

Second Thoughts *By John Parker*

Introduction

Jeff has just moved in with his dad and his dad's new partner and he is struggling to adjust. Everything is new, including his dad's new sports car that seems to be taking all his dad's time and attention. Feeling angry and rejected Jeff, on impulse, takes the sports car for a drive ... with unexpected consequences.

Reason for reading

You could use this book with your students to:

- explore the topics of anger, tolerance, and dealing with changing family situations
- feature as part of a wider unit on family relationships
- deepen understanding of consequences and the importance of thinking beyond an action.

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.

- Students explore the cover and determine what they think the story is about.
- Brainstorm ideas about changing family relationships. In what ways can a family situation change? How important is it to look at a situation from different viewpoints? What does "putting yourself in someone else's shoes" mean?
- In small groups or pairs, students share their experiences of changing family relationships, or moving to a new place and "space". How did they feel? Why? How did they cope?
- In small groups or pairs, students share their experiences of the unexpected consequences of doing something they shouldn't have done. What did they do? What happened? What did they learn?
- Introduce vocabulary that the students may need to access the text. Refer to the vocabulary worksheets (3, 4a and 4b) for words that are unfamiliar.

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.

- End of page 3 – "How is Jeff feeling? Why?"
- End of page 5 – "Why has Jeff decided to move in with his dad? How do you think his mum feels about him moving out of her place?"
- End of page 6 – "Jeff says he can't help his behaviour. What do you think? How do you think Christine feels when Jeff doesn't answer her? How do you think she feels about him moving in with her and Jeff's dad?"
- End of page 8 – "Why is Jeff not eating? Who is hurting the most?"
- End of page 11 – "Why is Jeff surprised to see the keys to his dad's car?"
- End of page 15 – "What do you think Jeff's dad is thinking when he sees Jeff drive off in his car? Check the registration plates on the car. What does SUP SUB mean? How old is Jeff?"
- End of page 17 – "Why doesn't Jeff want the cops to notice him? What does he do?"

- End of page 19 – “What is the car behind Jeff trying to do? How is Jeff feeling?”
- End of page 21 – “What would you do if you were Jeff in this situation?”
- End of page 24 – “How did Jeff’s dad know where he was? If you were Jeff’s dad, what would you say to Jeff? Would you let him drive the sports car home – why or why not? Why is Jeff feeling better?”

Taking a closer look

Choose suggestions that suit your students and reason for reading.

Exploring ideas and opinions

- Ask for your students’ opinions of this story. How do they feel about it and why? Do they think it is realistic? In what ways do they identify with Jeff? What do they think of Jeff’s behaviour? How do they think Christine is feeling? Encourage your students to make connections with their own experiences.
- After the students complete the three-level thinking guide (Worksheet 1), they discuss their responses in pairs, in small groups, or as a class.
- Students discuss in pairs or small groups: “A time when I did something I shouldn’t have”. What happened? How did it feel? What were the consequences?

Exploring character

- Ask your students: “Does Jeff’s character change during the story? Think about how he is feeling at the beginning of the story, and then at the end. Does his behaviour change during the story? What does he learn from the consequences of his impulse to take the car?”
- Discuss: The author writes this story using the first person narrative. Why? Do you think this approach helps you to identify with Jeff better?
- Discuss: Think about Jeff’s father and Christine. Are they “real” characters? Do you feel you get to know them during the story? Can you imagine how they are feeling about Jeff?
- Working in pairs, students decide who will be Jeff and who will be Christine, and they develop the conversation that these two characters might have when Jeff returns home with his father.

Exploring structure

- Give the students the statements from Worksheet 2 to sequence correctly.

or

- Students take a statement each from Worksheet 2 and arrange themselves into the correct story sequence. Then, taking turns based on this sequence, they retell their part of the story.

or

- Students create a visual sequence of events from the story.

Exploring language

- Cut out the words and definitions from Worksheet 3 and mix them up. Hand them out to students, who then find their correct “partner”.

