

Ways to Live Forever

Teacher's Booklet

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Introduction

Synopsis

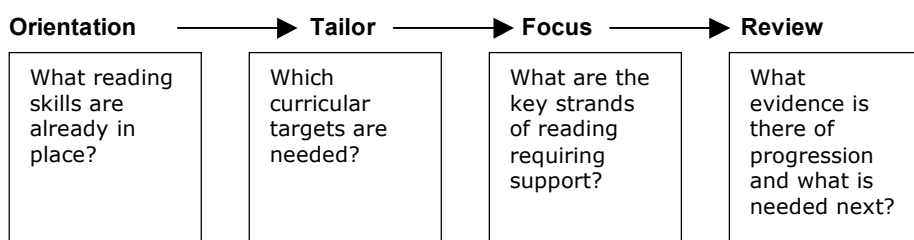
Ways to Live forever is a remarkable account of an eleven year old boy's life and death. Sam has leukaemia which he faces with wit and dignity and a determination to make the best of whatever time he has left. The text is a scrapbook of Sam's life, lists, facts, drawings and *Questions Nobody Answers*. Sally Nicholls avoids any sentimentality and easy answers in this powerful, thought-provoking and very moving novel.

Delivering progression in reading

These teaching materials are designed to help teachers provide opportunities to deliver tailored progression in pupils' reading skills when studying *Ways to Live Forever*. It is envisaged that these materials could be integrated with a broader scheme of work around the novel that might include work to support pupils' progression in writing and speaking and listening.

The materials offer a streamlined approach to planning and assessment linked to the National Strategy's Progression Maps¹ and the APP Assessment Grids². Activities are provided for each of the Reading Assessment Focuses (except for AF1) to allow the teacher to target the materials to their class' particular needs. For each Assessment Focus, differentiated activities are provided using the pen portraits defined in the National Strategy's Progression Maps as **developing**, **competent** and **active** readers. This allows for a differentiated approach to a whole class novel helping all pupils to make maximum progress.

Using the teaching support in class



The teaching support consists of three parts:

- Orientation tasks (for use when reading p3 – 14)
- Differentiated activities for each Reading Assessment Focus
- Assessment tasks (for use when the novel has been read).

Orientation tasks

These tasks provide an opportunity for teacher and pupils to identify strengths and weaknesses in reading. It is envisaged that this information will be combined with other prior attainment data such as KS2 Test and Teacher Assessment data, APP task and ongoing assessments to form curricular targets.

Differentiated activities

As the activities for each Reading Assessment Focus are linked to a section of the novel, the materials can either be used in their entirety to ensure coverage of all Reading Assessment Focuses or as appropriate for specific targets and then as a model for further work on that target Assessment Focus, using the text to develop identified skills.

Differentiated activities chosen for pupils will differ according to their strengths and weaknesses across the Assessment Focuses, for example, if a pupil has strengths in AF3, he/she might work on the task for an active reader. However, if the same pupil has an identified weakness in AF5, it might be more appropriate to work on the task for the developing reader. Extending the tasks for AF5 over the reading of several chapters, using the format of the tasks on page 6 as a model until progress is secured, might be more appropriate than moving on to AF6 in this case.

Assessment tasks

At the end of the unit, there is a page of suggested Assessment Tasks that could be used in conjunction with the APP Assessment Grids to assess pupil progress in reading and support target setting.

¹ <http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/progressionmaps>

² http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/downloads/enapp178905av_guide_read_y_7.pdf

Orientation tasks – 7th January (p3 – 14)

The following tasks could be completed during or after the reading of the first chapter. The page references might be helpful for note-making during the initial reading.

Tasks requiring skills in information retrieval (AF2)

- Imagine you are a social worker. Write a report on the McQueen family and the provision which is being made to look after Sam at home.
- What do you learn about the character of Felix? (p7 – 9)
- Write a paragraph about Felix using details from the text to support what you say.

Tasks requiring skills in inference (AF3)

- What sort of teacher do you think Mrs Willis is? (p7 – 9) What makes you think this?
- What do you think Ella feels about the rest of her family? (p11 – 13) What makes you think this? What do they think about her?
- What can you infer about Sam's illness from reading the first pages of the text?

