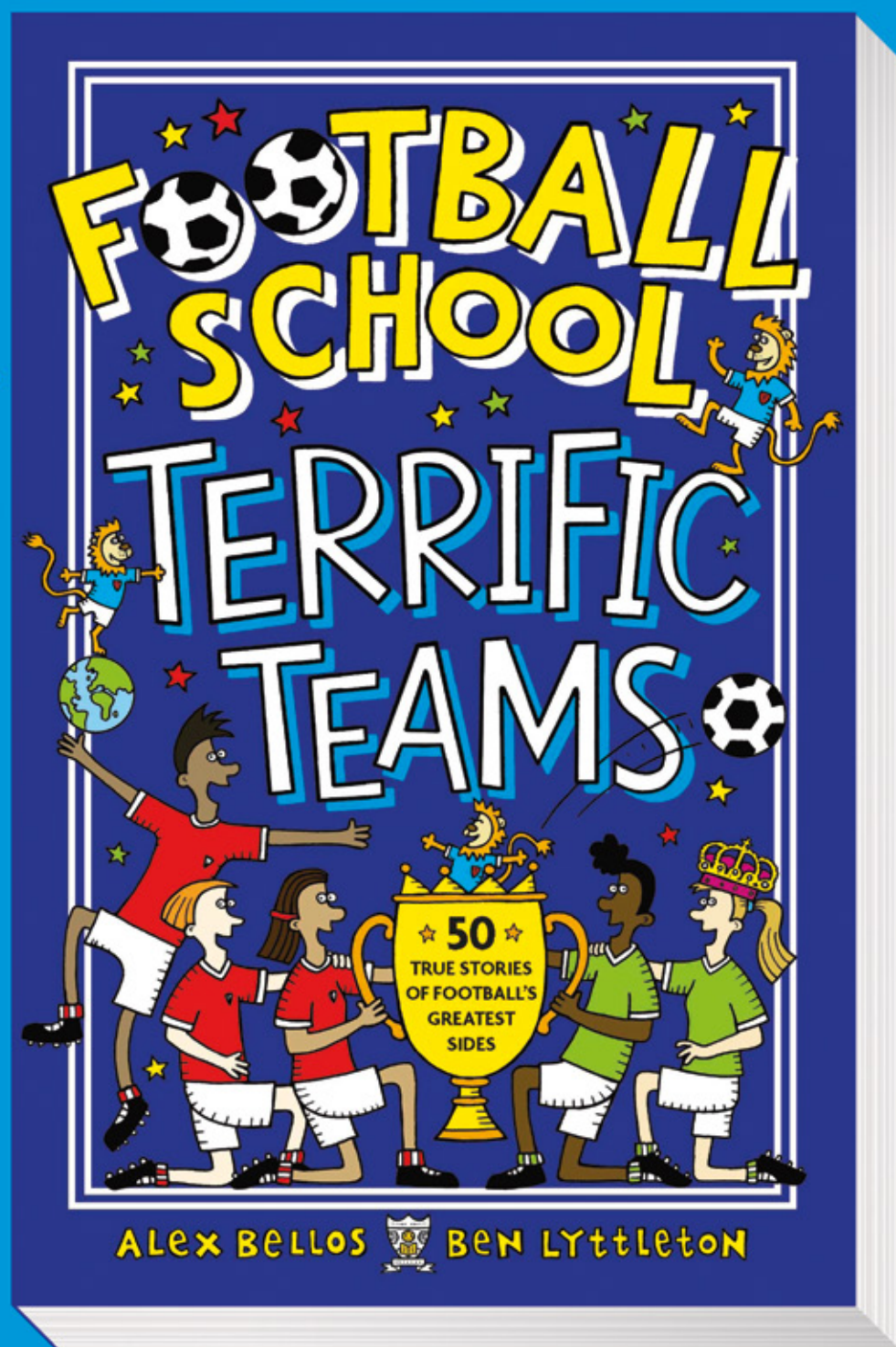


# TEACHERS' NOTES



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WALKER  
BOOKS

ALEX BELLOS  BEN LYTTLETON

Illustrated by Spike Gerrell • 9781406386660 • £6.99 • paperback • 7+

**ABOUT THE BOOK:** Discover the incredible true stories behind the most famous clubs in football, such as Manchester United, Real Madrid and Liverpool. Explore how these teams have overcome failure and tragedy to win leagues, lift trophies and enter the record books. Also discover fascinating facts about more unknown clubs, including the German team with a skull and crossbones logo and the most eco-friendly club in the world. Perfect for fans of *Football School: Star Players* and *Football School: Epic Heroes*, this collection of fifty true stories is a must-read for any young football fan.

