman.

QUOTES:

- *'Corey must've been able to hear her – he was only a couple of metres away. But he kept his head down and acted like he couldn't hear. Corey always acted like that: he never retaliated or let on that it got to him. I don't know how he did it.'* (p 8)
- *'I guess I'm just a ratbag skater moron.'* (p 47)
- *'You have to do it. Since we live in Grumpsville, run by nasty old boofheads who grew up and forgot they were ever kids.'* (Gail, p 55)
- *'I thought Lauren Saxelby was a snob. I thought a girl like her could never respect someone like Corey Matthews. I thought I knew everything.'* (p 83)
- *The way the relatives organised the funeral seemed like they were putting out the garbage. Embarrassing garbage.* (p 176)
- *'Have you seen the vultures in this town all round the carcass?' I said. 'It's bad enough people never did anything to help Corey when he was alive but now he's dead, they pour mud all over him and tear down who he really was.'* (p 178)
- *'Because you old bigots wore the kids down!' said Mum. 'You made them lose any faith that things could be fair.'* (p 196)
- *'What you want is to put all the kids – well, the boys – put all the boys in an underground bunker when they hit twelve and not let them out until they turn eighteen, ready to be workers and members of the RSL. Skaters and their mates – they're our kids. This town's children. We owe them a bit more than this crap.'* (Gail to Ray Stone, p 197)
- *'It'd be good to get an apprenticeship,' said Corey. 'But who in Narra'd give me an apprenticeship? No one.' That was true, even though I wished it wasn't. No one in Narragindi would give a Matthews kid any chance.* (p 95)

Determination and Perseverance

Although dealing with some tragic issues, the novel contains a strong message about perseverance and determination.

This is shown throughout the novel with Zac. Although he does have a negative attitude towards the skatepark campaign, he eventually works through this and has a positive outlook to life.

QUOTE:

Contrast between his attitude at the start and the end of the novel:

- *'We'll never get a skatepark in Narragindi!' My voice was getting louder and harder. 'You're bashing your head against a brick wall! Stop kidding yourself!'* (p 69)
- *The truth is, terrible things can happen and sometimes you just have to stand there and let the terrible things wallop you in the guts. Then you have to find a way to get up again. That was the part I wasn't so sure how to do.* (p 223)

Perhaps more importantly, though, is the contrast between Trisha and Gail. Both women grew up in Narragindi, went to the same school, had teen pregnancies and raised their children without a father. As a result, their lives could have turned out to be very similar. However, due to Gail's perseverance and determination, she had a good life and brought her children up well. Trisha, on the other hand, ended up with an abusive boyfriend, relied on her son for support and ended up killed.

QUOTES:

A good contrast between the mothers:

- *Trisha Matthews looked way older than my mum – because she had a hard life, I suppose.* (p 58)
- *It's a shame Mum comes into the story here because you might get the wrong impression.* (p 50)
- *She really liked having Corey around. He was part of our family, in a way. She was glad to see him having a good time, with no worries pressing on his mind. Even if it was just for a little while.* (p 66)

Bullying – Power and Powerlessness

There are a number of examples of bullying and how destructive this can be. This is shown in the relationship between Corey and his family vs Warren Beggs and the youths/skaters vs Ray Stone.

Bullying is taken to the extreme with Corey and Warren Beggs; Corey and his mother are killed by a violent bully.

QUOTES:

- *Warren Beggs lunged across the street and blocked the footpath in front of us. Next to me, Corey flinched as if he'd touched a live wire.* (p 9)
- *Warren grunted at Corey like he was a waste of space and then stalked back to his van.* (p 11)
- *Ropable because he couldn't find what he was looking for in the kitchen, Warren chucked one of the greasy plates onto the floor and smashed it.* (p 135)

The skaters are also bullied by the 'old bigots' on the council, who fight them every step of the way. The skaters win in the end, but only after a long, arduous process.

QUOTES:

- *'You can't win against a guy like Stone,' I pointed out to Travis. 'So don't take him on.'* (p 23)
- *'Because you old bigots wore the kids down!' said Mum. 'You made them lose any faith that things could be fair.'* (p 196)
- *'What you want is to put all the kids – well, the boys – put all the boys in an underground bunker when they hit twelve and not let them out until they turn eighteen, ready to be workers and members of the RSL. Skaters and their mates – they're our kids. This town's children. We owe them a bit more than this crap.'* (Gail to Ray Stone, p 197)

The townsfolk's gossip and attitude does not really 'bully' Corey, but it does cement his feelings of powerlessness.

QUOTES:

- *'I guess I'm just a ratbag skater moron.'* (p 47)
- *'Anyway,' said Corey. 'Right now the main thing is making sure Mum's okay and that. So not much point thinking about it – y'know, the future.'* (p 95)
- *'Have you seen the vultures in this town all round the carcass?' I said. 'It's bad enough people never did anything to help Corey when he was alive but now he's dead, they pour mud all over him and tear down who he really was.'* (p 178)
- *'It'd be good to get an apprenticeship,' said Corey. 'But who in Narra'd give me an apprenticeship? No one.' That was true, even though I wished it wasn't. No one in Narragindi would give a Matthews kid any chance.* (p 95)

Jycinta is very controlling of Marissa. Eventually, Marissa works up the courage to ignore Jycinta and be her own person.

QUOTES:

- *Jycinta used a tough voice, like a farmer giving a disobedient kelpie an order. 'I said let's go, Marissa.'* (p 80)
- *'Excuse me?!' screeched Jycinta, flashing Marissa a poisonous look. 'You will not be going in the shot anything!'* (p 103)
- *'Thanks for stuffing things up for me and Matt. First you do that stupid skateboard act which, y'know, makes me look stupid – as your friend. And then you stood there cackling like a retarded chicken.'* (p 157)

Skateboarding

Skateboarding culture is also a theme in the novel. The way the skaters behave when skating outside the town hall and eventually in their skatepark is a commentary on how a civil society should be run. Everyone is welcome – younger kids, girls who come to watch, etc. The only unspoken 'rule' is to treat each other with respect. The strong help the weak, for example, the older boys help Riley, a Year 7, learn new skateboarding tricks (Chapter 2); Stella teaches Mitchell to skate, despite all his cruel comments to her over the years (Chapter 17) and Riley teaches Marissa to skate (Chapter 17).

QUOTE:

- *A skatepark might look disorganised but under the surface, there's a system operating, with unspoken rules. People take turns and make space for each other without making a big deal out of it.* (p 187)

Domestic Violence

The nature and destructiveness of domestic violence is an underlying theme in the novel. This is shown through Warren Begg's treatment of Corey's family who are killed in a domestic dispute. It also touches on women's reluctance to report domestic violence; Constable Alexakis encourages Trisha to speak up, but she is too shy.

QUOTES:

- *I tried not to stare but it was hard to miss the marks on Trisha's face: bruises, a swollen, split lip and a bloody, messy part around her eye, like boxers get.* (p 59)
- *'That Trisha. I hate her guts right now,' Mum said, her voice hard and thick with anger. 'If Trisha were here right now, I'd shake her, I'd shout. Why couldn't she be a better mother to that boy?'* (p 170)

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Zac Marlowe

Getting Air's main character, Zac, is fifteen and lives in a small NSW country town called Narragindi. He and his best friend, Corey Matthews, love skateboarding. The novel is the story of Zac's rites of passage as he deals with the death of his best friend.

