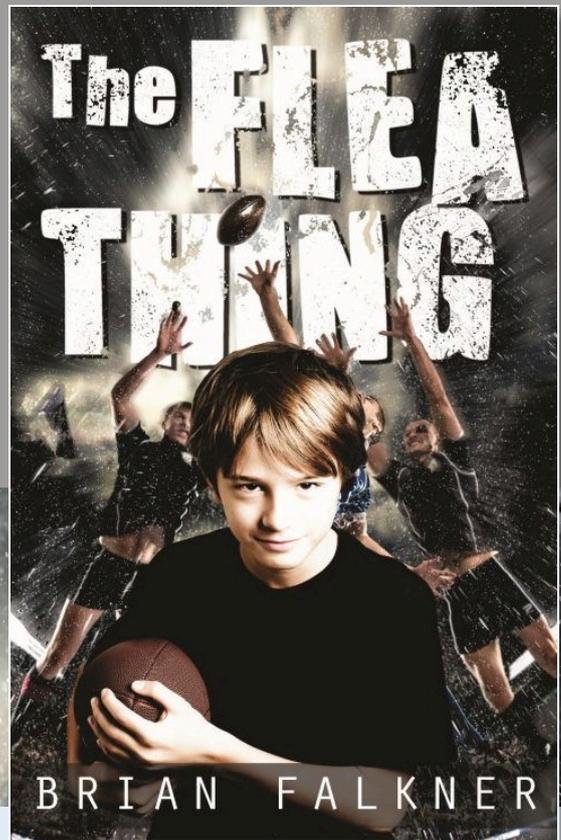




The FLEA THING

By Brian Falkner



- Primary School
- Ages 8+
- Sports
- Junior Fiction

Synopsis

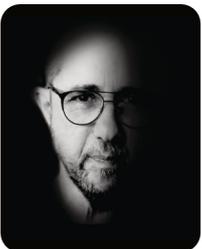
“The Flea Thing” by Brian Falkner tells the story of Daniel, a twelve-year-old boy with an extraordinary gift—he can move incredibly fast, almost supernaturally so.

Daniel dreams of playing professional rugby league for the New Zealand Warriors, despite his young age. His journey begins with a bold challenge to the Warriors’ coach, Frank Rickman, where Daniel uses his secret ability to demonstrate his unmatched speed and agility. Against all odds, Daniel secures a try-out and earns a spot on the team.

As the youngest player in the squad, he faces immense challenges, including rigorous training, balancing schoolwork, and managing relationships with friends and family. With the help of supportive team-mates like Henry Knight and his loyal friends, Daniel grows both as an athlete and as a person.

The novel explores themes of perseverance, friendship, and personal growth, illustrating how determination and belief in oneself can overcome even the most daunting barriers. As Daniel strives to prove himself on the field, he also learns valuable life lessons about teamwork, humility, and the importance of staying true to one’s dreams.

About the Author



Brian wanted to be an author ever since he was a child. It only took him thirty years to realise that dream. Along the way he worked as a reporter, advertising copywriter, radio announcer and internet developer. Now an award-winning author, with twenty-one books published internationally, he is also an internationally acclaimed writing coach, running workshops and writing camps around Australia, the USA and New Zealand. He lives in Queensland.





Key Learning Areas

- Literature Analysis
- Creative Writing
- Sports Ethics
- Personal Growth



Themes

- **Perseverance and Determination:** Daniel's journey reflects the importance of pursuing one's dreams despite obstacles.
- **Friendship and Loyalty:** The support Daniel receives from his friends highlights the value of loyalty.
- **Growth and Maturity:** The story shows Daniel's growth as he learns to handle new responsibilities.
- **Overcoming Adversity:** Daniel faces numerous challenges both on and off the field and learns to overcome them.



Characters

Daniel (The Flea): The protagonist, known for his incredible speed and determination

Henry Knight: A supportive team member who helps Daniel balance his new life.

Frank Rickman: The coach of the New Zealand Warriors

Jason: Daniel's close friend who supports him through his journey

Jenny: Daniel's love interest



Genres

- Junior/ Middle Grade Fiction
- Supernatural Fiction
- Coming-of-Age
- Humor

Writing Style

Brian Falkner employs a first-person narrative in "The Flea Thing" allowing readers to deeply connect with Daniel's thoughts, emotions, and experiences. The language is accessible and engaging, making it suitable for young readers while still appealing to a broader audience. Falkner effectively uses humour, action, and vivid descriptions to bring the story to life, capturing the excitement of rugby and the challenges of adolescence. The pacing is brisk, reflecting the protagonist's quick movements and dynamic life. Dialogue is natural and often infused with wit, contributing to character development and the overall light-hearted tone of the novel. Falkner's writing style ensures the story remains captivating and relatable.

Activities

Slow Motion Tag:

Choose one student to role-play as Daniel, who moves at normal speed, while the rest of the class moves in slow motion. This activity will help illustrate Daniel's extraordinary speed compared to others. Discuss how it felt for both the 'Daniel' and the other students, relating it to the narrative.