- As an alternative to the above activity, divide the class into two groups: the first group fills in the second column of Worksheet 4a and the second group fills in the second column of Worksheet 4b. This activity involves the students in creating definitions, which they then use to test the other group.
- Students complete Worksheet 5 – the cloze activity.

Moving beyond the text

Choose activities that suit your students and reason for reading.

Reading

- Read *Smash-Up!*, the magazine in the GO for IT series that complements this book.

Writing

- Set this writing task: “Imagine you are Jeff. Write a letter of apology to your dad for your behaviour. Explain why you did what you did and how you plan to change.”
- In pairs, students write the script for what Jeff, his dad and Christine say when Jeff and his dad get home.

Debating

- Hold a class debate on a topic related to the story, such as: “Parents should stay together for the sake of the kids.”

Research

Students do research on:

- car hijacking and how it happens in New Zealand
- single parent families and how common they are in New Zealand.

Art and design

- Students prepare a static image – a “wanted” poster for the two car hijackers.
- Students design a book cover that sells *Second Thoughts*.

WORKSHEET 1

Second Thoughts – 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 and information)

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.

LEVEL 1	Agree/disagree
The sports car that belongs to Jeff’s dad is blue with silver wheels.	
The sports car has got two exhausts and leather seats.	
The iPod was a birthday present for Jeff from his dad.	
Christine is the best friend of Jeff’s mum.	
Everything is new for Jeff: room, house, street, and school.	
The teachers at Jeff’s school call him Jeffrey.	
Jeff hasn’t eaten anything all day.	
Jeff sneaks out to the kitchen to get the keys to his dad’s car.	
The car stalls when Jeff first starts the engine.	
Jeff forgets to turn the car lights on.	
Jeff drives slower so the cops won’t notice him.	
Jeff takes off before the guys get to him.	
Jeff’s dad stops the two guys from stealing his car.	
Jeff’s dad drives the new sports car home.	

LEVEL 2	Agree/disagree
Jeff's dad loves washing and polishing his new car.	
Jeff is jealous of his dad's new sports car.	
Jeff's dad is upset by Jeff's behaviour.	
Jeff's dad couldn't care less whether Jeff eats or not.	
Jeff thinks his dad should keep his keys under his pillow.	
Jeff plans to steal his dad's car and run away.	
The car is the most powerful one that Jeff has ever driven.	
Jeff is breaking the law when he drives the car by himself.	
Jeff's father has been following him in Christine's station wagon.	
Jeff is upset that his father has found him.	
Jeff's father threatens the two guys and calls the police.	
LEVEL 3	Agree/disagree
Jeff has every reason to behave the way he does.	
Jeff's parents are irresponsible because they have separated.	
Jeff is totally self-centred – he doesn't care about anyone but himself.	
Car hijackers only go for flash new cars.	
Jeff is lucky he doesn't have brothers and sisters.	

Sheet 2 of 2

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

WORKSHEET 2

Second Thoughts – Restore the order

Cut out the statements and mix them up. Ask your students to place them in the correct order.

Dad is washing his new, blue sports car in the driveway.
I watch Dad polish the gold wheels.
Dad cares more about that car than he cares about me.
I plug into my iPod so I can't hear what Christine says.
Dad gave me the iPod because he wants me to feel good about moving in with him.
Staying here is better than staying with Mum because she's always complaining about Dad and Christine.
I'm hungry but I don't want to eat with Dad and Christine.
I tell Dad I'm not hungry when he calls me for dinner.
At eight o'clock I try to go to sleep, but I'm starving because I haven't eaten since breakfast.
I sneak to the kitchen for a banana and I see Dad's keys to his new car by the fruit bowl.
Before I know it, I'm out the back door with the keys, heading to Dad's new sports car.
"Stop!" yells Dad but I'm speeding out the driveway onto the road.

Cars are flashing their lights at me.

I turn my lights on.

I'm not supposed to drive a car without a fully licensed driver sitting beside me.

I switch on the radio, put my foot down and, next thing, I'm doing 150 km per hour.

I look in the mirror and see a car right behind me.