Zac hates his town and is bored, which reflects his attitude to life, or rather, his future. He is not nasty, though – Zac shows a great deal of respect for those who respect him and his friends, but initially he lacks hope. Zac is somewhat hardened by life. He shows apathy towards his schoolwork, feeling it is irrelevant compared to what he and Corey (his best friend) face in the 'real world'.

He does not like Lauren, the school's 'good girl' who films the skaters as he thinks she is full of herself and treats the skaters like scum. At the start of the story, he behaves quite out of character in front of Lauren – he is rude to her, which is unusual, and disobeys a police officer the skaters seem to have some respect for.

When Lauren and the skaters are convinced by Zac's mother to re-campaign for a skatepark in the town (the first attempt was unsuccessful), Zac is very negative and refuses to get involved. He was upset by the previous skatepark proposal being knocked back and feels that trying again is useless, again suggesting he is hardened, as well as trying to protect the people he loves from being disappointed.

Zac has a great deal of respect for his mother. As he retells how they pick up the skateboard that was confiscated, he mentions his mother is grumpy, but that it is unusual. He then explains how tough she has had it and that she is normally *funny and good value* (p 50). He feels his mum got a raw deal out of life, which helps explain why he was so hardened.

He is an extremely loyal friend to Corey. He warns Lauren about hurting Corey's feelings. He also neglects to tell Corey he visited his house – possibly to save Corey some embarrassment about his living conditions.

After the skatepark campaign is approved, Zac feels guilty about his lack of commitment to the committee when he joins in the celebrations. He is just showing signs of beginning to become excited about the skatepark and a future, when he is told Corey had been shot by his stepfather. This sends him very quickly back to his negative outlook. He is so angry and disappointed in the way the town treated Corey in life and after his death that he runs away to live with his cousin.

When Lauren tells him of the council's plans to renege on the skatepark, he realises it is time to get on with his life, but doesn't know how to go about it. Zac finally decides to go back home and do something about the skatepark and support his friends and family, which suggests his hope for the future has returned and that he is working through his grief over Corey's death.

Zac comes to realise that Lauren isn't as stuck-up as he thought and dates her. The novel ends with him finally trying at school, mainly due to pressure from his mum and Lauren. This is significant, as it indicates that he sees a point in it and is working towards a future.

QUOTES:

His attitude to life at the beginning of the novel; feeling that there is no hope:

- *Before we get into what happened last year, you need to understand something about our town: Narragindi is a hole. If you're after movies, proper shops, a swimming pool, a go kart track decent live bands, a dance club or any kind of major fun, don't bother coming to Narra. (p 2)*

- *I remember being deadset keen like that when I was Riley's age. (p 15)*
- *Flaked out there on the beach, I realised I had a big stupid smile on my face, like I was that happy little kid again. (p 46)*
- *The Aztecs – who really cares about them? (p 63)*
- *'We'll never get a skatepark in Narragindi!' My voice was getting louder and harder. 'You're bashing your head against a brick wall! Stop kidding yourself!' (p 69)*
- *I thought Lauren Saxelby was a snob. I thought a girl like her could never respect someone like Corey Matthews. I thought I knew everything. (p 83)*
- *All the kids and adults who worked on the skatepark campaign showed up, plus a lot of bludgers who never did anything to help. Bludgers like JT and Travis. Bludgers like me. (p 141)*
- *I stared at the model through the night, trying to conjure up the tiny imaginary skaters whooshing up and down the balsa-wood ramps, the way I used to. I saw wood and plaster and paint but no tiny skaters. (p 192)*

How his attitude has changed by the end of the novel:

- *The truth is, terrible things can happen and sometimes you just have to stand there and let the terrible things wallop you in the guts. Then you have to find a way to get up again. That was the part I wasn't so sure how to do. (p 223)*

The respect he has for his mother and how she has struggled:

- *It's a shame Mum comes into the story here because you might get the wrong impression. (p 50)*

His respect for and protectiveness of Corey:

- *'Nah, it's your business if you wanna help out on the new campaign. But I'd hate to see you get all psyched up and then –'
'And then the grumpy old guys kill it dead. That's what you think will happen,' said Corey.
'I remember how lousy it felt, that's all.' I said. (pp 97–98)*
- *It's amazing when you see a friend do something you never thought he could do. (p 113)*
- *The way the relatives organised the funeral seemed like they were putting out the garbage. Embarrassing garbage. (p 176)*
- *'Have you seen the vultures in this town all round the carcass?' I said. 'It's bad enough people never did anything to help Corey when he was alive but now he's dead, they pour mud all over him and tear down who he really was.' (p 178)*

His matter-of-fact approach:

- *It's not a big deal and I don't want to dump some 'poor Zac' story on you. I'm just explaining why Mum had reason to be tired and pissed off sometimes. (p 51)*

His respectful attitude towards his mates and those who don't prejudge the youths of the town:

- *I know a lot of people get annoyed by guys like JT. He did go off at the mouth too much and his jokes were generally pretty lame. But I reckoned he was good value. (p 17)*

His attitude towards Lauren:

- *Did she think of us skaters as a little 'project' she could take on to earn herself more Good Girl points? (p 76)*
- *I thought Lauren Saxelby was a snob. I thought a girl like her could never respect someone like Corey Matthews. I thought I knew everything. (p 83)*
- *I was supposed to be doing some other work, but I kept sneaking looks at Lauren ... I was beginning to think she wasn't as full of herself as I'd thought. (p 208)*
- *It's as if she [Lauren] could put my thoughts into words better than I could. (p 218)*
- *Sometimes, if Lauren and I are having a laugh about something, I can suddenly feel this twist of guilt in my guts. How can we laugh and have a good time when Corey is dead? But at least I can talk about it with Lauren and she understands better than anyone. (p 240)*

His guilt over his refusal to help on the skatepark campaign:

- *All the kids and adults who worked on the skatepark campaign showed up, plus a lot of bludgers who never did anything to help. Bludgers like JT and Travis. Bludgers like me. (p 141)*

Corey Matthews

Zac tells us Corey is fifteen also. His family has a bad reputation in the town. His father left his mother, Trisha, who was a teenage mother. Trisha is living with a 'bad' boyfriend (Warren Beggs), who is an alcoholic. Corey is scared of Warren and is ashamed of his family. As a result, he is very quiet and withdrawn, except with those he trusts.

He is constantly being judged by the community and most of his teachers as a criminal, although Corey is actually very thoughtful and stays out of trouble. He is simply discriminated against because 'he is a Matthews'. As a result, he avoids eye contact with others and stays quiet. In one instance, he runs away from the police even though he is innocent, because he assumes they will blame him for the incident.

Although Corey is shy, he is not weak. He falls in love with Lauren Saxelby, even though his best friend hates her, and he often mentions how lovely she is. Likewise, he eagerly participates in the skatepark campaign despite Zac's negativity. It takes a lot of courage to stand up to your best friend.

We find out that his stepfather is physically abusing Corey's mother and is at least verbally abusive towards Corey. He often does not want to go home and spends a lot of his time staying at Zac's. When he does go home, it is usually when his mother is going through a rough patch or needs protection; Corey is clearly the 'parent' in the relationship.

