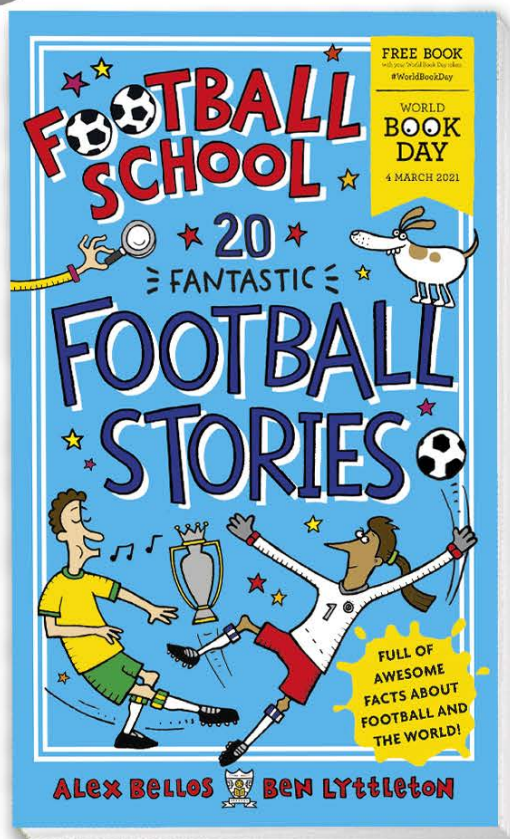


WALKER BOOKS TEACHERS' NOTES

FOOTBALL SCHOOL



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ALEX BELLOS  BEN LYTTLETON

TEACHERS' NOTES

FOOTBALL SCHOOL 20 \ni FANTASTIC \ni FOOTBALL STORIES

ALEX BELLOS & BEN LYTTLETON

Illustrated by Spike Gerrell

These notes have been written by the teachers at the [CLPE](#) to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. They could be used to support whole class, group or individual reading. We hope you find them useful.

BEFORE YOU START



As you read through the book it would be helpful to use a group journal to organise and store discussions and responses to the text.

The book comprises four sections with five 'stories' in each section, so that you may have each child read all of the stories, or prefer to allocate the stories to individual pupils or pairs of readers to read then summarise and report back on to the group, which would afford good opportunities to practise close reading, re-reading, thinking aloud and summarising alongside skimming, scanning and questioning.

Throughout the book, you may need to, or children may be inspired to, conduct extra research around the people, events and aspects shared. Look for ways to support this authentically, sharing with children the ways in which they could go about this. This includes investigating how to find and recognise credible sources and how to ensure they are fact checking information that they find out. All of this will lead to a much richer and deeper understanding of the text and may also encourage children to research topics of their own interest and write about these.

INTRODUCING THE BOOK:

- Look at the cover of the book together, sharing the title and cover art. *What does the cover make you think about? How do you feel about reading this book? What do you think it might be like? Have you read any books like this before? Take time to look carefully at the illustration. What details do you notice? What might these tell you about the stories that lie ahead? Does the cover make you want to read this book? Why or why not?* Record the children's initial responses and return to these as you read the book, comparing the children's first thoughts with how it actually turns out to be.
- Look at the additional branding on the book. *What do the gold ribbon describing it as a 'free book' and the hashtag #WorldBookDay mean to you? What do you know about World Book Day? Have you used a World Book Day token to get a free book before? What was it?*
- Come back to the front cover and encourage the children to make connections between this text and other books they have read, life experiences and real world knowledge. You may ask facilitating questions such as:
 - *Do you like football, is it a game you enjoy playing and/or watching?*
 - *What do you already know about the game, its history and players? What would you like to find out?*
 - *What does the subtitle '20 Fantastic Football Stories' suggest to you? What type of stories do you think this book might contain, what might make them 'fantastic'?*



- Now focus on the text presented in the splash on the cover: **'Full of awesome facts about football and the world!'** What does **'awesome'** suggest to you? What kinds of facts might there be about **'football and the world'**? Again, make a note of children's initial ideas. You can then come back to these as you continue to read to see if any of these link with any of those presented.
- Share the first pages up to and including the page about World Book Day (page 7). *How does the bookplate fit with your predictions about the book based on the cover? What does the phrase **'Kickito Ergo Sum'** mean to you?* Children may find the Latin phrase 'Cogito ergo sum' from the philosopher René Descartes; translated as 'I think, therefore I am', this pun translates as 'I kick, therefore I am': what does this tell you about the importance of football to the authors?
- Look closely at the four sections of the book and the 'stories' that they include: *how might each contribute to the whole? What do you think each part might be about and what might it tell us about **'football and the world'**?*

SECTION 1, FANTASTIC FOOTBALLERS, PAGES 9–27:

The stories in this first section focus on the background, abilities and personalities of five different players. You could ask children to read all five or to read one each then report back on that player to the rest of the group. As each of the four parts of the book has the same overall structure, you could alternate the approach, sometimes reading all five stories, and sometimes reading and reporting on just one.