I slow down, but the car stays right behind me.

It's creepy, and I'm scared because the car stays right on my tail and I can't see who it is.

I have to stop for an old black station wagon that goes past and disappears.

The car behind me pulls ahead to cut off my exit, and two big tough guys walk toward me.

I'm trapped, then I hear a car coming and a man with a big torch yells, "Stop that!"

The two guys run for their car and zoom off.

It's Dad and he says, "Are you okay, Jeff?"

I drive home with Dad driving behind me in Christine's old black station wagon.

I'm thinking about dinner and the fact that Dad didn't ask about the car – he asked about me.

WORKSHEET 3

Second Thoughts – Match the meaning

Cut out the words and their definitions, mix them up, and ask your students to match the pairs.

Word	Definition
accelerator	pedal that is used to increase the speed of a car
complains	moans, grizzles
cruising	moving quickly and smoothly
curb	the raised edge where the road meets the footpath
exhaust	outlet for waste gases from the car engine
fires up	starts
gas	petrol
gears	settings in the gearbox that help to control the speed and direction of the car
gulp	to swallow quickly
hit the gas	pressed down on the accelerator
ignition	mechanism that starts the car engine

Word	Definition
iPod	a portable digital gadget that plays music
plug	to put earplugs into one's ears so as to hear music
sneak	to move quietly
speedometer	a gadget in the car that measures the speed of the car
stalls	cuts off the engine accidentally
starving	very hungry
suit yourself	have it your way
surges	moves quickly and suddenly forward
yank	to pull hard

Sheet 2 of 2

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

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

WORKSHEET 4a – GROUP A

Second Thoughts – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups, and give one group Worksheet 4a and the other group Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column of its own worksheet, each group writes a definition for each of the words listed in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, a group may need to check the page of the book that is listed.
- Each group then folds the first column out of sight and swaps worksheets with the other group.
- Each group guesses the original words, based on the definitions given in the other group's worksheet, and writes them in the third column of that worksheet. A group can go to the page of the book that is listed if it needs help. For an extra challenge, groups can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

Word	Definition (Group A)	Word (Group B)
accelerator (p 21)	(p 21)	
cruising (p 11)	(p 11)	
exhaust (p 2)	(p 2)	
gas (p 15)	(p15)	
gulp (p 10)	(p 10)	
iPod (p 4)	(p 4)	
sneak (p 10)	(p 10)	
stalls (p 12)	(p 12)	
suit yourself (p 6)	(p 6)	
yank (p 21)	(p 21)	

WORKSHEET 4b – GROUP B

Second Thoughts – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups, and give one group Worksheet 4a and the other group Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column of its own worksheet, each group writes a definition for each of the words listed in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, a group may need to check the page of the book that is listed.
- Each group then folds the first column out of sight and swaps worksheets with the other group.
- Each group guesses the original words, based on the definitions given in the other group's worksheet, and writes them in the third column of that worksheet. A group can go to the page of the book that is listed if it needs help. For an extra challenge, groups can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

Word	Definition (Group B)	Word (Group A)
complains (p 5)	(p 5)	
curb (p 12)	(p 12)	
fires up (p 12)	(p 12)	
gears (p 16)	(p 16)	
hit the gas (p 12)	(p 12)	
ignition (p 11)	(p 11)	
plug (p 4)	(p 4)	
speedometer (p 16)	(p 16)	
starving (p 8)	(p 8)	
surges (p 16)	(p 16)	

WORKSHEET 5

Second Thoughts – Fill in the gaps

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

The car stays behind me. I slow to 80. That car is behind me. It won't pass.

I don't what to do. I could down to 70, but if it's a cop, he'd stop to why I going so slow. And he'd want to see my

I could pull and stop, but then what I do? I switch off the radio. I to think.

I decide to get off the There's an exit two kilometres. But when I take the, the car behind me takes it

I drive right the roundabout and drive back onto the motorway. The car me follows me.

It's creepy. My throat is I'm scared.

I decide to get..... at another exit. The car stays right on my tail. It's so I can't see in it.