Despite his courage, Corey feels his only future is protecting his mother, living one day to the next. Lauren asks him what he wants to do when he leaves school, and it bothers him. He wants to be an apprentice, but feels no one in the town would give a 'Matthews' a job. When the council agrees to build the skatepark, he comments that he finally feels good about life.

Corey dies in a way which epitomises his character – he is shot by Warren Beggs in an attempt to protect his mother.

QUOTES:

About his shyness:

- *Corey must've been able to hear her – he was only a couple of metres away. But he kept his head down and acted like he couldn't hear. Corey always acted like that: he never retaliated or let on that it got to him. I don't know how he did it. (p 8)*
- *That was the thing about Corey: he could make it so people hardly noticed he was there. (p 18)*

About his upbringing:

- *If anyone saw Corey Matthews wandering down the main street of Narra with a skateboard under his arm, they would've had no idea of the trouble he had to handle in his life. (p 12)*

His feelings for Lauren and his insistence:

- *'I was in sick bay with her one time ... She talked to me. She was nice,' Corey insisted in his quiet Corey way. (p 31)*
- *She pulled a goofy face, sending herself up. Corey laughed. From that moment on, he was a goner – that is, totally in love with Lauren Saxelby. (p 87)*

His attitude to his life:

- *'I guess I'm just a ratbag skater moron.' (p47)*
- *'Anyway,' said Corey. 'Right now the main thing is making sure Mum's okay and that. So not much point thinking about it – y'know, the future.' (p 95)*
- *'Ha! I can't believe how good this feels. Like, we did it and it worked.' He squeezed his eyes shut. 'I don't wanna ever forget feeling this good, you know?' (p 160)*

The reliance his mother has on him:

- *Trisha turned her head, not letting Corey look at her swollen eye. But when she nearly fell over, wobbling on her feet, she let him steady her. (p 61)*
- *'Anyway,' said Corey. 'Right now the main thing is making sure Mum's okay and that. So not much point thinking about it – y'know, the future.' (p 95)*

The town's attitude towards him:

- *'Have you seen the vultures in this town all round the carcass?' I said. 'It's bad enough people never did anything to help Corey when he was alive but now he's dead, they pour mud all over him and tear down who he really was.' (p 178)*

Gail, Zac's mum

Gail has it tough – she had a teen pregnancy and Zac's father left her, so she has to work long hours at the chemist to make ends meet. Despite this, she is a devoted and supportive mother to her two children. She does little things such as using her lunch hour to watch her children compete at the swimming sports. She is also great in a crisis. After Corey dies, Zac leaves home and although this must break her heart as she is grieving herself, she lets him go, knowing it is what he needs. Gail has a great sense of humour and is considered to be 'good value' by her son.

Although they are struggling themselves, she has no problem with Corey staying all the time and clearly acts as a second mother, considering Corey's own mother is clearly incapable of this task. When Corey and Trisha are both shot, Gail is very angry at Trisha for 'letting it happen' to Corey and for being a bad mother. Gail also feels a lot of guilt for not doing more to help Corey.

This maternal instinct extends to all the youths in the town: she is the one who initiates the skatepark campaign for the sake of her son (despite his lack of enthusiasm) and the other youths in the town. She practically leads the campaign, helping the kids rally against the council even though her son has left, and she confronts Ray Stone when he reneges on the agreement.

QUOTES:

Her sense of humour:

- *The police officer asks her how she is and she replies, after making choking and strangling noises, 'I'm overworked, disappointed by life, driven mental by my kids – y'know, great.' (p 51)*

Her maternal attitude/protectiveness towards Corey and the other youths:

- *'She really liked having Corey around. He was part of our family, in a way. She was glad to see him having a good time, with no worries pressing on his mind. Even if it was just for a little while.' (p 66)*
- *'That Trisha. I hate her guts right now,' Mum said, her voice hard and thick with anger. 'If Trisha were here right now, I'd shake her, I'd shout. Why couldn't she be a better mother to that boy?' (p 170)*
- *'Because you old bigots wore the kids down!' said Mum. 'You made them lose any faith that things could be fair.' (p 196)*

Lauren Saxelby

Lauren Saxelby is the story's 'good girl' and a love interest for both Corey and Zac. She works hard in school, is pretty and comes from a rich family. She also happens to be Ray Stone's niece. Although we hear from Zac that she is 'full of herself', her actions contradict this and we find out she is very supportive of the skaters, even though they are not of the same social status. She makes snide comments about the 'bitchy' girls, supports the skatepark campaign and is polite and pleasant. She also gets along very well with Corey and does not judge him.

Throughout the story we realise she is quite strong-willed. She stands up to her uncle about building a skatepark – she is no goody-two-shoes when she is determined! Despite the lack of enthusiasm from Zac after Corey's death, she still fights hard for the skatepark campaign and travels an hour and a half to find Zac to convince him to come back and support the cause.

QUOTES:

About her personality and attitude towards the skaters:

- *I thought Lauren would screw up her nose at those two monkeys and walk away, but amazingly, she didn't. 'Yeah, "youth activity" is pretty tragic,' she said with an embarrassed smile. (p 28)*

Her strong moral ground:

- *'I guess not, since you voted against every skatepark proposal in the last seven years.' She looked him straight in the face, not exactly aggro but defiant. (p 121)*

Trisha Matthews

Trisha is Corey's mother, who comes from a family with a bad reputation. She became pregnant with Corey when she was a teenager and it is believed his father is dead or in jail, along with most of the males in the family. Trisha has an abusive boyfriend and it is implied that she relies on Corey to protect her. The family lives in a dilapidated house which is constantly dirty and ill-kept.

QUOTE:

About her life:

- *But Trisha Matthews looked way older than my mum – because she had a hard life, I suppose. (p 58)*

About her reliance on her son:

- *Trisha turned her head, not letting Corey look at her swollen eye. But when she nearly fell over, wobbling on her feet, she let him steady her (p 61).*

Warren Beggs

Warren Beggs is the main villain in the story, and the scene is set in the very first chapter when he is seen drunk and disorderly outside the bar. He is Corey's mother's boyfriend. He is a drunk who is talked about by the townsfolk. Corey is afraid of him as he is clearly aggressive and has a temper, which makes us believe that he is indeed physically abusing Corey's mother. He ends up shooting Corey (who was trying to protect his mother), Trisha and then himself.

We are given no insight into his perspective so as not to evoke any sympathy for this character.

QUOTES:

About his temper and attitude:

- *The terrifying thing was the look in Warren Begg's eyes. That look could suck the air out of your lungs and make it impossible to speak or breathe, let alone run. (p 9)*
- *Corey's mother had hooked up with a few different boyfriends and most of them were dropkicks and mongrels. But Warren Beggs was the nastiest mongrel of them all. (p 10)*
- *Warren grunted at Corey like he was a waste of space and then stalked back to his van. (p 11)*
- *Ropable because he couldn't find what he was looking for in the kitchen, Warren chucked one of the greasy plates onto the floor and smashed it. (p 135)*

Ray Stone

Ray Stone is one of the story's villains. He is a councillor who has his sights set on being Mayor. He seems to have a vendetta against the youths of the town, faulting their every move. For example, he instantly blames the skaters, then Corey, for the damage to his car when in fact it was an elderly gentleman who caused the damage.

