

TEACHERS' NOTES

BE
AMAZING!

AN INSPIRING GUIDE
TO BEING YOUR
OWN CHAMPION



CHRIS HOY



9781406394733 • Paperback • £9.99 • 9 years+

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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. 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 group could also be asked to reflect on the writer's use of language and how he creates a particular effect or image.

Session 1: Cover and Preface

- Begin by considering the book as an artefact, sharing the cover and blurb, and asking children to consider it carefully. Ask them what expectations they have of the book they are about to read – the genre, the potential subject matter and text layout, and whether they make any connections between this book and other books they already know. Ask the children to make predictions of what the book could be about and to justify their responses, drawing out any connections they may have made to other books. Record the children's initial responses and return to these as you read the book, comparing the children's first thoughts to how it actually turns out to be when they read it.
- Support the children to make connections between this text and others like it they might know, by encouraging them to scrutinise and reflect on the cover.
 - What do you think about the cover of the book? How does it make you feel? What features catch your eye? Why? What can you say about the layout and appearance of the cover, the typeface used for the main title and author? How do the colours chosen for the cover design make you feel? Why do you think these particular colours may have been chosen?
 - What does the title "Be Amazing!" suggest to you? How does it feel to be given this instruction, as an imperative? What might "being amazing" involve? What do you think the book might invite you to be amazing at?
 - What do you take from the subtitle, "An Inspiring Guide to Being Your Own Champion"? What type of "guide" do you think this book might be, what might make it "inspiring"? What do you understand by "being a champion"? Where do you normally meet this word, and what does it mean? How could you be "your own" champion? How does this relate to the gold medal with star and laurels on a red, white and blue ribbon? What does this illustration make you think about or say to you? What do the other shapes – the starbursts and curved lines – add to the experience? What do you think the book designer is trying to convey to us as readers? Does the cover make you want to read this book? Why? Why not?
 - Do you recognise the name of the author? Although he has written for children – about cycling and the Flying Fergus series with Joanna Nadin – they may not know Chris Hoy primarily as a writer. Depending on their age, they may not even know him as a sportsman, arguably Britain's greatest cyclist, with eleven world championships and six Olympic gold medals to his name, as well as a successful motorsport career since retiring from cycling. If they haven't heard of him or know very little, take the time to watch some videos or read some newspaper articles about his achievements. Knowing more about Chris Hoy, what does this make you think this book will be like? Do you think that having an Olympic champion write this book would make people more likely to read it and follow the advice within? Why or why not?



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- Open the book and share the illustrations and dedications up to and including the Table of Contents, and discuss:
 - How do the illustrations — of the beribboned gold trophy, the smiley face below the dedication (to the author’s children), the cyclist speeding downhill and the abstract designs (flowers, fireworks...?) on the Contents page — support your prediction about the content and link to the author? What does the phrase “Go Me!” mean to you, how do people use it? How might it relate to this book, and why might it be associated with a huge trophy? What tone is set by the cyclist, the smiley face and the decorative background on the Contents page, how do they make you feel? Children might comment on them being friendly and unthreatening, and associated with growth, potential and celebration of achievement.
 - What do you learn from the contents page? Does this reflect what you thought the book would be about? What do you notice about the language of the chapter headings? Children might notice that they are short and punchy, like slogans, and that they sometimes feature alliteration and use imperatives (except “fantastic failure”). Why do you think these language devices have been chosen? What further clues do you think these chapter headings might give about the contents and tone of the book? Children might associate this language with a positive, empowering and upbeat attitude.
- Read aloud Chris Hoy’s introduction, sharing also the way the text looks on the page - the speech bubble “Hello!”, the different typefaces and font sizes and the arrows around the “And have fun!” command. Give the children time and space to reflect on and discuss what they have heard and consider:
 - What do you think is happening in the pages you have just heard read? Who is speaking and what do you learn about him, what he has done in his life and what he wants to achieve with this book?
 - What words and phrases stand out for you as Chris Hoy addresses you? What tone does he adopt? What does he do to introduce himself as your potential role model and mentor? Children might mention how modest and self-effacing he is, given his incredible achievements: why do you think Chris Hoy emphasizes how ordinary he is and how unbelievable his success has been? How does this make you feel about him and his book, and what you might gain from it?
 - What do you think is the main message of what Chris Hoy says in this introduction? Can you summarise the key points?
 - How has the book designer used the visual elements of the page? How does this relate to what Chris Hoy wants to say, does it support you in your navigation and understanding of the pages and the objective of the book? How does this work?
- You could also watch Chris Hoy read the opening of this introduction at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zv7cf82>. Give the children time and space to reflect on and discuss what they have heard and consider:
 - How does Chris Hoy’s reading of the introduction compare to your reading of it? Is the voice and tone he adopts the same as you picked up on when you read it for yourself? How is it different, if at all?
 - What impression does he make on you when you read his words or hear him read his own words: are you inspired to trust him with your dreams and ambitions? What has he said, and how, that inspires that trust? How do you think the next and following chapters will build on this trust?



