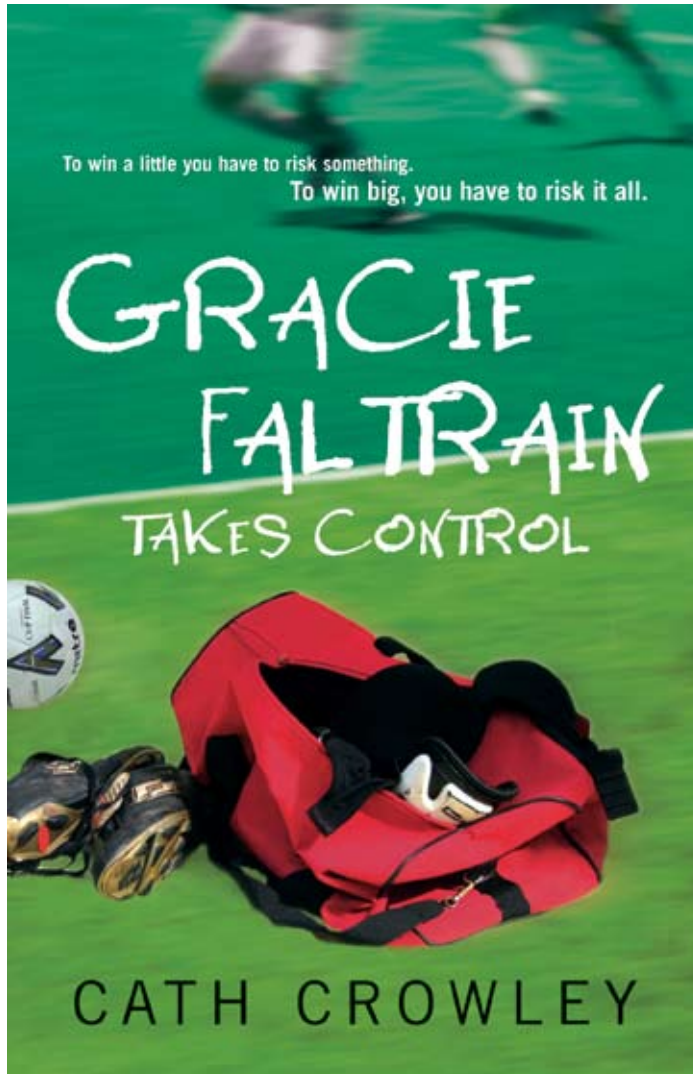


# GRACIE FALTRAIN Takes Control

CATH CROWLEY  
Teachers' Notes



*Gracie Faltrain Takes Control*,  
the new novel from the author of the CBC shortlisted novel,  
*Chasing Charlie Duskin*

## BOOK SUMMARY

Gracie Faltrain is back and she couldn't be happier. Her team won the Championships; she scored a few goals and a boyfriend. Just as she's settling down to a new season of soccer, the stakes are raised. Coach has entered the team in the Firsts – a boys' only league. To prove herself, Gracie has to fight harder than ever before. The other teams will do anything to keep her out of the game and, if she makes it, they'll do anything to see her lose.

But Gracie is sick of losing. She's sick of seeing friends, like Martin and Alyce, unhappy. Gracie Faltrain has decided it's time to take control and even the score for everyone, on and off the field.

## FROM CATH

*Gracie Faltrain Takes Control* continues the journey of Gracie and her friends. (It also continues the story of her enemies!) After I had finished *The Life and Times of Gracie Faltrain* I knew that there were many stories left to tell.

Alyce had to find out what it was like to take chances. Martin needed to come to terms with his mother leaving. Jane had to find a way to make Gracie listen to her. Flemming had to realise that his sense of self worth should not be dependent on his soccer performance.

Gracie also had a lot left to learn. At the end of the second novel she views the world through very different eyes. She sees the impact that her actions have on other people. I hope that her journey encourages the reader to question the way society treats vulnerable people. I hope that Gracie's story raises questions about the way the community deals with conflict.