He is Lauren Saxelby's uncle and constantly patronises her, in particular her interest in the skatepark campaign.

QUOTES:

About his attitude:

- *What can I tell you about Ray Stone? Apart from the fact that he was a maggot. (p 21)*
- *When Ray marched around town wearing his fancy suits, he thought he was a Very Important Guy. (p 21)*

Constable Alexakis

Constable Alexiakis is a friendly female police officer. Although she does enforce the law (it is her job!) she is fairly sympathetic towards the skaters. She is also one of the few adults in the town who does not assume the worst about Corey simply because of who his family is.

She does what she can to encourage Trisha Matthews to report the physical abuse she suffers at the hand of her partner, Warren Beggs, but is unsuccessful.

QUOTE:

About her character:

- *Alexakis was actually pretty sympathetic but in the end, she had to do her job – be a cop – and make us stop skating. (p 33)*

THE SKATEPARK KIDS

Jycinta and Marissa

Jycinta is the school 'mean girl' who hangs out at the skatepark with her loyal follower, Marissa. They spend their time preening themselves and gossiping. Jycinta is also chasing after an older boy, Matt, who is clearly disinterested in her. Unfortunately poor Marissa is constantly blamed for Matt's brush-offs, at one point being called a 'retard'.

Initially, Marissa tries to stand up to her a little and even showed signs of wanting to join in with the skaters, but is constantly held back by Jycinta. With the help of the skatepark kids, Marissa eventually grows able to stand up for herself against Jycinta and enjoys herself.

QUOTE:

- *Jycinta used a tough voice, like a farmer giving a disobedient kelpie an order. 'I said let's go, Marissa.' (p 80)*

JT (Jamie Throsby)

JT is a tall, clumsy Year 10 boy. He is quite a larrikin with a smart mouth, but settles down at the end of the novel.

Travis

Travis is best friends with JT, also in Year 10. He is muscly and is in trouble a lot. He falls in with the wrong crowd (his brother's mates) when Zac leaves, but ends up in a good job and happy.

Stella

Sella is a Year 9 girl. She initially had problems being a girl and a skater, but she is good at it and they now accept her. She is helpful and is keen to help Mitchell improve his skating skills, despite the fact he has made some rude comments to her over the years. She ends up on the pro-skating circuit.

Riley

Riley is a Year 7 boy who is trying hard to learn new skating tricks. He is the youngest of the skaters and they all do their best to look out for him.

Mitchell

Another Year 10 skater. He has a very keen interest in the magazines, gear, etc. but does not actually skate – he is waiting for the perfect board. He ends up getting the perfect board in a raffle and is scared rigid of actually skating on it! With the help of Stella and the rest of the group, he eventually learns to skate.

Amy

Amy is Zac's little sister and she is in Year 7. She is not girly and loves soccer and skateboarding. She is heavily involved in the skatepark campaign. Amy is very supportive and protective of her mother. When Zac leaves after Corey's death, she is very angry with him because it hurt their mother, but Amy forgives him quickly.

GETTING AIR

Teaching Support Kit

ACTIVITIES

Below is a list of different post-reading classroom activities you might wish to do.

Activities on Background, Setting and Structure

Activity 1 – *Question Time!*

- Refer to BLM 1

Activity 2A – *Fill In The Gaps*

- Refer to BLM 2

Activity 2B – *You Be The Author*

- Discuss the author's writing style – it is very frank and authentic: it sounds like a fifteen-year-old boy has written it.
- Have students write a short story mimicking the author's style.

Activities on Plot

Activity 3A – *Timeline*

- Refer to BLM 3

Activity 3B – *Storyboards*

- Have students create a storyboard/comic strip to re-tell the main events in the story.

Activities on Characters

Activity 4 – *Character Webs*

- Refer to BLM 4
- You might wish to print/copy this on A3 paper.
- You might also have your students complete more than one character.

Activity 5 – *Wanted: Young Hooligans!*

- Refer to BLM 5

Activities on Themes

Activity 6 – *Themes Chart*

- Refer to BLM 6. Use the notes on themes in this Support Guide to aid correction.

Activity 7 – *Bullying: Roleplay Scenarios*

- Brainstorm as a class ways to deal with bullying.
- Refer to BLM 7

Activity 8 – *Determination and Perseverance: Approach Your Local Council*

- Refer to BLM 8

Activity 9 – *How to Cope with Grief and Loss*

- Brainstorm the ways in which different people handle grief. Ask students to comment on what they do when they are grieving (if they feel comfortable sharing). You might wish to discuss the loss of a pet, friend or relative.
- Refer to BLM 9

Activity 10 – *Changing Symbols*

- Have students re-write the story (briefly!) using a theme other than skateboarding, for example, a group of girls who love shopping, a basketball group, etc.

Activity 11 – *Architect Extravaganza*

- Have students design their own skatepark. This can be a plan, a model or both.

Activity 12 – *Novel vs Play*

- Locate a copy of the script for the screenplay, *Skate*. Have students compare events in the novel and the play. Discuss why they think these are different.

Activity 13 – *Domestic Violence* – **this activity is better suited to older age groups**

- Refer to BLM 10

Activities on Text Analysis

Activity 14 – *Text Response Essay Questions*

- Essay Topics:
 - In *Getting Air*, Zac learns that even though life is sometimes unfair, you still need to persevere to succeed. How does the novel show the importance of determination and perseverance? Discuss, using examples from the text.
 - By the end of the novel, Zac's outlook on life is totally different. Discuss, using examples from the text.
 - *Getting Air* is a novel about abuse of power and prejudice. Do you agree?
 - *Getting Air* is a story about struggles and hardships. Do you agree?
 - *Getting Air* shows us how important it is for communities to stick together. Do you agree?

Activity 15 – *Chapter Review Questions*

- Refer to BLM 11

GETTING AIR
Teaching Support Kit

STUDENT WORKSHEETS

QUESTION TIME!

Background, Setting and Structure

1. What narrative style has the author chosen?

2. Describe the author's language use.

3. How would the story be different if it was told in third person narration and written using formal language?

4. The story is set in a small country town in Australia, yet we are given very little description as to what the town looks like. There is also no date/time given. Why do you think the author neglected to do these things?

5. The author gives us little pieces of background information at a time, for example, when explaining to us about Corey's home life. Why didn't she tell us all about it at the start, then move on with the plot? That is, why did she choose to give us the information in small chunks?

Filling in the Gaps

There are a number of 'gaps' in the story. Authors often leave gaps so it allows us to use our imaginations to fill them in, giving us more control over what the story means to us.

Choose one of the following gaps in the novel and fill in the blanks – tell us what you think happened.

Challenge: Try to use the same writing style as the author!

- Explain what happened with the first skatepark campaign.
- Explain what happened with Corey and his mother when she was in a hospital in Glenthorpe.
- Explain the fight at Corey's house and how he was killed.
- Explain how Lauren and/or the skaters started to get into trouble after Corey's death.
- Explain how Zac rallied the skaters together for the rose garden planting.
- Explain in more detail what Zac's life was like when he lived in Glenthorpe.
- Explain what Stella's life is like on the professional skating circuit.



