

# What a Wreck! *By John Parker*

## Introduction

Andy is over the moon when he buys his first car with the help of some money from his dad. He has big plans to fix it up, but it all takes longer and costs more than he expected – and he isn't prepared for the consequences of his actions.

## Reason for reading

You could use this book with your students:

- to explore the themes of following your dream, taking responsibility for your actions, and learning through your mistakes
- to explore some of the vivid descriptions in the story.

## Setting the scene

Draw on your students' prior knowledge. If necessary, introduce concepts or vocabulary to help them access the story. Also communicate the reason for reading.

- Brainstorm ideas about cars. "What is involved with owning a car? What would you need to know before buying one? Would you need to know much about mechanics? Do you know what the law requires car owners to do? Where could you get information about owning a car?" Alternatively, you could elicit prior knowledge through a postbox or "think, pair, share" activity. Write key vocabulary on the board.
- Print Template A, the KWLH chart, from the back of this document. Alternatively, create a KWLH chart on the board. Have the students fill in the first two columns with what they know and want to know about cars. After reading, they can fill in the final two columns (what they learned and how they learned it).
- Introduce any vocabulary that your students may need to access the text. Refer to Worksheet 3 for a list of potentially unfamiliar words. You could carry out this activity before or after reading. (See "Taking a closer look – Exploring language".)
- Have your students look at the cover and predict what this text might be about.

## Getting stuck in

Choose the prompts that you feel your students need. Remind them to note any unfamiliar words and check for clues to the meanings in the text or images. The meanings of words in bold text are in the glossary at the back of the book.

- End page 2 – "What sort of car do you think Andy will get for one hundred dollars?"
- End page 6 – "Would you buy the car that Andy bought? Why or why not? How is Jace feeling about it? How can you tell? Why does Andy buy the car? What does 'My heart missed a beat' mean?"
- End page 8 – "How does Andy's mum feel about the car? What about his dad? What makes you say that? How is Andy feeling at this point?"
- End page 13 – "Do you think Andy was prepared for all the work he has to do on the car? What makes you say that?"

- End page 17 – “What do you think of how Andy decides to keep working on the car when his mum says to get rid of it? Do you sometimes react to your parents in this way? How does Andy feel after fixing the wiring?”
- End page 21 – “What is going to happen? What do Nathan and Jace think about Andy taking the car out? Why does he take it anyway? Can you understand his actions? Why or why not?”
- End page 24 – “Were you right? Why does the owner of the house behind the hedge swear at Andy? How do you feel about that reaction? What is Andy’s dad concerned about? What do you think of what Andy did and why?”

## Taking a closer look

Choose suggestions that suit your students and reason for reading.

### Exploring ideas and opinions

- Ask for your students’ opinions of the story and encourage them to justify those opinions.
- Have the students complete Worksheet 1 (the three-level thinking guide) and discuss their responses in pairs, in small groups, or as a class.
- Discuss in more detail Andy’s decision to take the car out, relating his decision to the students’ experiences of feeling impatient and doing things without thinking about the consequences. Specifically discuss the way Andy put other people’s lives at risk. “Would you feel differently if Andy had driven the car somewhere that there were no other people? Why or why not?”
- “Do you think Andy learned anything from his experience with the car? If so, what? Do you think he’ll be quick to buy another car? What might he do differently next time?”
- Have the students complete the KWLH chart with things they’ve learned about cars.

### Exploring character

- “What sort of person do you think Andy is?” Brainstorm words on the board to describe him. Take into account all the different aspects of the story – not just Andy’s decision to buy the car and drive it before it was ready but also his dedication and determination to fix it up. What do your students think of the commitment he showed?
- You could also examine the other characters in the story, especially in terms of Andy’s relationship with them. “How important was Andy’s friend Jace in helping him with the car?” Explore what the characters do and say.

### Exploring structure

- Give the students the statements from Worksheet 2 and have them sequence them in the correct order.

### Exploring language

- Cut out the words and definitions from Worksheet 3 and muddle them up. Hand them out to individual students and have them find their correct “partner”.
- As an alternative to the above, divide the class into two groups and have them complete Worksheet 4a and Worksheet 4b respectively. This activity involves the students in creating the definitions, which they then use to test the other group.