Most of all I hope that *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control* is a great story. And that the readers are as equally attached to the characters as I am.

## PRE READING ACTIVITIES

*Gracie Faltrain Takes Control* focuses on the importance of respect within and between teams. It explores the need for people to defend their rights fairly, without impinging on the rights of others.

In order to highlight these points, have students:

- List the different teams to which they belong. These might be sporting clubs, hobby groups or 'friendship' teams. Families also function as teams in many respects.
- List the benefits of belonging to a team.
- List qualities that help a team function effectively.
- List reasons why teams sometimes don't function effectively.

This activity could be conducted as a class discussion. Alternatively, students could create a shield that represents their team. On the shield they could draw symbols to show the positive and negative aspects of belonging to a group.

## SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

## Chapter 1

1. How might the opening chapter quote from Gracie foreshadow the events of the novel?
2. What problems might arise because of her attitude?

## Chapter 2

1. How does Gracie plan to '...even up the score...' this year? (p.8).

## Chapter 3

1. What do we learn about Gracie's view of Alyce in this chapter? Give two quotes to support your answer.

## Chapter 4

1. According to Gracie, how is Martin different since they came back from the Championships? Support your answer with quotes from the text.
2. In what way does Martin's life remind Gracie of a movie about a cyclone? (p.15).
3. 'You have to let Martin tell his story in his own time. If you don't do that, you won't understand it anyway,' Mr Faltrain comments to Gracie on page 17. What does he mean by this?



### Chapter 5

1. Why does Gracie feel she needs to prove herself more than anyone else at the Firsts tryouts?

### Chapter 6

1. Why does Martin believe '...it will never work...' between Alyce and Andrew Flemming? (p. 27). Do you agree with him?
2. Why do you think that Jane and Gracie 'snap' at each other on page 30?
3. How does Mrs Faltrain reassure Gracie at the end of the chapter?

### Chapter 7

1. How does the opening quote hint at the action to come in this chapter?
2. What bad news does Principal Yoosta have for Gracie on page 37? Do you agree with his decision?
3. How does Martin disappoint Gracie in this chapter? (p.39).

### Chapter 8

1. Do you agree with Gracie's philosophy of adventurous living? Explain your answer.

### Chapter 9

1. What has Martin 'given' to Annabelle that belongs to Gracie? (p.51).

### Chapter 10

1. Would you have helped Corelli if you were in Gracie's situation? Why or why not?

### Chapter 11

1. 'I'm not like you Alyce...' Gracie comments on page 60. In what ways does Gracie see herself as different to her friend?
2. How does Gracie show that she has maturity in this chapter? (p.62).
3. Does Gracie really prove herself to be a champion in her match against Dan Woodbury? Why or why not?
4. Ironically, who is the real champion of the chapter?

### Chapter 12

1. What problems do Martin and Flemming's comments hint at for Gracie on page 71?
2. On page 73 Martin states that it doesn't matter what his life was like before his mother left. In what ways do his actions undermine his words?

### Chapter 13

1. How does 'love suck' in this chapter?

### Chapter 14

1. In what ways does Gracie see Alyce as a mouse in this chapter?
2. Does the text support Gracie's view?
3. 'What's the point in being on the field if you're not planning on winning?' (p.84). Do you agree with Gracie?

### Chapter 15

1. In your view, was Martin right to 'fix' the tryouts?
2. Why does Mr Faltrain disagree with Gracie's cyclone theory? (p. 89).

### Chapter 16

1. Alyce and Flemming's sad end is foreshadowed by Jane on page 91. How?
2. What does Gracie agree to on Alyce's behalf? (p. 95).
3. What is Alyce's attitude to hope on page 96? Who else in the novel shares this view? Do you agree?
4. What would you have done in Gracie's place, after her phone call with Flemming?

### Chapter 17

1. In what way is Gracie hypocritical in this chapter?



### Chapter 18

1. 'To win you have to risk something. To win big you have to risk it all,' Gracie comments on page 108. Do you agree with her actions in this chapter? Why or why not?