TIMELINE

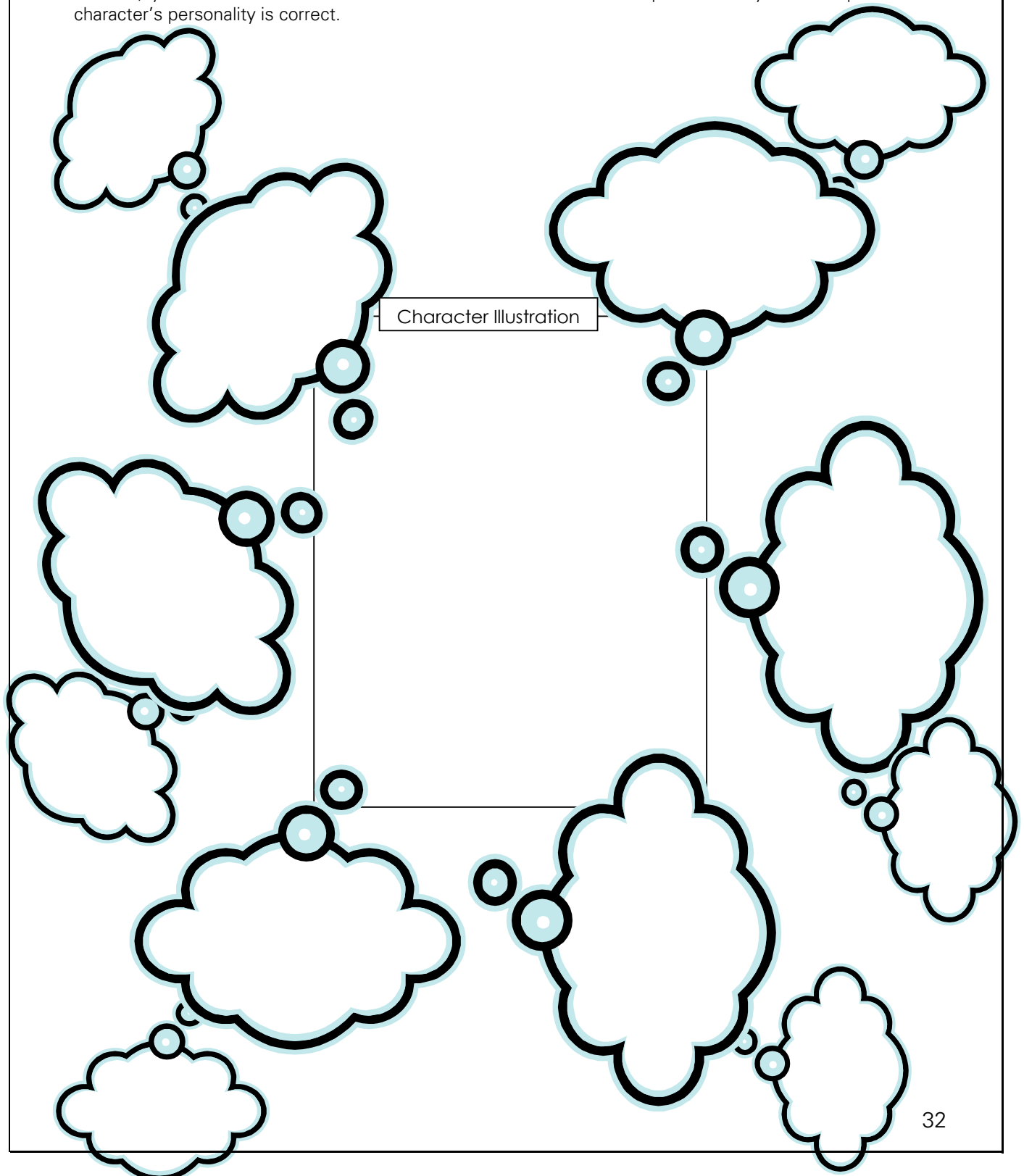
Cut out the events in the story. Paste them into your workbooks in the correct order.

The school athletics carnival, where Corey gets up and speaks about the skatepark campaign.	Ray Stone kicks the skaters away from skating around the Town Hall.
The council refuse to build the skatepark and want to plant a rose garden instead.	Gail asks Lauren if they can use her video to help with the skatepark campaign.
Zac and Gail run into Corey and Trisha. Trisha is rude, but then apologises. We think Trisha is having a rough time with her boyfriend.	150 skaters and townsfolk rally the council and end up convincing them to build the skatepark.
Lauren Saxelby films the skaters and Zac refuses to skate in front of her. He ends up having his skateboard confiscated.	The school holds a memorial service for Corey.
Gail drives Corey to Glenthorpe to visit his mum in hospital.	Zac goes to Corey's house and hides from Warren Beggs.
The council agrees to build the skatepark because the Youth Grant is approved.	Mr. Proudfoot drives into Ray Stone's car.
Zac runs away to Glenthorpe.	Warren Beggs is drunk and asks Corey where his mother is.
Corey and his mother are killed by Warren Beggs.	Gail convinces Corey and Amy to start campaigning for a skatepark again.

CHARACTER WEBS

Character: _____

Complete the following mind map of one of the characters in *Getting Air*. In the first circle of bubbles, you will need to write down something that describes the character's personality. In the second circle of bubbles, you will need to write down evidence from the book that proves that your description of the character's personality is correct.



WANTED: YOUNG HOOLIGANS!

Ray Stone is mad – those darn kids keep skating in places they shouldn't and constantly cause trouble!

He has approached you to design some 'wanted' poster to help the townsfolk recognise the trouble makers and stop them from skating around the town.

Choose one of the following skaters:

- Zac
- Corey
- JT
- Travis
- Riley
- Mitchell
- Stella
- Jycinta and Marissa (just for hanging around!)
- Lauren (for all that troublesome videoing!)
- Gail (for encouraging them!)



Your 'wanted' poster will need to include:

- A picture of the 'offender'
- A description – include their physical appearance, hobbies, attitudes, etc
- Which 'crime' they are guilty of (hint: think of their misdemeanours that have annoyed Ray Stone)

Grading Criteria:

Criteria	Very High 5	High 4	Med 3	Low 2	Very Low 1
Your understanding of the characters.					
How well your poster conveyed accurate information.					
Your overall preparation and presentation.					

Themes Chart

The following themes are present in the novel. See how many examples of the theme you can find in the story. There is a blank row for you to choose a theme of your own.

Theme	Examples from the novel
Friendship and Family Relationships	
Grief and Loss	
Prejudice	
Determination and Perseverance	
Bullying – Power and Powerlessness	
Skateboarding	
Domestic Violence	
?	

Bullying: Roleplay Scenarios

In *Getting Air*, there are many instances of bullying. For example, Corey and his mother are bullied by Warren Beggs, the skaters are bullied by Ray Stone and Jycinta bullies Marissa. Unfortunately, most people will encounter bullies in their lifetime.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

In small groups (3 people), look at the following scenarios and decide together what you would say or do in each situation. Choose one scenario to act out to the class.