Task requiring skills in structure analysis (AF4)

There are six sections in the text up to page 14.

- What are these sections?
- Write one sentence to describe each section.
- Why do you think there is such a variety of types and forms of text, e.g. lists, note cards and journal style accounts?

Tasks requiring skills in language analysis (AF5)

Reread page 8.

- How does what the characters say and do show their attitudes to being ill?

Reread *Why I Like Facts* (p10)

- How would you describe Sam's language in this section.
- How does the writer use contrasts in the first paragraph.
- Why does he write "*If I grow up, I'm going to be a scientist*"?
- What does Sam mean when he writes "*Going to die is the biggest waffly thing of them all*"?

Task requiring awareness of author as creator of text with a specific viewpoint and purpose (AF6)

There is the first *Questions Nobody Answers* on page 14.

- What do you think other *Questions Nobody Answers* might be?
- Why do you think Sally Nicholls includes these questions in the book?
- Do you think there will be any answers?

Task requiring understanding of social context (AF7)

Research the symptoms of and possible treatments for leukaemia.

FOR A DEVELOPING READER

[Pupil target: Finding and using textual references](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on details about Sam's Dad, looking at the difference between facts, which can be proved with quotations from the text, and inferences, which can't.

Activity:

Ask pupils to work in pairs and to reread *Mum and Dad* (p19 – 20). They then have to decide which of the following seven statements about Dad are true. They should find a quotation to support their judgements.

- He comes from a large family.
- He does not like any fuss.
- He cannot accept that Sam is ill.
- He helps around the house.
- He is a kind man.
- He has a good relationship with his wife and children.
- He does not have a good relationship with his own mother, brother and sisters.

Using these notes, pupils should write a paragraph about Dad.

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Find the main ideas in a text and support them with evidence](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the details about Sam's mother and father.

Activity:

Ask pupils to reread pages 19 - 20 and 29 - 32. They should then make notes on the differences between Mum and Dad's attitudes to:

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Visitors | • Sam going back to school | • Sam's long term illness |
| • Going to church | • Sam's sudden nosebleed | • Each other |

Using these notes, they should either script or improvise a video-diary entry which Mum and Dad make individually after Sam has gone to bed. They must be completely truthful!

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Use short, well-chosen quotations within sentences to show I can refer closely to a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on Sam and his family.

Activity:

Working in a group of four using the information in this section, ask pupils to hot-seat the four members of the family in turn.

Pupils then need to write a Point – Evidence – Exploration paragraph about each character.

Pupils can be given a model, for example:

Ella sometimes goes to church with her mother, not because she is religious 'but only because everyone fusses over her'. This may mean that she likes being the centre of attention because people know that her brother has a terminal illness. She also stands up for herself. Mum always hates buying things with her because 'They always fight'. Perhaps she resents all the attention that is given to Sam and wants some of it for herself.

FOR A DEVELOPING READER

[Pupil target: Use empathy to make judgements](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on using empathy to make judgements.

Activity:

Ask pupils to reread *The Story of Grandfather's Footsteps* (p61 – 63).

Then ask pupils to write a sentence about:

- What scientists think about ghosts
- What Granny thinks about ghosts
- What Sam thinks about ghosts
- The relationship between Granny and Grandad
- What Granny feels about Sam's illness – both now and in the past.

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: To use inference and deduction when reading a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on inference and deduction

Activity:

- Ask pupils to reread *Why Does God Make Kids Get Ill?* (p36 – 41)
- Working with a partner, pupils are to rate each of the seven reasons from the points of view of Felix and Sam.
(1 = Definitely True; 2 = Possibly True; 3 = Don't know; 4 = Possibly Untrue; 5 = Definitely Untrue).
- Based on these decisions, pupils should write one paragraph on Sam and his beliefs and one on Felix and his beliefs – or lack of them.