### Chapter 19

1. How do we know that things went well between Alyce and Flemming?

### Chapter 20

1. What is Dan Woodbury's 'plan' in this chapter?
2. Do you think that his 'plan' is justifiable? Why or why not?

### Chapter 21

1. Flemming comments that the team has to win on Saturday. How do you think he intends to do this?

### Chapter 22

1. How does the opposition target Gracie on page 122?
2. What reason does Alyce give for the other team's tactics? (p. 124).

### Chapter 23

1. Give evidence to suggest that Alyce and Flemming like each other.
2. Flemming is a coward. Do you agree?
3. How does Gracie treat Alyce in a similar way to Martin on page 129?
4. How would Gracie react if Alyce and Martin treated her in this way?

### Chapter 24

1. How does the team react to their defeat on page 132?
2. What reason does Gracie give for Flemming's anger? (p. 133).
3. Do you agree that Gracie's team has a right to defend themselves? Why or why not?
4. What is Martin's reaction to the plan?
5. Gracie says that Martin is 'safe' in goal. Is he also playing it safe in other areas of his life?

### Chapter 25

1. Alyce comments on page 136 that 'We haven't really changed at all.' What does she mean and do you agree with her?

### Chapter 26

1. Gracie comments that if her team won't play dirty, then the bad guys will win. In what way has the line between good guys and bad guys become blurred in this chapter?
2. Why does Woodbury's team pick on Corelli? What comment might the author be making here on the way we treat people in society?
3. Martin and Flemming see winning in very different ways. Explain their opposing views.
4. Gracie comments on page 140 that she loves Martin because he won't play like Woodbury. However, she is determined to play unfairly in order to win. What does this say about her character?

### Chapter 27

1. How does Gracie win in this chapter? (p.148).
2. In what way has she become like her enemy the 'Truck'?

### Chapter 28

1. What does Jane see as Gracie's problem?

### Chapter 29

1. Why do you think Alyce tries so hard in the basketball game?
2. 'Flemming wants it both ways. He can't kick Alyce in the teeth and expect her to smile about it.' (p. 156). In what ways are Flemming and Gracie similar?
3. In what ways is Gracie playing dirty on and off the field?



### Chapter 30

1. What reason does Gracie give for being angry at Martin on page 161?
2. What lessons does Gracie learn about human nature on page 161?
3. Why does Gracie comment on page 162 that she no longer recognises Flemming?
4. Why is Gracie afraid for Alyce at the end of this chapter?

### Chapter 31

1. What can Alyce see about life that Gracie can't?

### Chapter 32

1. At this point Gracie predicts that her friend is about to have her heart broken. Alyce represents in the novel a loss of innocence. Has anyone else in the novel lost their innocence?

### Chapter 33

1. On page 174 Mrs Faltrain says to Gracie: 'You got it all backwards.' What does Gracie have backwards?
2. Why does Gracie have to lose this time in order to win?

### Chapter 34

1. How does Martin describe Gracie in this chapter?

### Chapter 35

1. If you were Martin, would you forgive Gracie? Why or why not?

### Chapter 36

1. Why did Flemming throw the chair at the window?
2. Why does he 'dump' Alyce?

### Chapter 37

1. Why does the Coach tell Gracie that there's no way the team can win now?
2. Gracie finds out in this chapter 'The secret that Martin has been holding onto since the Championships.' (p.186). What is it?
3. Gracie realises that her cyclone theory is wrong. In what way? (p. 187).
4. What is the 'unexpected cow' coming Gracie's way? (p. 189).

### Chapter 38

1. Why does Gracie feel that she's living in an episode of the *Twilight Zone*? (p.192).
2. What does Gracie show that she has learnt in this chapter?
3. What terrible news does Gracie learn on page 194?
4. Explain Gracie's quote that Flemming is '...like a mirror, smashed on the ground, reflecting different bits of sky.' (p. 195).
5. What does Gracie think is the real reason Flemming broke up with Alyce? (p.197).
6. Why does Gracie want Flemming to fight her? (p.197).
7. Why does he snap and try to hit her? (p.198).
8. Why does Gracie think that she knows Flemming? (p.198).
9. What happens at the Knight's house to make Gracie feel the full weight of her decisions?
10. Mrs Faltrain comments that whatever someone has done, they don't deserve to be hit. Find two other quotes from the text to support this view.
11. What 'big picture' (p. 207) does Gracie see by the end of this chapter?