1. One of the smart girls makes fun of you and other students who are not good at Maths.
2. You are hanging out with your friends. You all go into the toilets and while you are there, they run away from you.
3. Another student is jealous because you became School Captain. They tell everyone that you only got the position because you bribed the teacher in charge.
4. A large student, who is well known for his meanness, finds you alone in the locker bays. He threatens to beat you up if you do not give him your lunch money.
5. You arrive at your locker to find that someone has played a prank and placed a stink bomb in there.
6. You and your friends are down at the local primary school playing basketball. A group of bigger kids arrive and take over the court.
7. You are playing cricket with your friends and one of the kids accidentally hits the cricket ball through a classroom window. The teachers ask what happened, and the rest of the group blames you.



Determination and Perseverance: Approach Your Local Council

Through determination and a lot of hard work, Gail and the skaters finally managed to get the skatepark built.

It would have been a lot easier to give up – the campaign was refused twice – but they still continued and ended up getting what they wanted.

Think of an issue that is affecting where you live. For example, there may be too much litter, a number of dog attacks from dog walkers who don't use leads, not enough playgrounds, etc.

Write a letter to your local council asking them to fix the problem. You will need to think of at least three convincing arguments to persuade them.

The aim of writing a letter like this is to state your opinion strongly and persuade the reader that your argument is the 'right' one.

WRITING HINTS

1. Start strongly. How can you grab your reader's attention?
2. Use lots of examples, case studies and statistics.
3. Don't be afraid to use emotive language – but avoid the temptation to overdo it.
4. Make sure your conclusion is a strong one, which deliberately repeats the major arguments you have used and sums up your point of view effectively. What is something you can leave your reader thinking about?

Determination and Perseverance: Approach Your Local Council

WRITING FOLIO ASSESSMENT TASK

Criteria	5 Very High	4 High	3 Med	2 Low	1 Very Low	Not Shown
Content						
Demonstrates knowledge of the chosen content						
Structure and Language Features						
Demonstrates ability to write appropriately for the audience and purpose and has used the correct format						
Ability to use effective, accurate and expressive language specifically suited to the audience and purpose of the task						
Ability to use paragraphs for the coherent ordering and linking of ideas						
Has used correct grammar and spelling						
Preparation						
Has carefully drafted and edited writing						

Total: /30

Comments:

How to Cope with Grief and Loss

Getting Air explores how different people are affected by grief: how Zac deals with the loss of his best friend, how Gail deals with the loss of a boy like a son to her and how a small country town deals with a tragedy. Grief affects everyone in different ways.

Your task is to research grief and how it affects people.

PART 1

Using the internet, you and a partner will need to research answers to the following questions:

1. Find as many different examples as you can of how people react when they are dealing with grief or loss.
2. A few websites offer advice on how to support someone who is grieving. List as many of these as you can find.
3. After researching this information, how would you help a friend who was grieving?

You might find the following websites helpful:

<http://www.nalagvic.org.au>
<http://www.grieflink.asn.au>
<http://www.reachout.com.au>

Report your findings to the class.

PART 2

Using the novel, answer the following questions:

1. How did Zac initially react to Corey's death?
2. How did Zac eventually cope with Corey's death?
3. How did Gail deal with Corey's death?
4. How did the town handle the tragedy?



Domestic Violence: What Can You Do?

Domestic violence is a serious issue which has a significant impact on the community.

Your task is to complete a research assignment on domestic violence. Use the following questions to guide your research.

1. Who is affected by domestic violence?
2. What impact does domestic violence have:
 - on the victim;
 - on the family of the victim;
 - on the offender; and
 - on the community.
3. A lot of women who are victims of domestic violence are often criticised for not having enough sense to leave the relationship. Why is leaving the abuser not always easy for them?
4. What organisations/programs are available to assist victims?
5. What advice would you give to someone who wants to help a victim of domestic violence?

Assessment Criteria:

Criteria	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Knowledge and understanding of the topic					
Planning and drafting					
Appropriate structure (ie use of headings, paragraphs, etc)					
Spelling, grammar and punctuation					
Bibliography					

Total: /25

Chapter Review Questions

Chapter 1

1. The author gives us a clue that something bad is going to happen. What is this clue? What do you think the 'bad' thing is going to be?
2. How does Zac feel about his town? Use quotes to support your answer.
3. *If anyone saw Corey Matthews wandering down the main street of Narra with a skateboard under his arm, they would've had no idea of the trouble he had to handle in his life. (p 12)* What trouble is in Corey's life?

Chapter 2

1. What does Zac think about the other skaters?
2. Why do the skaters skate outside the town hall?
3. Why do you think Zac describes Ray Stone as a 'maggot'?

Chapter 3

1. Who is Lauren Saxelby?
2. Why doesn't Zac like Lauren? Why does Corey?
3. What 'history' about the town do we find out from the conversation Zac has with Lauren?

Chapter 4

1. Why does Ray Stone instantly assume it was the skaters, in particular, Corey, who damaged his car?
2. Who did damage Ray Stone's car and how?
3. Why did Corey run away?

Chapter 5

1. What do we find out about Zac's mother's personality? How does Zac feel about her?
2. What do we learn about Corey's family?
3. What do Gail and Trisha have in common?

Chapter 6

1. Who comes up with the idea of re-campaigning for a skatepark?
2. Why do you think Corey spends so much time at Zac's?
3. Why do you think Zac is so negative about the skatepark campaign, when you would think he would be very interested?

Chapter 7

1. What rumours were spreading around the school?
2. Who is falling in love with whom? How do we know this?
3. What new strategy did Gail organise for the skatepark campaign?

Chapter 8

1. Why did Gail drive Corey to Glenthorpe? What was her excuse for driving there? Why did she make up this excuse?

2. Why was it important for the author to include the conversation between Zac and Corey about their futures?
3. We find out a little more about why Zac is so negative about the campaign. What is this, and what does this tell us about Zac?

Chapter 9

1. Who does Jycinta blame when she got into trouble for talking to Matt (the cute older boy)? Was this fair? Why or why not?
2. How does Jycinta 'control' Marissa? Give some examples from the text.
3. What event gave Corey the confidence to stand up and talk about the skatepark in front of the whole school? Why do you think this small act was so important?

Chapter 10

1. Describe Corey's house.
2. Describe Corey's room. What do you think this symbolises?
3. Why do you think Zac didn't tell Corey where he had been?

Chapter 11

1. Why was Mitchell worried when he won his dream skateboarding kit?
2. What passage in the novel gives us a clue that Zac is feeling guilty about not being involved in the skatepark campaign?
3. Why did Corey stay at his own house that night?

Chapter 12

1. We find out what the 'bad' event is. What happened?
2. The author has given us a lot of clues throughout the novel that something bad is going to happen. This is called 'signposting'. Why do you think she does this?
3. Why did Zac run away to live with his cousin in Glenthorpe?

Chapter 13

1. What happened to the skaters in this chapter? What does this tell you about how they are feeling?
2. Why did the council renege on their agreement to build the skatepark, despite the fact the campaign created enough funding for the project?
3. What do you think this quote means: *I stared at the model through the night, trying to conjure up the tiny imaginary skaters whooshing up and down the balsa-wood ramps, the way I used to. I saw wood and plaster and paint but no tiny skaters. (p 192)*

Chapter 14

1. What does the council decide to do with the land that was supposed to be used to build the skatepark?
2. Who stood up to Ray Stone? Why?
3. Eventually, all the skaters arrived to rally against the rose garden. Who organised this? Why was this a significant act for this person?