- Your students could work in small groups to cluster vocabulary (from the worksheet, their earlier brainstorming, and/or the text) into sets of their choice, for example, car parts, car models, legal requirements, mechanical know-how – or even nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. They could also practise using the words in sentences.
- Explore the vivid descriptions in the story. Focus in particular on the description of the seller, his place, and his car on pages 4 and 5; the simile “it was like dealing with a nest of snakes” on page 16; and the description of the accident on pages 22 and 23. “What effect does this language have?” Notice how it engages the reader by painting a clear picture for them, making them feel like they are there.
- Have your students complete Worksheet 5 – the cloze activity.

## **Moving beyond the text**

Choose activities that suit your students and reason for reading.

### **Reading**

- Read the GO for IT magazine designed to complement this book – Smash Up.

### **Writing**

- Rewrite part of the story, such as the ending, and illustrate your work.
- Write about a time you got impatient with something and did something you later regretted. If possible, try to use vivid descriptions like those in What a Wreck!
- Pretend you are a news reporter and prepare a radio or television interview to find out about Andy’s experience. “Would you do it all again knowing what you know now? Why or why not?” Remember to use open-ended questions (why, what, when, where, who, how). Carry out your interviews in pairs, with one person acting as Andy and one as the reporter before swapping over. You could tape the interview for presentation to the class.

# WORKSHEET 1

## What a Wreck! – Three-level thinking guide

- Level 1 – Reading on the lines (interpreting what the text says on a literal level)
- Level 2 – Reading between the lines (inferring, or interpreting what the text might mean)
- Level 3 – Reading beyond the lines (evaluating ideas by relating them to other knowledge)

Students write “agree” or “disagree” beside each statement and then discuss their responses in pairs, in groups, or as a class. The value of this activity lies in the discussion it generates as students justify their views. The activity is not intended as a test for comprehension.

<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<b>Agree/disagree</b>
Andy bought the car off Trade Me.	
Andy paid one hundred dollars for the car.	
Jace was Andy’s best friend.	
Andy’s mother liked the car.	
First, Andy got the radio working.	
It took Andy and Jace all weekend to get the engine working.	
Andy felt rich having his own car.	
The car flattened Mum’s lettuce plants.	
Andy bought a second-hand gearbox from the wrecker’s yard.	
Andy got a part-time job at the petrol station.	
The colour of the doors matched the car perfectly.	
Andy learned how to wire the car from a book.	
Andy finally got a warrant of fitness for the car.	

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<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<b>Agree/disagree</b>
Andy was passionate about cars.	
The man who sold the car was really poor.	
Andy's father thought buying the car was a good idea.	
Jace didn't think buying the car was a good idea.	
A gearbox drives a car backwards and forwards.	
Andy's father enjoyed working on the car too.	
Andy did not have a good relationship with his mother.	
It took months for Andy to fix up the car.	
Andy learned a lot from working on the car.	
Andy finally got his money back for the car.	
<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<b>Agree/disagree</b>
Andy paid too much money for the car.	
Andy shouldn't have bought the car.	
Buying an old car is the best way to learn how to fix a car.	
Driving a car with no warrant of fitness is irresponsible.	
Patience is a virtue.	
All boys love cars.	

Sheet 2 of 2

Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007

# WORKSHEET 2

## What a Wreck! – Restore the order

Photocopy this worksheet. Cut out the statements and mix them up, keeping an intact master copy for yourself. Give each student a statement. Ask them to arrange themselves so that their statements are in the order of the story. To check that the order is correct, they can read their statements aloud in turn.

I saw an ad in the newspaper one Saturday morning.

I needed to ask Dad for thirty more dollars.

The seller's place was a dump.

Jace drew his finger across his throat.

"Yours for fifty," the seller said.

Mum squealed, "What a wreck! You're not parking that in front of our house!"

I started fixing up my very own car.

I fixed the radio so I could listen to my favourite station while I was working.

When we turned the key late Sunday afternoon, the engine started.

Jace and I laughed. Dad didn't.

Even after the gearbox was fixed, I couldn't drive the car on the road.

I got a part-time job at the gas station.

I saw an ad in the newspaper one Saturday morning.