### Chapter 39

1. Why does Gracie put herself on the bench?
2. In what way does this indicate that she still isn't fully facing up to her problems?

### Chapter 40

1. How does Gracie begin to see Alyce differently on page 212?
2. Why might Martin have gone to Dromana?
3. How does Mr Knight show that he has changed his attitude to life in this chapter?
4. If the Knight family becomes closer because of Gracie's actions, does this make them right? Why or why not?



Chapter 41

1. Why does Gracie describe Alyce as 'Lindt' in this chapter?

Chapter 42

1. What does Gracie learn from standing in Martin's 'soccer boots' in this chapter?
2. What event 'wakes' the team up on page 224?
3. Why does Flemming agree to change the way he plays? (p.226).

Chapter 43

1. How does Alyce 'even up the score' in this chapter?

Chapter 44

1. What has Martin remembered about his mother that makes her loss easier for him to cope with? (p.237).
2. Martin now understands that his mother had a reason for leaving the people she loved. How did he learn this? (p.239).

Chapter 45

1. What sign does Martin give that he is ready to participate in life again? (p.245).
2. What signs are there in this chapter that Martin and Gracie are going to remain friends?
3. How do we know that Flemming has changed?

Chapter 46

1. Gracie comments that Martin will be arriving to watch the tape of the match soon. He's '...just going to take a little longer.' (p.250). Her comment has another meaning. What is it?

GROUP DISCUSSION POINTS

Themes

1. Organise small groups within the class, and allocate each group one of the major themes in the book. Have each group make a list of events, words and concepts that relate to their theme.

Suggested themes include:

Loss	Conflict	Courage	Hope	Violence	Trust
Love	Friendship	Dignity	Growth	Gender	Fear

2. As a class, discuss the issues listed below. Alternatively, you could allocate the topics to smaller groups and have them report back to the class. Have the students base their answers on evidence from the text and world events.

- Gracie feels responsible for Alyce because she is bullied. Do you think society has a responsibility to look after those who are vulnerable? Think about the people in your class or school and those in the wider community.
- 'A lot of things get done for the greater good, Gracie. It doesn't make them right.' Discuss Helen Faltrain's comment in relation to current or historical events. For example can war ever be justified? Is animal testing necessary for health reasons?
- Gracie comments that when her team starts to attack there's '...the smell of metal in the air. The smell of blood.' What comment is being made on human nature?
- 'Majority rules, Martin,' Gracie comments. List the positive and negative points of a system where majority rules. Think about this in relation to your school. What happens when one group of students set the rules for the class? Think about this issue on a wider level. What happens when smaller groups in society are left out of the decision making process?



- 'Fair enough, fighting's wrong. But fighting back? That's a whole different ball game. All I'm saying is that a person should be able to defend themselves. It's our right.' Do you agree with Flemming?
- Some rules are meant to be broken. Because if you don't, then nothing ever changes. Is there ever a time when it's necessary to break rules?

## INDIVIDUAL TASK

### Character Analysis

Have students complete the chart below on the characters in *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control*. Make sure students provide quotes from the text to support their answers.

Character	Positive (Good Qualities)	Minus (Negative Qualities)	Interesting (Characteristics that stand out)
Gracie Faltrain			
Martin Knight			
Jane Iranian			
Annabelle Orion			
Alyce Fuller			
Andrew Flemming			
Declan Corelli			
Dan Woodbury			
Helen Faltrain			
Bill Faltrain			

## LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

### Metaphors

There are many metaphors used in *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control*. Martin's isolation is represented by his shift to goal. Helen and Bill Faltrain's relationship is compared to magnolia, because it will renew itself in time.