Chapter 15

1. After the rally, what did the council decide to do?
2. What did Lauren and Zac plan to do to celebrate the opening of the skatepark?
3. Why did Zac decide to run away again?

Chapter 16

The truth is, terrible things can happen and sometimes you just have to stand there and let the terrible things wallop you in the guts. Then you have to find a way to get up again. That was the part I wasn't so sure how to do. (p 223)

1. What does this quote mean?
2. What does this tell us about Zac's attitude to life?
3. What prompts Zac to change his outlook?

Chapter 17

1. Which two characters were taught how to skate?
2. What did Marissa do that was very out of character?
3. Why did the author decide to make the weather 'perfect' on the day of the skatepark opening?

Chapter 18

1. What are the skaters doing with their lives now? How has this changed from chapter 13?
2. Why is Zac's relationship with Lauren so important to him?
3. How was the school's memorial service different to Corey's funeral?

GETTING AIR
Teaching Support Kit

TEACHER 'CHEAT SHEETS'

QUESTION TIME!

Background, Setting and Structure

1. What narrative style has the author chosen?
The author chose first-person narrative.
2. Describe the language use.
The language use is simple, colloquial and frank; it sounds like it is from a teenage boy.
3. How would the story be different if it was told in third-person narration and written using formal language?
It would be a lot harder to identify with the main character. It may also be less believable.
4. The story is set in a small country town in Australia, yet we are given very little description as to what the town looks like. There is also no date/time given. Why do you think the author neglected to do these things?
The author does this so it is 'blank' – the reader can fill in their own gaps. By letting the readers fill in their own parts of the story, it makes them identify with characters more easily.
5. The author gives us little pieces of background information at a time, for example, when explaining to us about Corey's home life. Why didn't she tell us all about it at the start, then move on with the plot? That is, why did she choose to give us the information in small chunks?
The author gave us information in small pieces to make us want to keep reading; wondering about it adds to the excitement of the story.

TIMELINE

Cut out the events in the story. Paste them into your workbooks in the correct order.

1. Warren Beggs is drunk and asks Corey where his mother is.	2. Ray Stone kicks the skaters away from skating around the Town Hall.
3. Lauren Saxelby films the skaters and Zac refuses to skate in front of her. He ends up having his skateboard confiscated.	4. Mr Proudfoot drives into Ray Stone's car.
5. Zac and Gail run into Corey and Trisha. Trisha is rude, but then apologises. We think Trisha is having a rough time with her boyfriend.	6. Gail convinces Corey and Amy to start campaigning for a skatepark again.
7. Gail asks Lauren if they can use her video to help with the skatepark campaign.	8. Gail drives Corey to Glenthorpe to visit his mum in hospital.
9. The school athletics carnival, where Corey gets up and speaks about the skatepark campaign.	10. Zac goes to Corey's house and hides from Warren Beggs.
11. The council agrees to build the skatepark because the Youth Grant is approved.	12. Corey and his mother are killed by Warren Beggs.
13. Zac runs away to Glenthorpe.	14. The council refuse to build the skatepark and want to plant a rose garden instead.
15. 150 skaters and townsfolk rally the council and end up convincing them to build the skatepark.	16. The school holds a memorial service for Corey.

How to Cope with Grief and Loss

Getting Air explores how different people are affected by grief: how Zac deals with the loss of his best friend, how Gail deals with the loss of a boy like a son to her and how a small country town deals with a tragedy. Grief affects everyone in different ways.

Your task is to research grief and how it affects people.

ANSWERS TO PART 2

Using the novel, answer the following questions:

1. How did Zac initially react to Corey's death?
Zac became angry and withdrawn and ran away.
2. How did Zac eventually cope with Corey's death?
He focused on the skatepark and realised he couldn't run away forever. Lauren's support also helped him.
3. How did Gail deal with Corey's death?
Gail became angry with Trisha and blamed herself.
4. How did the town handle the tragedy?
The town dealt with the tragedy by gossip, saying things such as 'they had it coming' to justify why something so terrible could happen.



Chapter Review Questions

Chapter 1

1. The author gives us a clue that something bad is going to happen. What is this clue? What do you think the 'bad' thing is going to be?
If someone had asked me at the beginning of last year, before everything spun out of control, 'Zac, what are the best things in your life right now?' I would've just mumbled and laughed like a braindead prawn. (p 1)
2. How does Zac feel about his town? Use quotes to support your answer.
A great place to be when you are little, but a boring place for a teenager. Supporting quote: Before we get into what happened last year, you need to understand something about our town: Narragindi is a hole. If you're after movies, proper shops, a swimming pool, a go kart track decent live bands, a dance club or any kind of major fun, don't bother coming to Narra. (p 2)
3. *'If anyone saw Corey Matthews wandering down the main street of Narra with a skateboard under his arm, they would've had no idea of the trouble he had to handle in his life'. (p 12).* What trouble is in Corey's life?
His mother's aggressive boyfriend, Warren Beggs. Corey is scared of him.

Chapter 2

1. What does Zac think about the other skaters?
He respects them and has something positive to say about all of them.
2. Why do the skaters skate outside the town hall?
There is nowhere else for them to skate.
3. Why do you think Zac describe Ray Stone as a 'maggot'?
Stone is constantly picking on the skaters and telling them to skate somewhere else, even though there is no 'legal' place for them to go.

Chapter 3

1. Who is Lauren Saxelby?
Lauren Saxelby is the town's 'good girl' who wants to film the skaters for a film competition.
2. Why doesn't Zac like Lauren? Why does Corey?
Zac doesn't like Lauren because he assumes she thinks the skaters are scum. Corey likes her because she spoke to him nicely once when they were in the sick bay together.
3. What 'history' about the town do we find out from the conversation Zac has with Lauren?
We find out the skaters created a campaign to have a skatepark built, however, this idea was rejected by the council.

Chapter 4

1. Why does Ray Stone instantly assume it was the skaters, in particular, Corey, who damaged his car?
He assumes it was the skaters because he is prejudiced against them. Corey's whole family are criminals, so Stone assumes Corey is a criminal, too.

2. Who did damage Ray Stone's car and how?
An elderly gentleman, Mr Proudfoot, lost control of his own car and hit Ray Stone's.
3. Why did Corey run away?
It was a defensive action. Corey assumed that everyone would blame him for the damage, so he ran away to avoid the questions.

Chapter 5

1. What do we find out about Zac's mother's personality? How does Zac feel about her?
Zac's mother has a good sense of humour and works hard. Zac has a great deal of respect for her. We can tell this by the way he feels guilty for dragging her to the police station to reclaim his skateboard.
2. What do we learn about Corey's family?
We learn that Corey's mother is being beaten up by someone – we assume her boyfriend, Warren Beggs.
3. What do Gail and Trisha have in common?
They both went to school together and had teen pregnancies.

Chapter 6

1. Who comes up with the idea of re-campaigning for a skatepark?
Gail (Zac's mother).
2. Why do you think Corey spends so much time at Zac's?
Corey probably spends a lot of time at Zac's because his home life is unpleasant; Warren Beggs doesn't like him and makes life hard.
3. Why do you think Zac is so negative about the skatepark campaign, when you would think he would be very interested?
He is upset because the previous skatepark proposal was refused. He is scared of getting his hopes up again and thinks it's a waste of time.