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Interpreting layers of meaning](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on how characters' thoughts are expressed in their speech

Activity:

Working with a partner, pupils are to decide what characters are really thinking:

Mrs Willis let us play Top Trumps instead of school. She said if anybody asked, it was Maths. (p38)

'She gets cured,' she said. 'End of story. Now go and blow up some aliens or something' (p46)

'We've enough real things to worry about without making up more for ourselves' (p47)

'Let's wait and see,' they said. Or, 'Fingers crossed.' (p49)

'You're not writing a weepy book full of poems and pictures of rainbows, are you?' (p51)

'It's quicker if you use the other ones, dear,' she said. (p56)

Using these as examples, pupils should write a short exploration of the statement:
In this book characters sometimes do not say what they really mean.

FOR A DEVELOPING READER

[Pupil target: Understanding text layout and organisation](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on identification of different text types.

Activity:

In pairs, ask pupils to skim read pages 64 – 87. As they do so they should decide what text type is on each page:

- What is happening to Sam – the story
- What Sam wants to do – his thoughts and feelings
- Facts.

Are there any other types of text? If so, what are they?

Ask pupils to decide possible reasons why Sally Nicholls uses so many different text types.

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Use a range of imaginative reading strategies](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on how excitement is created in an individual section

Activity:

- In a group of three, ask pupils to read out the dialogue in *Me and Marian* (p64 – 69)
- Ask pupils to imagine that Sam, Ella and Felix have a heart beat monitor which records their excitement. Choose seven moments in this section and, in a group of three, draw a graph to show how excited the characters are.
- Ask the groups to consider why the jelly baby is important in this section.

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Text organisation and its effect on the reader](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on how Sally Nicholls uses a variety of text types.

Activity:

In pairs, ask pupils to skim read pages 64 – 87. As they do so, they should decide what text type is on each page and whether the text is about

- new life and experiences
- death
- life after death

Ask pupils to make notes on why they think Sally Nicholls has included:

- The story of Marie Antoinette's ghost (p64)
- True Facts About Coffins (p70)
- The conversation between Mum and Dad (p72)
- List No. 5 (p81 – 82)
- The Story of Stars (p84)
- The drawing of the Supernova (p87)

Using their notes, pupils should write a paragraph on how Sally Nicholls has used different text types and subject matter in this section of the novel.

FOR A DEVELOPING READER

[Pupil target: To understand the writer's use of verbs](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- How true to life is the language Sam uses?

Activity:

Ask pupils to reread *What Happened* (p96 – 99)

Ask pupils to storyboard this incident using six pictures. Each must have a caption from the text.

Working in a pair, pupils should look at p98 from *What happened next was something incredible* to the end of the section. They should be asked to identify:

- the verbs
- the negative verbs
- the repeated verbs
- the simple sentences
- the compound sentences
- the complex sentences

Pupils should then compare the language of this section to *What is Dying?* (p100) What are the main differences in the language used?

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Identifying and commenting on a writer's choice of language](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Use of speech and imagery to create effects.

Activity:

Ask pupils to re-read *Bullet Holes* (p112 - 114)

Ask pupils to storyboard this incident using nine pictures. Each must have a caption from the text.

In pairs, ask pupils to discuss

- Granny's language
- pleasant images
- unpleasant images
- colours
- similes
- the locked door

Pupils should make a short presentation to another pair on the ways language is used in this section.

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: A writer's language choices and their effect on the reader](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the use of contrasts

Activity:

Ask pupils to reread *The Funeral* (p120 – 124)

Ask pupils to storyboard this incident using twelve pictures. Each must have a caption from the text.

In pairs pupils should make notes on the contrasts between

- what Felix would have wanted and what actually happened
- what Ella and Sam should have done and what they actually did
- what was said about Felix and what he was really like

Pupils should make a presentation to another pair on the ways contrasts are used in this section.

FOR A DEVELOPING READER

[Pupil target: Using active reading strategies](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- How does Mum's viewpoint change?

Activity:

In small groups, ask pupils to describe Mum's feelings up to the end of Felix's funeral.