- Begin by looking at all five stories to see what they have in common, what features all of them share, and what features the authors have used to convey the lives of their subjects. *What features are the same across all five potted biographies? How do the layout, format and illustrations help you to make sense of each life?*
- Go on to read each of the stories and allow time and space to consider the content and form of each biography. Encourage children to consider why each life has been included in the book: *what does it add to our understanding of the game of football? What do we find out about the kind of people that play the game professionally: what are the skills and attitudes all five share, and what makes them stand apart from each other and from other players that you may know?*
- Consider the life and career of prodigy Ansu Fati (page 10):
 - What do you think the authors mean when they describe Ansu Fati as the new Lionel Messi? What do you know about Messi and why he is famous? Do you think the comparison seems fair? Why? Why not?
 - Do you think a player can really be valued at £425m? What do you think the authors feel about sums of this size for players? Do you think it is right for such huge sums to be spent on a game?
 - What does the panel about Ansu Fati's friendship with Takefusa Kubo tell you about him as a person? What do you understand by the phrase **'mates before teams'**?
- Consider hard-working Harry Kane (page 14):
 - How do you think Harry Kane's experience compares to that of Ansu Fati? How do you feel the authors feel about him, from the way they write about his dedication both on and off the field and nicknaming him **Humble Harry**?
 - How do you think hearing the 'story' of American footballer Tom Brady affected



Harry Kane, and how does the resilience he developed relate to his high scoring rate and captaincy of the national team?

- *What does the panel about attending the same school as David Beckham add to your understanding or enjoyment of the story?*
- Consider principled rebel Megan Rapinoe (page 18):
 - *Megan Rapinoe is described as standing up for her beliefs. Do you feel sportspeople should use their fame to get involved in politics as she has done?*
 - *Have you seen her perform 'The Pose'? Maybe you could try it for yourself! How did it make you feel? What do you think it symbolises?*
 - *How does the panel about the fashion label she has created with her sister add to or refine your understanding and appreciation of her as a player or a person?*
- Consider campaigner Marcus Rashford (page 22):
 - *What impression do you gain of him, on and off the pitch? How do you think the authors feel about him, how do you know?*
 - *Like Megan Rapinoe, Marcus Rashford has campaigned for causes close to his heart and personal experience; but where Rapinoe was confronted by President Trump, UK Prime Minister Johnson acknowledged Marcus Rashford was in the right and he was awarded an MBE. Why do you think the two players were treated differently?*
- Consider footballing genius Cristiano Ronaldo (page 24):
 - *Why do you think the authors focus on a match Ronaldo is famous for not playing in? What do his behaviour and attitude in that game tell us about him?*
 - *What do you think football teaches us about working together?*
- Complete the quiz on page 28 and discuss what the different stories about the lives and careers of individual players contribute to our understanding of the game of football, and of the world.
- Children could select a player of their own to write a biography on using this section as a model; encourage them to consider what they want their player to tell us about the game and the world — what is unique and interesting about them — how they might format and illustrate it, and what they might include in the extra panel. Encourage them to share what they write and work together to identify what worked well and what could be improved.



SECTION 2, TOP TEAMS, PAGES 29–47

The 'stories' in Section 2 move from the individual players ('Fantastic Footballers') of Section 1 to consider the achievements and ethos of 'Top Teams'. As before, children could read all five stories or read one in detail and report it back to the group. The suggested questions will encourage the children to identify what the five stories have in common, as well as what each contributes to the pool of knowledge that this book is providing about 'football and the world'.

- Explore the reasons why each team might have been included in this section: *what do we find out about the different kinds of team that play in different leagues, what makes them stand apart from each other and from other teams that you may know or support? How do the layout, format and illustrations help you to organise your understanding of each team? What do you think is the particular strength of each club that made the authors include it?*
- Consider the 'heartbroken' England Women (page 30):
 - *What do we learn about the experiences of the England Women and their*

responses to them? Why do you think the authors included a team that has not yet been successful in its World Cup campaigns? Do you think defeat has something valuable to teach us?