Session 2: Chapter 1

- Share the opening spread, marking Chapter 1, **Get Inspired — find something that makes you feel amazing** and invite children to discuss:
 - What is the impact of signposting the new chapter in this way? Why do you think the author and book designer have chosen to demarcate the new chapter in this way?
 - What is the significance of the medal and ribbon, the twinkling stars, and the subheading, “Find something that makes you feel amazing”? What more does this subheading add to the chapter title that you already know from the Contents page; how does it support or engage you as a reader, and why do you think Chris Hoy included this additional information?
- Support children in skimming and scanning to find the subheadings of the other chapters, e.g., **Chapter 2: Dare to Dream — believe in yourself and aim for amazing**, **Chapter 3: Feel Positive — a change in attitude can have amazing results**, and so on.
 - How does the subheading in each case relate to the chapter title? How do the chapter title and subheading work together? How do they serve to inform, engage and orient the reader?
 - How do the subheadings of each chapter work together? What do they have in common?
- Read aloud the entire chapter, pages 12 to 29, but explain that you will be asking the children to summarise what they hear. Depending on their experience of taking notes, you may wish to model effective ways of notetaking first, thinking out loud to decide, which is the most important information that you want to note down, and ways to capture the main points effectively in writing, using techniques such as bullet points or producing a concept map. You could support them by allowing them to stop you — by raising a hand, for example, or making an agreed sound — when there is something important to record and they want time to take notes, or by stopping at key points, and asking them to orally summarise the main points before writing them down.
- At the end of the chapter, agree on a summary of the points, which might read something like: childhood; Athens Olympics; inspiration from ET; BMX racing; choose three activities; leave your comfort zone; be your best; back to the Athens Olympics.
- Come back together to reflect on what you have heard and discuss:
 - What is the structure of the chapter you have just read? How does Chris Hoy combine different types of writing in it to engage, encourage, and inspire you? Children might mention being hooked by personal story; the work of the chapter being sandwiched between the exciting recall of the Olympic time trial; the advice from the point of view of Chris Hoy himself; the practicality and application to their own interests and experience.
 - How does Chris Hoy use his unique perspective as an Olympic medal winner to hook you and structure the chapter? How is this different from mere autobiography?
 - How does he make his advice on choosing your passion credible and realistic? If you were reading this for yourself, would you be able to follow his advice, to list three activities you would like to attempt, and so on?