Ask pupils to re-read *A Snow Fall* (p125 – 130)

Script or improvise a telephone conversation between Mum and her friend Sue about the day she took Sam and Ella sledding. Ask pupils to concentrate on:

- what happened that day
- why she decided to take them
- her feelings about what they all did
- her feelings about what might happen in the future.

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Understanding the writer's viewpoint](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- How Sally Nicholls shows the changes in Dad's character

Activity:

In small groups, ask pupils to describe how a reader would feel about Dad up to when he said the family could not go sledding.

Ask pupils to reread the four sections between pages 132 and 141.

Script or improvise a conversation between Dad and Dr Bill in which Dad explains:

- how he used to feel about Sam and his illness
- what he is feeling at this point in the text
- why his feelings have changed
- what he thinks about the future.

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Commenting on the impact of a writer's choices](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- What picture of the world does Sally Nicholls present to the reader?

Activity:

Ask pupils to reread *Perfect* (p146 – 148)

In small groups, ask pupils to say why Sam describes this particular day as "perfect".

Then ask pupils to focus on the final two paragraphs and discuss:

- what Sam and Ella could see
- what Sam thought about it
- how Sally Nicholls makes the world seem a wonderful place through Sam's words
- what the final two sentences might imply about what will happen next.

FOR A DEVELOPING READER

[Pupil target: Understand the context of a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- What sort of family is the McQueen family?

Activity:

In a small group, note down everything you can find out about the McQueen family.

Script or improvise a television show like *Trisha* in which the McQueens are interviewed about their lives before and after Sam first became ill.

Ask pupils to write a paragraph on the home life of the McQueen family and how it has changed.

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Understand the social context of a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- What types of medical treatment are currently available for a child in Sam's situation?

Activity:

In a small group, note down everything you can find out about how Sam's leukaemia is treated.

Script or improvise a television show like *Richard and Judy* in which Mr and Mrs McQueen, Dr Bill and Annie are interviewed about Sam's treatment.

Ask pupils to write an account of the ways in which leukaemia is treated.

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Understand the difference between factual account and fictional interpretation of facts](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the way in which factual accounts are included in a fictional text.

Activity:

Ask pupils to look back over the ten lists which Sam has included in his book so far and decide how many contain real facts and how many are fictional.

Then ask them to note the details given of Sam's leukaemia both in the lists and in the story.

- What is leukaemia?
- What are the symptoms?
- How is Sam's leukaemia treated?

Script or improvise a documentary television programme which shows the ways in which leukaemia is treated in this country. Interviewees could include Mr and Mrs McQueen; Sam and Felix; Annie and Dr Bill; the people from Mum's church and Mrs Willis.

'It's my life. I don't want to spend it taking stupid things that don't do anything' (p152)

Ask pupils to discuss whether they think that Sam has taken the right decision.

Information retrieval (AF2):

Describe Sam's death. You should try to include his feelings as well as the factual information given.

You will gain marks for details which are taken from the text.

Inference (AF3):

Reread *Spring* (p174 – 175)

What can you infer about the feelings of:

- Mum and Dad
- Mrs Willis
- Ella
- Sam

Why do you think Sam's last contact is with his father rather than his mother?

Reread *List No.11 Things I Want To Happen After I Am Dead* (p182)

Write an imaginative account of his funeral based on how you think the characters in the book would behave.

Use of structure (AF4):

Compare the two ways in which his death is presented. You will gain marks if you use details taken from the text.

Why do you think there is a final list? What is the effect of this list on the reader?

Use of language (AF5):

There were no angels (p 178) How does Sam describe his own death?

Think about:

- Light and dark
- Colours
- Inside and outside the room
- Movement and stillness
- Dreaming and waking
- The use of repetition

Awareness of author's viewpoint and purpose (AF6):

In *Question and Answer with Sally* at the end of the book, the writer explains that she is a Quaker and that

'Quakers don't tell you what to believe – like Sam they think you have to work out your own answers to the big questions'. How do you think she would answer these *Questions Nobody Answers*:

- Does it hurt to die?
- Why do people have to die anyway?
- Where do you go after you die?
- Why does God make kids ill?

How would you answer these questions?