- Consider eco-friendly Forest Green Rovers (page 32):
 - Do you think it is important for a high-profile organisation like a football club to think about green issues? Would you be more likely to support a club with these priorities? Could or would you adopt any of the ideas in the 'Green Goals' panel?
- Consider unexpectedly successful Leicester City (page 36):
 - What makes this story of surprise success interesting? How do the authors capture what Leicester did to counter everyone's expectations, what words and phrases especially capture the tension of their win? What do Spike Gerrell's illustrations add to your engagement with the story? And what does the panel about Gary Lineker's unusual bet add to this story?
- Consider all-conquering Liverpool (page 40):
 - Liverpool's success in the 2019–2020 Championship has been widely reported; how do the authors manage to bring something fresh to the story? What do you think brought Liverpool their success? What do you think the authors think?
- Consider legendary Real Madrid (page 44):
 - How do the authors manage to bring out what is special about the **'most famous club in the world'** and its history and successes? Why do you think they concentrate on the 1960 final against Eintracht Frankfurt: what is the significance of this historic game, and how do they capture the magic of that evening?
- Check your recall of key information with the 'Top Teams Quiz' (page 48), then consider what these teams add to our pool of knowledge and understanding about 'football and the world'.
- Children could take inspiration from this chapter to do some free writing about their own favourite team, for example by recounting a famous victory, analysing their playing style, designing merchandise or kit that captures their special quality. They could use text and illustration or develop a presentation to share their work, then vote on one club to add to the list of Top Teams.



SECTION 3, GAME CHANGERS, PAGES 49–67

As you pass the half-way point of the book, ask children to summarise the first two sections and assess how they relate to their expectations prior to starting the book. Encourage children to read forwards or back through the book in order to relate connections or clarify ideas, and to verbalise their thinking about the book so far, co-creating an understanding of and response to the text.

- Go on to read the next section, 'Game Changers', a mixture of stories about teams and players. As before, consider whether children will read all five stories or focus on one each which they study in depth before summarising and reporting back to the group. Children can bring to bear in their discussion of these stories everything they have learned from their discussion of the stories so far: the organisation, layout and visual features of this type of text; but also the authors' use of examples to demonstrate their thinking on what different players and teams tell us about football.
- Ask the children to consider what the five stories have in common, to explore what might unify them as 'game changers'. *What do you understand by the phrase 'game changer'?*

Does this refer simply to the game of football, or is it being used more widely here to suggest ways in which the wider world is affected by things that happen or originate in the domain of football?

- What was special about the team of Dick, Kerr's Ladies (page 50) to deserve inclusion in this section? Were you aware more widely of the history and status of women's football (which is only recently regaining a popularity and prestige it once enjoyed but was then denied)? How do you think this team's history relates to the history of women's rights?
- Why do you think the authors included Jimmy Hill (page 54) as a 'Game Changer'? Which of his contributions, either to player's welfare or to the fan experience, do you think is most important? Can you imagine what the game was like before these innovations? What does the panel about Jimmy Hill refereeing in tight shoes add to your understanding of his character and personality?
- Although he was a player, Australian Craig Johnston (page 56) is best known for inventing the Predator boot: how do you think this new technology changed the game? Do you think all innovations are successful?



- The final two stories are about two figures who are perhaps better known for the impact they had on the wider world, so that the 'game' they changed wasn't only football. *Why do you think it was significant for Jadon Sancho (page 60) to travel abroad for the chance to improve his game and win a permanent place in a good team? What do you think the challenges might be in moving to live and work far away from home? Can you see why the authors decided to include him here?*
- Children may have heard of Walter Tull (page 64), famous as the first mixed heritage professional player, and beyond football as the first black officer in the British army. *What impact do you think Walter Tull's example had on the game of football and on wider society? What do the panels on the racism that Walter experienced and how he faced it, and on the Football Battalion add to your understanding of both this story and the wider world?*
- Tackle the quiz. *What do the stories in this section suggest about the ability of individuals and teams to bring about change? What do you think these stories add to our understanding of the impact of certain teams or individuals on football and wider society?*
- You could invite the children to reflect on ways in which they would like to see the game of football continue to evolve. Ask them to brainstorm a range of potential changes, to dimensions of pitches, length of matches, size and composition of teams, new kit, balls or other equipment, technological innovations — be brave, there are no limits! Invite them to champion one of these game-changing ideas and make a one-minute oral case for its introduction, then as a group debate its merits. *Could any of these ideas have impact outside the world of football?*

SECTION 4, UNBELIEVABLE TALES, PAGES 69–87

The final section, 'Unbelievable Tales', groups together five tales that are only loosely tied to each other but are all related to football. After reading them — again either as a group or as individuals summarising to the group — give the children time and space to reflect on what they have heard, then discuss: why do you think the authors chose to group these stories in the final section; what does each tale add to the book overall?