- Now provide a copy of the pages you have shared for them to see how the text looks on the page.
 - How does the summary you created correspond to the chapter as it appears in the book? What features of the layout, graphics and illustration stand out for you?
 - How do they support you as a reader? How have Chris Hoy and the book designer worked together to make the content accessible, fun, memorable, and engaging? Children might mention the callouts, the different typefaces and font sizes, the graphics like the lightbulb, pencil, diving board, speech bubbles, and so on. Invite them to add examples to the Reading Journal.
 - How do the examples that are given in the chapter bring the text to life and support Chris Hoy's argument? Do any of the examples he cites resonate with you, e.g. Andy Murray, Bake Off or netball? Has another sporting or cultural event inspired you? Which one, and why?
 - By contrast, have you ever felt any of the negative thoughts expressed in the speech bubbles putting you off trying out new things? How might you stay positive and persevere in the face of adversity?
- End the session by watching this short film about Chris Hoy's victory in the 1 km time trial at the Athens Olympics in 2004: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzceCYkv4xQ>.
 - How do you feel as you watch this exciting historic footage? How do you think Chris Hoy might have felt? How does he convey this in his writing?
 - How do you feel about the chapter you have read now you have seen the historic event in which Chris Hoy has embedded it?
 - Are you inspired to follow the guidance he has offered? Do you think he is well qualified to talk about achieving a goal?
 - What do you think are the key messages from the chapter and how are they evident in the film?
 - What could be the possible result of you pursuing something you feel passionate about and enjoy doing?

Session 3: Chapters 2 and 3

- Read aloud Chapter 2, ***Dare to Dream*** — ***believe in yourself and aim for amazing***, in which the author emphasizes the value of daydreaming and being ambitious in one's dreams, and at appropriate points share the supporting illustrations and examples of layout, typeface and graphics. Allow time and space to reflect on what they have heard, and discuss:
 - What do you think Chris Hoy is saying in this chapter? Can you summarise the key points of his message?
 - How do the layout and illustrations support the points he is making? How do they add to the readability and accessibility of the text, how do they make it more engaging for you as a reader?
 - Do you find that the examples he gives resonate with you? How easy do you think you would find it as a reader to complete the exercises he advocates, for example indulging in ambitious daydreaming? Would this book be easy to 'use', do you think? Why? Why not?



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- If they have not mentioned it, draw the children’s attention to Chris Hoy’s use of biographical information, and discuss:
 - At the start of the book Chris Hoy said, “*this is a book all about YOU!*” (page 7) but he draws on his own experience and in this chapter also refers to other public figures from sport and the arts. How does Chris Hoy use biography in his writing? What do you think the examples he gives are designed to add to the book? Do you find them effective?
- Provide copies of the sections about Gavin Hastings (page 36), Graeme Obree (page 40), Bartosz Ostalowski (page 44), Nicola Adams (page 45) and Jon Norfolk (page 52), and support children in rereading and looking in detail at the way Chris Hoy writes about each figure.
 - What do you think each example is designed to demonstrate? Which words and phrases stand out for you in what you read about these figures? How do you think Chris Hoy feels about these people? How do you know?
- Go on to read on aloud through Chapter 3, **Feel Positive — a change in attitude can have amazing results**, in which the author stresses the importance of a positive mental attitude, especially in the face of setbacks. Again, share the supporting illustrations and examples of layout, typeface and graphics as appropriate and allow time and space to reflect on what they have heard, and discuss:
 - What do you think Chris Hoy is saying in this chapter? Can you summarise the key points? How do you think it relates to and builds on what he has said in the first two chapters and what he proposed to do in his introduction?
 - Drawing on your understanding of his use of examples from others’ experiences in the first part of this session, how does Chris Hoy use biographical information in this chapter — he refers to Anthony Joshua (page 59), Beyoncé (page 71) and Jessica Ennis-Hill (page 77) — and what do the experiences of these figures add to his argument?
- In this chapter, invite children to focus especially on how Chris Hoy presents the practical aspects of the book, the things he wants readers to reflect on and understand and the practical tasks he wants them to carry out as part of his/their plan.
- Provide a copy of the chapter so that children can scrutinise it and identify the ways in which he presents his thinking about the importance of a positive mindset. Consider:
 - How does Chris Hoy manage to make accessible the quite abstract ideas about attitude and negativity?
 - What words and phrases stand out for you as you read his ideas, and what features of the language and the text support him in persuading the reader to share his opinion, believe his advice and trust his guidance?
- As well as the powerful biographical examples already addressed, children might mention Chris Hoy’s ability to draw on his own experience, and his use of tables, as on page 65, the artwork contrasting ‘Attitude Awful’ and ‘Attitude Amazing’ on pages 66 and 67, the callout boxes and imagined quotes on page 70, the artwork to add appeal to the section on Beyoncé on page 71, even the simple device of using different coloured backgrounds to break up what might be quite complex ideas.