Have each class member:

- Define the term metaphor.
- Find and list three metaphors used in the book.

Ask students to create metaphors to describe:

- The members of their family
- Their friends
- Their teacher

### Dialogue

The characters in *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control* all have a different way of speaking. Have students:

- Find one piece of dialogue from each character to illustrate their varying styles of speech. Discuss the differences in character dialogue in terms of word choice, sentence length and tone.
- Write a paragraph commenting on the incident of Annabelle's 'love poem' (p.80) from the perspective of any character other than Gracie.



## ORAL PRESENTATIONS

### Group Oral Task - Comedy Debate

Have students participate in their own comedy debate. They could argue using information drawn from both the novel and independent research. Divide students into teams and assign them the following topics:

1. Love sucks. Art and life prove that without a doubt.
2. In life, lying is not only necessary. Sometimes it's right.
3. Life should be more like the movies.
4. Winning is the most important thing. It doesn't matter how you do it.
5. Life shouldn't be hard. People would still grow in maturity if everything went right for them.
6. 'Fair enough fighting's wrong. But fighting back? That's a whole different ball game.' Sometimes fighting is justified. Sometimes it's the only way.

### Individual Oral Task - Monologue

Explain to the class that a monologue is a speech or piece of writing from the perspective of one character.

Assign each student a main character from the list below:

1. Gracie Faltrain
2. Martin Knight
3. Jane Iranian
4. Alyce Fuller
5. Andrew Flemming
6. Declan Corelli
7. Annabelle Orion
8. Dan Woodbury
9. Helen Faltrain
10. Bill Faltrain

Explain to students that the task is to write and perform a four to five minute monologue commenting on three events from the novel. For example, Martin might comment on Gracie kicking the boy from the opposition in the 'balls'; her need to win; and her betrayal of him in contacting his mother. Students must demonstrate knowledge of character in the task. Have students use their character charts and language analysis of dialogue as a starting point for this piece.

## WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. 'The rules of the universe clearly state: when you're desperate to be picked for something, forget it. The only time you can guarantee to be chosen at school is when you'd rather be hung out of a plane and dropped without a parachute.'

Have students write their own 'Survival Kit for School'. They could divide paragraphs according to the key skills needed in their lives. Perhaps each paragraph could start with a quote, similar to the way the chapters begin in the novel. For example: 'If you're late for class, always have excuses ready.'

2. Write a newspaper article about one of the events in *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control*. Use one of the following headlines or make up your own.

'Girl Scouted in Saturday's Game Along with the Rest of Her Team' – *The Daily Times*

'Principal Yoosta Fights to Keep Girl off the Team' – *Local News Weekly*

'Girl Soccer Star Checked Out for Boob Damage' – *Herald Today*

'Local Boy Goes Missing' – *Sun National*



3. 'Usually at the end of a season I have this flat feeling, like I've been flying for months and then all of a sudden someone cuts off my wings and leaves me grounded' (p.4).

Write a personal reflective piece about a time when you lost something, or someone, that was important to you. Remember to describe what was lost and how you felt after it was gone. Comment on what you did to regain your confidence.

4. Write Annabelle's poem about Alyce and Flemming from page 80.

#### ESSAY TOPICS

1. Compare and contrast the personalities of Gracie Faltrain, Annabelle Orion and Andrew Flemming.

2. *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control* shows us that there are two sides to every argument. Discuss with reference to events in the novel.

3. 'It's the competition I love. And it's hard to win against yourself.' How do Gracie and her friends 'win' at the end of the novel?

4. 'Faltrain will run right over the top of you. And wonder what the bump was.' Discuss how Gracie Faltrain plays dirty on and off the field.

5. It is the vulnerable people in *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control* that are the most courageous. Discuss.

6. If Gracie had not intervened, Martin would have made the same mistakes as his father. She did the right thing in writing to the paper. Do you agree?

7. Being a girl doesn't leave you vulnerable on the field. *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control* isn't about the conflicts that exist between males and females. It's about the conflicts that arise between people. Discuss.