- In 'The Boy Who Would Not Grow' (page 70) we meet Lionel Messi: *why do you think he belongs in this section of 'Unbelievable Tales', rather than 'Fantastic Footballers' or 'Game Changers', for example? What do you think is the 'unbelievable' part of his story? How does the contrasting panel about goalkeeper height add to what you take from this story?*
- Children may especially enjoy 'The Footballers Who Pooed on the Pitch' (page 74). *How do the authors combine scientific explanation and an embarrassing/humorous set of anecdotes? What does the diagram of the digestive tract and explanation of the process of digestion add to your understanding and enjoyment of the story?*
- 'The GOAT Mascot' (page 78) relates the story of Cologne's nine goat mascots. *Does your club have a particular mascot or associated animal? Many football teams have nicknames that tell some story of the club's origins or history, which children could research and report.*



- 'The Mystery of the Stolen World Cup' (page 80) recounts the mysteries of the three World Cup trophies that have been stolen. *Which of the three mysteries do you find most perplexing? Why? What does the panel on the history of trophies add to your understanding of mankind's need to recognise and celebrate success?*
- The final story in this book, 'The Thai Cave Rescue' (page 84) relates the dramatic rescue of the Wild Boars and their coach Ake, after 17 days trapped in a cave system in Thailand. *What do the drama and daring of this rescue add to the book you have been reading? Do you feel it is a good and appropriate note to end on?*
- Children could take inspiration from any of these stories to do some free writing, including but not limited to first-hand recounts; newspaper/radio/TV coverage; reporting research on nicknames and mascots; preparing interview questions for those mentioned in the stories or sending them notes of advice... Share what the children produce and identify what worked well and what could be improved.
- Try the final quiz, then review the section and the whole book. *What do you think are the key points and messages of this final section? How do the authors draw everything together in the final stories? What do you think is the book's 'take home' message?*
- At this point, ask the children to explore and discuss their responses to the text so far with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls the four basic questions. These questions are



most frequently used to discuss fiction, but can equally be applied to poetry, illustrations and artwork, films and multimedia, and — as here — the type of book Alex Bellos and Ben Lyttleton have written. They give children accessible starting points for discussion:

- *Tell me ... is there anything you like about this text?*
 - *Is there anything that you particularly dislike?*
 - *Is there anything that puzzles you?*
 - *Are there any patterns ... any connections that you notice?*
- Support the children's discussion of these questions, perhaps guiding it towards considering what type of book this is: children may feel that it has elements of biography, historical recount and humour, but also borrows from illustration, picturebooks and illustrated non-fiction.
 - Consider the authors' selection of stories and how they have told them: *how do the experiences of real life footballers compare to those of fictional characters?*
 - Throughout the book, we find out about a range of players, teams and events. *How do you think that the authors curated the various stories? What do you think they want you to think about football and its place in the world?* Football School describes its mission as being 'to develop a love of reading and a curiosity about the world'. *How well do you think this book achieved that aim?*
 - What do you think have been the most interesting aspects of this book, and how do they compare to other books you have read? *Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? Why not? Who do you think would enjoy it? What might you tell them about the book? And what might you keep back, so as not to spoil their reading experience?*
 - The book ends with further conversation between Alex Bellos and Ben Lyttleton about the miracle of reading and the importance of World Book Day. *Did you enjoy this title, and did it make you look forward to reading more books for pleasure?*

AFTER READING, YOU COULD ALSO:

- Through modelling, ask the children to describe their favourite part of the book. Provide the children with an oral scaffold for example: *the most memorable story/section of the book was ... because ...; my top moment/player/team/match/story in the book was ... because ...* and in pairs ask them to identify their favourite part of the book. Encourage children to give reasons for their choices and invite some children to share these.
- If possible, leave copies of the book in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or socially in a group.
- Children could research the various players, teams and matches that the authors mention and undertake simple bookmaking to create a journal to write up and present their research.



OTHER SUGGESTED TITLES BY OR TO FURTHER SUPPORT THE EXPLORATION OF THEMES ARISING FROM THE BOOK:

- Football School's own website <https://www.footballschool.co/>.
- There are many other titles in the Football School series, including *Football School: Seasons 1–4*, *Football School: Star Players*, *Football School: Epic Heroes*, and *Football School: The Amazing Quiz Book*, *Football School: The Incredible Joke Book* and *Football School: The Ultimate Puzzle Book*.
- There are also numerous print and video interviews and programmes about the book's contents on the internet, and highlights featuring many of the matches and players discussed, even Gary Lineker presenting *Match of the Day* in his Leicester City boxer shorts.

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