Chapter 7

1. What rumours were spreading around the school?
Corey and Zac jumped over a two-metre wall, skated through a waterfall, reached speeds of 100+km and were chased by twenty police officers.
2. Who is falling in love with whom? How do we know this?
Corey is falling in love with Lauren. We know this because he is always defending her to Zac and Zac comments: *She pulled a goofy face, sending herself up. Corey laughed. From that moment on, he was a goner – that is, totally in love with Lauren Saxelby. (p 87)*
3. What new strategy did Gail organise for the skatepark campaign?
Gail asked Lauren if they could use her video to aid the campaign.

Chapter 8

1. Why did Gail drive Corey to Glenthorpe? What was the excuse she gave Corey for needing to driving there? Why did she make up this excuse?
Gail drove Corey to Glenthorpe to visit his mother in hospital (she had been beaten up by Warren again). She tells Corey she is going to Glenthorpe to visit her cousins so Corey would not feel guilty or embarrassed about taking 'charity' from her.

2. Why was it important for the author to include the conversation between Zac and Corey about their futures?
It shows us how prejudiced the town is towards Corey and how hopeless his situation is. It also shows us how Corey puts his mother's needs ahead of his own.
3. We find out a little more about why Zac is so negative about the campaign. What is this, and what does this tell us about Zac?
Zac is worried the campaign will fail again. He is worried that Corey and the other campaigners will be disappointed when it all goes to pieces. This tells us Zac is very loyal and protective of those he loves.

Chapter 9

1. Who does Jycinta blame when she got into trouble for talking to Matt (the cute older boy)? Was this fair? Why or why not?
Jycinta blames her friend, Marissa. It was not fair, because Marissa did nothing wrong.
2. How does Jycinta 'control' Marissa? Give some examples from the text.
Jycinta controls Marissa by putting her down/criticising her all the time. Some examples could be:
 - o *Jycinta used a tough voice, like a farmer giving a disobedient kelpie an order. 'I said let's go, Marissa.'* (p 80)
 - o *'Excuse me?!' screeched Jycinta, flashing Marissa a poisonous look. 'You will not be going in the shot anything!'* (p 103)
 - o *'Thanks for stuffing things up for me and Matt. First you do that stupid skateboard act which, y'know, makes me look stupid – as your friend. And then you stood there cackling like a retarded chicken.'* (p 157)
3. What event gave Corey the confidence to stand up and talk about the skatepark in front of the whole school? Why do you think this small act was so important?
The event that gave Corey the confidence to speak was Lauren giving him a small smile. This was so important because he was in love with her and, although she was technically 'above him' socially, she liked him for who he was and did not judge him.

Chapter 10

1. Describe Corey's house.
Corey's house is dirty, run-down and smelly.
2. Describe Corey's room. What do you think this symbolises?
Corey's room is clean and tidy. This symbolises how different he is from his family.
3. Why do you think Zac didn't tell Corey where he had been?
Zac probably didn't want Corey to be embarrassed – he had never invited Zac to his house in the whole time they had known each other.

Chapter 11

1. Why was Mitchell worried when he won his dream skateboarding kit?
Mitchell had been all talk and had never actually ridden a skateboard. He had given everyone else such a hard time about their skating techniques, that he was nervous about what they would say about him.
2. What passage in the novel gives us a clue that Zac is feeling guilty about not being involved in the skatepark campaign?
All the kids and adults who worked on the skatepark campaign showed up, plus a lot of bludgers who never did anything to help. Bludgers like JT and Travis. Bludgers like me. (p 141)
3. Why did Corey stay at his own house that night?

Corey was excited about the fact the skatepark had been approved and he wanted to share the news with his mother.

Chapter 12

1. We find out what the 'bad' event is. What happened?
Corey tried to protect his mother from Warren Beggs. Warren shot both Corey and his mother before shooting himself.
2. The author has given us a lot of clues throughout the novel that something bad is going to happen. This is called 'signposting'. Why do you think she does this?
The author gives us clues about Corey's death to prepare us for what is about to happen, so it isn't such a shock. It is also important for the flow of the narrative – if something like a death springs up without warning, it can stop the story sounding believable and/or making sense.
3. Why did Zac run away to live with his cousin in Glenthorpe?
Zac ran away because he was angry at the way Corey's relatives and the rest of the town were still treating Corey like garbage.

Chapter 13

1. What happened to the skaters in this chapter? What does this tell you about how they are feeling?
All the skaters have given up skating and are getting into trouble. This tells us they have given up hope for their futures.
2. Why did the council renege on their agreement to build the skatepark, despite the fact the campaign created enough funding for the project?
The council changes their mind because the boys had stopped skating.
3. What do you think this quote means: *I stared at the model through the night, trying to conjure up the tiny imaginary skaters whooshing up and down the balsa-wood ramps, the way I used to. I saw wood and plaster and paint but no tiny skaters. (p 192)*
It tells us that Zac views the skatepark as a childish dream. He can't imagine the skaters, which suggests he feels that he has no future/nothing to hope for.

Chapter 14

1. What does the council decide to do with the land that was supposed to be used to build the skatepark?
The council decides to build a rose garden.
2. Who stood up to Ray Stone? Why?
Gail stood up to Ray Stone because she was sick of him and the council constantly prejudging the youths of the town.
3. Eventually, all the skaters arrived to rally against the rose garden. Who organised this? Why was this a significant act for this person?
Zac organised the rally. This was significant because it was his first real involvement in the whole campaign, showing us he now had hope for the future.

Chapter 15

1. After the rally, what did the council decide to do?
The council decided to build the skatepark as they had promised.
2. What did Lauren and Zac plan to do to celebrate the opening of the skatepark?
Lauren and Zac decided to hold a skateboarding competition to celebrate the opening of the skatepark.
3. Why did Zac decide to run away again?

Zac ran away again because he and Lauren wanted to place a memorial plaque for Corey, but the council refused.

Chapter 16

The truth is, terrible things can happen and sometimes you just have to stand there and let the terrible things wallop you in the guts. Then you have to find a way to get up again. That was the part I wasn't so sure how to do. (p 223)

1. What does this quote mean?
The quote means that you can't dwell on bad things and let them ruin your life. You just have to do the best you can with what you are given.
2. What does this tell us about Zac's attitude to life?
His attitude is positive and rational. He wants to move on and have a good life.
3. What prompts Zac to change his outlook?
Zac has a vision of Corey skating on the skatepark.

Chapter 17

1. Which two characters were taught how to skate?
Mitchell and Marissa are both taught to skate.
2. What did Marissa do that was very out of character?
Marissa stood up to Jycinta.
3. Why did the author decide to make the weather 'perfect' on the day of the skatepark opening?
It was done to represent how perfect the day in general was – great weather, great turnout, great day.

Chapter 18

1. What are the skaters doing with their lives now? How has this changed from Chapter 13?
All the skaters are now very settled. They are focused on their careers, which suggests they have hope.
2. Why is Zac's relationship with Lauren so important to him?
Zac's relationship with Lauren is very important to him because she is the only one who understands how he feels about Corey's death.
3. How was the school's memorial service different to Corey's funeral?
The memorial service was more of a celebration of Corey's life. It was run by the kids and remembered Corey in a positive way. The funeral had little to do with Corey's life at all.