[www.footballschool.co](http://www.footballschool.co) [youtube.com/FootballSchoolFacts](https://youtube.com/FootballSchoolFacts)

*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 fifty short chapters about fifty teams; every child could read about every team, but it would allow readers to develop a wider range of reading behaviours if you allocate teams to individual pupils, pairs or small groups of readers for them to read then summarise and report back on to the group. This approach 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 locate. All of this will lead to a 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

*Consider the book as an object and introduce its form, production, features and content, identifying readers' initial responses and engagement.*

- 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 book that lies ahead? Children might comment on the different strips, the globe, crown, lions and trophy. What do you think these different elements suggest? How do the colour, layout and font make you feel about the book? What mood does the style of illustration suggest? Does the cover make you want to read this book? Why or why not? Record the children's initial responses around a photocopy of the cover and return to these as you read the book, comparing the children's first thoughts with how it actually turns out to be.*
- 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?*



***Football School Terrific Teams: 50 True Stories of Football's Greatest Sides***  
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- What do you already know about the game, its history and players, culture and traditions? What would you like to find out?
- Is there a particular team you support? Is it a national team, one from the Premiership, Championship or lower divisions, or perhaps a European league? Is it a men's or women's team? Professional or amateur? Do you play in a team yourself? What do you think makes a team **'terrific'**? Is yours? Why? Why not?
- What does the subtitle **'50 True Stories of Football's Greatest Sides'** suggest to you? What type of stories do you think this book might contain, what is the significance of the stories being **'true'**? What might define these fifty clubs as the **'greatest sides'**? 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 the Contents page. 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?
- Consider the page that shows Alex and Ben discussing the book. How does this conversation set the tone for the book? What words and phrases especially stand out for you that draw you in to the book? Children might identify sport-related language like **'huddle in'**, **'tactics'**, **'line-ups'**, **'MVP (Most Valuable Player)'**; puns and plays on words, like **'underdogs'**, **'tails/tales'**; or well-chosen vocabulary like **'towering tallies of tremendous trophies'**, **'fabulous'**, **'achieved the impossible'**, **'extraordinary'**, **'hilarious'**. What more do you find out about the book you are going to read, what is in it, and the way the stories might be told? Does this dialogue draw you in to the book? Why? Why not?
- Ask children to discuss the spread about **'Football School: the team that plays it by the book'**. These pages borrow the format the book uses to introduce each team, with information on crest, mascot, home kit and stadium, and a textbox that adds more detail, so it is worth identifying key features and familiarising the children with them. What more do we learn about the people who have created this book? Why do you think they have written about themselves in the same way as they might write about a football team? What does the subtitle **'The team that plays it by the book'** mean to you? What does the text box **'Home Boys'** add to what you have read, how do you think it relates to the main text?
- Now look closely at the Table of Contents and the teams listed. Do you recognise any of the teams? What do you know about any of them, and why they might have been included? What might make each one **'terrific'**?
- Discuss the organisation of the book, considering how they will engage with it. How is the book organised? Why do you think the stories are organised alphabetically by team name? Do you think there are advantages or disadvantages in ordering them this way? How many other ways can you think of to organise the stories? Children may suggest categorising into national teams, Premiership teams, overseas teams; men's or women's teams; by amateur or professional status; or by teams they know and teams they don't. How would you choose to read the book: by working through it in alphabetical order; reading it front to back like a conventional story; by picking at random; or choosing teams you know or might be interested in, or maybe teams you don't know?



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## Investigating the form

Investigate the layout and treatment of sample team chapters by reading aloud, text-marking and discussing what has been shared.