Character Diaries:

Have students write diary entries from the perspective of different characters, detailing their thoughts and feelings about key events in the story. This activity encourages empathy and deeper understanding of character motivations.

Team Building Exercises:

Organize sports drills or team challenges that emphasize teamwork and collaboration, mirroring Daniel's experiences with the Warriors. Discuss the importance of teamwork in achieving goals.

Map the Lost Park:

Using descriptions from the book, have students draw a detailed map of the Lost Park. They can include all the key features and discuss why this secret place is important to Daniel and his friends.



Exercises and Questions

Heads I Win, Tails I Win Too!

- **Exercise:** Write a summary of Daniel's first meeting with Frank Rickman.
- **Question:** What initial impression does Daniel make on Frank?

The Boy Without a Brain

- **Exercise:** Describe the relationship between Daniel and his dad.
- **Question:** How does Daniel handle his father's disinterest in his rugby ambitions?

The Best Defence

- **Exercise:** Outline the key strategies Daniel uses to win the try-out.
- **Question:** Why does Frank give Daniel a chance to try out despite his initial scepticism?

The Thing

- **Exercise:** Explain Daniel's secret ability and how it influences his performance.
- **Question:** How does Daniel's ability set him apart from other players?

The Lost Park

- **Exercise:** Map out the Lost Park based on descriptions in the book.
- **Question:** What does the Lost Park symbolize in Daniel's life?

Train like the Wind

- **Exercise:** List the different training activities Daniel goes through.
- **Question:** How does Daniel's training routine challenge him physically and mentally?

Mashed Potatoes

- **Exercise:** Write about the dinner scene from Henry's perspective.
- **Question:** How does Henry's presence at dinner affect Daniel and his family?

Jenny Changes Everything

- **Exercise:** Write a letter from Jenny to Daniel, expressing her thoughts on his joining the Warriors.
- **Question:** How does Jenny's reaction to Daniel's news affect his feelings about his new role in the team?

Chai-Chop-Ski

- **Exercise:** Research and create a short presentation on the importance of nutrition and exercise for athletes.
- **Question:** What does Daniel learn about the importance of proper training and diet from his experiences in this chapter?

Meet the Press

- **Exercise:** Role-play a press conference with students acting as Daniel, his coach, and reporters.
- **Question:** How does Daniel handle the media attention, and what challenges does he face in this new aspect of his life?

Quadruple Scoopes

- **Exercise:** Create a comic strip depicting Daniel's experiences during this chapter.
- **Question:** What does this chapter reveal about Daniel's ability to handle pressure and unexpected situations?

Disaster!

- **Exercise:** Write a news article reporting on the disaster mentioned in this chapter, including interviews with key characters.
- **Question:** How does Daniel's reaction demonstrate his growth as a person and a player?

The Smart Fart

- **Exercise:** Develop a character profile for Phil Domane, exploring his relationship with Daniel and his role in the story.
- **Question:** How does Phil's behaviour impact Daniel's journey, and what does Daniel learn from their interactions?

Growing Down

- **Exercise:** Create a timeline of Daniel's key moments of personal growth throughout the novel up to this chapter.
- **Question:** How does the concept of "growing down" apply to Daniel's experiences, and what does he learn about himself?

The Grand Final

- **Exercise:** Write a detailed game plan that Daniel might use in the grand final, considering his strengths and weaknesses.
- **Question:** What strategies does Daniel employ in the grand final, and how do they reflect his development as a player?



Discussion Questions

- What motivates Daniel to pursue his dream despite the odds against him?
- How do Daniel’s relationships with his friends and family influence his journey?
- What role does Frank Rickman play in Daniel’s development as a player and person?
- How does Daniel’s secret ability affect his interactions with others?
- Why did the author choose a real NRL team for this book, instead of making one up?
- Why did the author make up a team as the main opposition for the Warriors?



Essay Topics

- Discuss the theme of perseverance in “The Flea Thing” and how it is portrayed through Daniel’s character.
- Analyse the role of friendship in the novel and how it supports the protagonist.
- Explain how Brian Falkner uses humour and action to keep the reader engaged.
- Reflect on the personal growth of Daniel from the beginning to the end of the novel.
- Discuss the challenges Daniel faces in balancing his school responsibilities, friendships, and rugby career. How does he manage these competing demands, and what does this reveal about his character and priorities?
- Analyze the impact of mentorship on Daniel’s journey, focusing on the relationships he forms with characters like Frank Rickman and Henry Knight. How do these mentors influence his development both on and off the field?



Word Search

Can you find these chapter titles from ‘The Flea Thing’?

- Chai-Chop-Ski
- Disaster
- Good Friends
- Growing Down
- Mashed Potatoes
- Meet the Press
- The Best Defence
- The Grand Final
- The Lost Park
- The Smart Fart
- The Thing
- Train like the Wind