- End the session by hearing Chris Hoy read about setbacks from Chapter 3 at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zv7cf82>
 - How does hearing Chris speak compare to reading his words on the page? Which do you find most convincing?
 - How does Chris Hoy make the words come off the page and bring them to life?
 - How do you think an audiobook of this title would compare with the print version you have been reading? What would be the gains and losses from having it read to you rather than having the page to see for yourself?
 - What do you think you can do with a print book that you can't with an audiobook?

Session 4: Chapters 4 and 5

- As you pass the half-way point of the book begin the session by asking children to summarise the first three chapters and assess how they relate to Chris Hoy's stated aims from his introduction.
- Encourage children to read forwards or back through the book in order to draw connections or to clarify ideas, and to verbalise their thinking about the book so far, co-creating an understanding of and response to the text.
 - How has Chris Hoy set about supporting the reader in increasing self-belief, setting an ambitious dream, and considering the right attitude to have to implement a plan?
 - What evidence does he bring to support the points he is making?
 - How has he worked with the book designer to use layout and visual features to organise and reinforce his message?
- Go on to read aloud Chapter 4, **Go For It — planning and practising make amazing**, in which Chris Hoy underlines the value of having a plan, being prepared and practising effectively, including recording progress; and Chapter 5, **Fantastic Failure — why losing is more amazing than you think**, in which he points out the value of failure and the lessons that can be learned from it. Share the layout and illustrations as appropriate, supporting the children in considering how these elements of the text support the thread Chris Hoy is weaving.
- Children can bring to bear in their discussion of these chapters everything they have learned so far about the features of the book: the organisation, layout and visual features of this type of text; Chris Hoy's use of examples from his own experience and that of other figures from sport and the arts to demonstrate the truth of his thinking.
- 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 Chris Hoy has 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 their answers to these questions; it would be interesting to guide it towards considering what type of book this is: children may feel that it has elements of autobiography and biography, of persuasive writing and instructional texts, but also borrows from illustration and picture books and illustrated non-fiction.
- End the session by watching this short interview <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-17790821> with the author from shortly before the 2012 London Olympics:
 - How do the answers Chris Hoy gives in his interview correspond to the book that you have been exploring? What do you think are his key messages?
 - What impression does he make on you? Does his attitude in this interview chime with the voice of the author you have heard in *Be Amazing!?* Children may notice his modesty and the enjoyment he takes from participating and supporting others to enjoy sport as he has done.

Session 5: Chapter 6

- Read Chapter 6, ***Feel Positive — a change in attitude can have amazing results***. Give time and space to reflect on what they have heard, then discuss:
 - What do you think is happening in this chapter? What do you think are the key points?
 - How does Chris Hoy draw everything together in the final chapter? What message do you think he wants to leave the reader with?
 - As a reader, do you think you would be inclined to take up Chris Hoy's challenge to "be amazing" and follow the guidance he has offered? Why? Why not?
- As well as revisiting Aidan Chambers' four basic questions, give the children the opportunity to reflect:
 - Did you enjoy this book?
 - Who would you recommend this book to and why? What would you want to tell them about it and what would you leave them to find out for themselves?
 - What do you think motivated Chris Hoy to write the book?
 - What questions are you left with after reading?
 - What links do you see to other books, life stories and stories from film or television?
 - You could extend the discussion by thinking about:
 - Which person mentioned in the book interested you the most? Why do you think this was?
 - Did any of the people remind you of people you know or remind you of characters in other books, films or real life?