- Share the stories of the first three teams to familiarise children with the form of the chapters, orienting themselves before they go on to explore the book for themselves. Begin by **reading aloud** the chapters on **'AC Milan'**, **'Al Ahly'** and **'Alcoyano'**, sharing the illustrations. Allow time and space for the children to reflect on what they have heard and seen, and to discuss.
  - What do you think is happening in each of these chapters? Can you summarise what you learn about each team?
  - What do the three stories share and how are they different? Children might observe that AC Milan is a famous, successful and historical European team, Al Ahly an African team whose supporters have known disaster, and Alcoyano a semi-professional team with a can-do attitude.
  - Why do you think the authors included them, what do you think makes each team **'terrific'**?
- Now provide a photocopy of the pages for the three teams and invite children to read along as you re-read, then to **text-mark** the stories, identifying features the three stories have in common, and that stand out for them.
  - What do you notice about the layout and structure of each story, what do they all share? Children might note the flags and crest-related illustration and explanation, the boxes for **'Mascot'** or **'Legend'** (or other stand-out features later), **'Home kit'** and **'Stadium'**. How does this guide the way you read each story?
  - What do the subtitles **'European giants with an important legacy'**, **'Top Egyptian club overcomes tragedy to win African title'**, and **'Spirited underdogs who never give up'** add in each case? How do they relate to the body of the text, and guide your reading?
  - What do you notice about the language Alex and Ben use to tell the teams' stories? How do they present factual information alongside their own reaction to it, which might be humorous, sympathetic, admiring?
  - Children might notice a particular taste for puns and wordplay, such as **'You red (and black) it here first!'**, **'The Red and Blacks are red and back!'** in **'AC Milan'**. Do you enjoy this kind of playful writing? Why? Why not? What do you think it adds to the text? Why do you think they do not use it in Al Ahly's story?
  - What do the textboxes and graphics add to each story? How do they relate to what the main story is about, and add to what you might think or feel about that team? What does the table about Al Ahly's relative success in the African Champions League add to what you find out about them?
  - How do Spike's illustrations, related to the crest and in-line with the story, add to your engagement with and enjoyment of the text? What aspects of each team's story does he choose to highlight? Why?
  - What features are the same across all three stories? How do the layout, format and illustrations help you to make sense of each story?



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- End by revisiting the three stories to reach a shared understanding of what each offers the reader and what distinguishes these teams.
  - What do we learn about football and its teams from these stories?
  - What do you think they add to our understanding of the game of football?
  - What do we find out about the kind of teams that play the game: what are the skills and attitudes they share, and what makes them stand apart from each other and from other teams that you may know?

## Book talk, independent reading and summarising

*Generate and guide discussion of initial responses to the text, then invite children to read on independently and offer their interpretation, before reaching a shared understanding of the text.*

- Before going on to read further into the book, 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.
- Now divide the remaining 47 chapters equally between the children, in the order they appear in the book, e.g., **'American Samoa'** to **'Barcelona'** to Pupil/Pair/Group 1, **'Bayern Munich'** to **'Chelsea Women'** to Pupil/Pair/Group 2, **'Corinthian'** to **'FC Nordsjaelland'** to Pupil/Pair/Group 3, **'Forest Green Rovers'** to **'Japan Women'** to Pupil/Pair/Group 4 and so on. Assign the teams to the children, pointing out that there is a fair distribution in each group of national and league teams, amateur and professional, men and women, famous and less well-known.
- Support the children in reading about and reflecting on the teams they have been assigned. In each case, encourage them to explore the reasons why the team might have been included:
  - What do we find out about the different kinds of team that play in different competitions?
  - 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?



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- What do you think is the particular strength or stand-out feature of each club that made the authors include it? How is this reflected in the subtitle for each team's story?
- After you have allowed time and space for the children to reflect on what they have read, seen and discussed, invite them to share what they have read with the group:
  - Can you summarise what you found out about each team in one or two sentences? Why do you think they were chosen to be included in the book? What is special about their story, and what does it tell us about the sport of football and its players and fans?
  - Did you identify any particular words or phrases or other uses of language as you read? What made them stand out for you?
  - What did the teams have in common and what made them stand apart? Did you think there were any lessons to learn from their stories? Were any of your teams' stories funny, sad, inspiring, historically significant? Which ones and why?
  - Children could select one of their stories to share with the group. They might prepare this by further **text-marking** to highlight particular features they want to bring out in their **performance reading**, and consider how they will lift these features from the page. Model how they might accentuate and emphasise specific features, so that they have opportunity to take on the voice of non-fiction with which they may be less familiar.
- After you have heard each pupil/pair/group share their responses to the stories they have read – which may take more than one session – deepen the children's response by inviting them to discuss the book as a whole, identifying themes. Invite them to reconsider the Contents and the different ways they identified of categorising the stories.
  - What do you think the book tells us about different issues it addresses, for example:
  - Gender and equality, for example '**Chelsea Women**' (page 58), '**Dick, Kerr Ladies**' (page 66), '**Doncaster Belles**' (page 70), '**England Women**' (page 78), '**Lewes**' (page 110), '**Lyon Women**' (page 116), '**USA Women**' (page 182).
    - 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?
    - What was special about the team of Dick, Kerr's Ladies to deserve inclusion? 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?
  - Ecology, for example '**Forest Green Rovers**' (page 84).
    - 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?