I saved enough to buy second-hand doors for the car.

I discovered the wiring was a mess.

“Get rid of it,” Mum said. “The car’s too much trouble.”

Nathan looked concerned. “I’m not sure about the left rear wheel,” he said.

My mind was made up. I couldn’t wait to drive the car any longer.

The left rear wheel rolled past me down the hill.

I looked at my car. It was dented all over. What a wreck!

Sheet 2 of 2

*Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007*

# WORKSHEET 3

## What a Wreck! – Match the meaning

Cut out the words and definitions, muddle them up, and have your students match them.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Definition</b>
wreck	the damaged remains of something
cheap	not expensive
bucks	dollars
dump	a place that is a mess
fender	the bumper bar around the front or back of a car
bald	worn out, without any tread (grip)
exhaust	the pipe at the back of a car where waste gases from the engine come out
spark plugs	the engine parts that create the spark to ignite the fuel
boot	the area of a car used to store luggage, usually at the back
gunk	dirt and muck
bonnet	the lid that covers the engine of a car

<b>Word</b>	<b>Definition</b>
carburettor	the part of an engine where petrol and air are mixed
grimy	dirty, mucky
stall	to stop (because the engine is overloaded or doesn't have enough fuel)
gearbox	the set of gears that send power from the engine to the wheels
accelerator	the pedal that makes the car move
install	to put in place
dashboard	the control panel in front of the driver
indicators	the lights that show which direction the car is turning
manual	an instruction book
axle	the rod that a wheel turns around

Sheet 2 of 2

Note that some words above may have other meanings in other contexts.

*Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007*

# WORKSHEET 4a – GROUP A

## What a Wreck! – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups and give half Worksheet 4a and half Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column, each group writes definitions for the words in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, they may need to check the page listed.
- They then fold the first column out of sight and swap sheets with the other group.
- That group guesses the original word and writes it in the third column. They can go to the page listed if they need help. For an extra challenge, they can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Definition (Group A)</b>	<b>Word (Group B)</b>
wreck (p. 2)	(p. 2)	
bucks (p. 2)	(p. 2)	
fender (p. 5)	(p. 5)	
exhaust (p. 5)	(p. 5)	
boot (p. 8)	(p. 8)	
bonnet (p. 8)	(p. 8)	
grimy (p. 8)	(p. 8)	
gearbox (p. 10)	(p. 10)	
install (p. 13)	(p. 13)	
indicators (p. 14)	(p. 14)	
axle (p. 18)	(p. 18)	

# WORKSHEET 4b – GROUP B

## What a Wreck! – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups and give half Worksheet 4a and half Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column, each group writes definitions for the words in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, they may need to check the page listed.
- They then fold the first column out of sight and swap sheets with the other group.
- That group guesses the original word and writes it in the third column. They can go to the page listed if they need help. For an extra challenge, they can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Definition (Group B)</b>	<b>Word (Group B)</b>
cheap (p. 2)	(p. 2)	
dump (p. 4)	(p. 4)	
bald (p. 5)	(p. 5)	
spark plugs (p. 5)	(p. 5)	
gunk (p. 8)	(p. 8)	
carburettor (p. 8)	(p.8)	
stall (p. 8)	(p. 8)	
accelerator (p. 10)	(p. 10)	
dashboard (p. 14)	(p. 14)	
manual (p. 16)	(p. 16)	

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# WORKSHEET 5

## What a Wreck! – Fill in the gaps

Add your own words in the spaces to make this passage come alive!

I felt a ..... in the left rear wheel. Then, that ..... of the car thumped ..... onto the ground. The ..... car started sliding to the ..... side of the road. Half a second ....., I saw the left rear wheel ..... past me and ..... the hill. I was ..... a three-wheeler!

My car ..... into the curb, just ..... cars coming up the ..... . Then, the car ..... sideways again, back ..... the hill. I was ..... straight for a lamp post. I ..... hard on the steering .....

I bounced the car ..... the footpath, ..... some grass, and into a hedge. The car stopped with a ..... . My seat ..... stopped me from ..... through the windscreen, but my neck was .....

People ..... running up. "Are you okay?" ..... asked.

Try writing your own ending to the story.

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