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- In fiction, the author might be a different person from the narrator who might be a different person from the main character; consider how this book compares:
 - How do the aspects of Chris Hoy's life and the experiences of the other real life athletes and artists that he shares compare to the characters and personalities you might encounter in a work of fiction? Children might observe that in this book we don't see characters develop or interact with others to any great extent. Do you think that, as Chris Hoy says "this is a book all about YOU!"?
 - We find out a great deal about Chris Hoy, his experiences, his heroes and his philosophy. How do you think this book differs from an autobiography? Do you think that the author has chosen and presented the episodes from his life to tell it in a certain way for a certain audience?
 - What do you think have been the most interesting aspects of this book, and how do they compare to other books you have read that are like it or quite different?

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 part of the story was ... because...; my top moment in the story was ... because...* and in pairs ask them to identify their favourite part of the narrative. 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 might like to use the book as it was intended: to set, plan and achieve long- medium- or short-term goals. Chris Hoy's accessible text is backed up by his own experience and the countless psychologists and other experts who have supported him. The children's goals could be sporting or otherwise, in any area of school or extracurricular life. This might work especially well as a transition or start-of-year activity. You could set individual goals for the term or the year with the children, coming back to these to see if they have been achieved and setting new goals or looking at what extra support the children think they might need to reach their goals.
- Children could make handmade books to use as a journal or workbook for the exercises and activities Chris Hoy suggests completing as part of his approach.
- Children could research the various public figures — sportspeople and others — that Chris Hoy mentions:
 - Gavin Hastings (page 36), Graeme Obree (page 40), Bartosz Ostalowski (page 44), Nicola Adams (page 45), Jon Norfolk (page 52) in Chapter 2.
 - Anthony Joshua (page 59), Beyoncé (page 71), Jessica Ennis-Hill (page 77) in Chapter 3.
 - Serena Williams, Danny McAskill and Ariana Grande (page 83), Ed Sheeran (page 88), Ellie Simmonds (page 91) in Chapter 4.
 - Robert the Bruce (page 108), Katherine Grainger (page 109), Jason Queally (page 110), Roger Federer (page 120) in Chapter 5.



Other suggested titles by Chris Hoy or to further support the exploration of themes arising from the book:

- *My Hidden Chimp* by Steve Peters (Studio Press; see page 140, Chapter 6)
- *On Your Bike: All You Need to Know About Cycling for Kids* by Chris Hoy (Piccadilly Press)
- Flying Fergus series by Chris Hoy and Joanna Nadin, illustrated by Clare Elsom (Piccadilly Press; see also an episode of Authors Live at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000k70b/authors-live-chris-hoy-and-joanna-nadin> in which the two talk about the series).
- Chris Hoy's own website <https://www.chrishoy.com/>.
- The Little People, Big Dreams series of books, published by Lincoln Children's Books
- The Little Leaders series of books by Vashti Harrison (Puffin)
- *Women in Sport; Women in Art and Women in Science* by Rachel Ignotofsky (Wren and Rook)
- *Stories for South Asian Supergirls* by Raj Kaur Khaira (Kashi House)
- *You Are Awesome: Find Your Confidence and Dare to be Brilliant at (Almost) Anything and Dare to Be You: Defy Self-Doubt, Fearlessly Follow Your Own Path and Be Confidently You!* by Matthew Syed, illustrated by Toby Triumph (Wren and Rook)
- *Stories for Boys Who Dare to Be Different* by Ben Brooks, illustrated by Quinton Winter (Quercus)
- *Break the Mould: How to Take Your Place in the World* by Sinéad Burke, illustrated by Natalie Byrne (Wren and Rook)
- There are also numerous print and video interviews and programmes about Chris Hoy on the internet.



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