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- Human Spirit, for example **'Iraq'** (page 96), **'Japan Women'** (page 104), **'Makana Football Association'** (page 118).
  - Why was it so important for Iraq's squad to win through to the final of the 2007 Asian Cup? What might victory mean for their countrymen?
  - What do you think football offered the inmates of Robben Island? Why do you think they named their league after Makana?
- Traditions and eccentricities, for example **'Bungay Town'** (page 48), **'Nacional'** (page 134), **'Portland Timbers'** (page 154) and **'Uppies and Doonies'** (page 180).
  - Why do you think so many people with the surname Bungay wanted to take part in the charity match? What does the Portland Timbers fans' support for Timber Jim tell you about football's sense of community? What do you think it would be like to play for the Kirkwall Uppies or Doonies in a game with so many players, a huge pitch and few rules?

## Quiz and deepening questioning

Use the quiz to assess children's retrieval of information from the text, then develop their questioning to support deeper comprehension.

- Invite children to tackle the quiz on page 184, to see how well they are able to retrieve information from the text. This will provide opportunities for re-reading, skimming and scanning to locate and summarise information.
  - How well do you think you have remembered the various stories?
  - Do you think the quiz questions give an accurate assessment of how you engaged with the book?
  - Can you devise some multiple-choice questions of your own to test your fellow readers?
- Model how to use a variety of questions to broaden the children's thinking around the book beyond the literal questions of the quiz. For example, referential questions promote the seeking of evidence from within the text and support the children in making text-based, deductive inferences, i.e., making connections within the text.
  - How do you think the fans of **'Manchester City'** (page 122) — **'founded by a vicar's daughter [...] for poorer members of the local community'** — felt about the successes of their wealthy neighbour **'Manchester United'** (page 126)?
  - How do you think Manchester United fans felt about their neighbours when the Abu Dhabi royal family invested in Manchester City and they were able to spend £1 billion on new players?
  - How do you think Nelson Mandela might have felt when prison guards built a wall to stop him watching football (page 121)?
- Evaluative questions can be used to promote the application of knowledge, thoughts, understanding and experiences to the text being investigated.



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- Do you enjoy singing? Why do you think fans of **'Nacional'** (page 134) started singing at matches? Why do you think fans of other teams copied them by singing together?
- Do you think it is important to win at all costs? Why do you think **'Corinthians'** (page 62) refuse to score from or attempt to save penalties?
- Is it better to win or lose, or just to take part? Why do you think **'American Samoa'** (page 18) keep on playing even though they suffer terrible defeats?

## Evaluating the text

- The book ends with further conversation between Alex and Ben that summarises the book. Do you agree with their take on the book and what you have learned? Did you enjoy this title, and did it make you look forward to reading more books from Football School?
- Revisit Aidan Chambers' four basic questions, giving the children the opportunity to reflect.
  - Did you enjoy these stories? What did you like or dislike?
  - What puzzles did it contain?
  - What links do you see to other stories you already know?
- Consider the authors' selection of teams and how they have told their stories. 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?
- Football School's website states: 'We promise you will laugh loads and learn even more about football and our amazing world!' Do you think this book keeps that promise? Why? Why not? 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?

## 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 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 the same format as the book, or develop a presentation to share



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their work, then vote on one club to add to the list of Terrific Teams.

- Children could research the various teams, coaches, players, matches and events 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 [www.footballschool.co/](http://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*. *Football School: 20 Fantastic Football Stories* was one of the World Book Day £1 titles in 2021.
- There are also numerous print and video interviews and programmes about the book's contents on the internet, and highlights featuring many of the teams, matches and players discussed.

Visit [www.footballschool.co](http://www.footballschool.co) and [youtube.com/footballschoolfacts](https://youtube.com/footballschoolfacts) for free activities and fun videos with coaches Alex and Ben.



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