

ALFIE GREEN and the MAGICAL GIFT

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JOE O'BRIEN

Teaching Guide

By Peter Heaney

RATIONALE AND THEMES

These books present the magical world of Alfie Green. Together they create a wonderfully humorous world of exaggerated characters and animated flora. Woven through the magic is the essential thread of mischief that every child will identify with. Alfie is irrepressible, and with his friend Fitz, they tackle a series of zany adventures with comic invention.

Although the books are aimed at the younger reader, the themes are universal and will create a rich and vibrant resource for class discussions and activities, particularly lending themselves to development through drama, visual arts and literacy. The main themes are:

- Dealing with bereavement
- Bullying
- Supporting others
- Developing coping strategies
- Emotional well-being
- Trust / Self esteem
- Following rules
- Feelings

APPROACH

These books are written as a series of adventures for Alfie. Each is a discrete story. For the richness of the character to develop, however, a series approach should be considered. Activities and discussion points are suggested for each book and overall activities are suggested at the end for those who have read a number of books in the series.

The pace, plot and characterisation within the books are versatile enough for them to be used either as individual readers or to be read to the class as a group.

SUMMARY

Alfie Green is nine years old and it is his birthday. He is excited and surprised to discover that his granddad, who has recently died, has left him a special gift. It turns out to be a magical book.

Alfie knew that his granddad thought plants were special, but he didn't realise quite how special they were until he opened the book.

The first time Alfie opens the book, he meets the Wise Old Plant, who helps him sign his name in the Ancient Book. The Wise Old Plant tells Alfie how to recover the Crystal Orchid with his name on it from the top of the Crooked Tree in Arcania. Arcania is the magical world on the other side of Alfie's granddad's potting shed.

With the help of some friendly garden tools, he is able to avoid the attentions of hazardous flora, and recover the Orchid. Alfie makes it home in time for his birthday celebrations where he finds that he is now able to talk freely to all the plants in his garden.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read pp.12-13. Alfie wasn't sure whether the magic was good or bad. He decided to go ahead and open the book anyway. Do you think this was wise of him? Why do you think he did so if he wasn't sure? What does it mean when you trust someone? When, why and which people do you think you should trust?
- Read pp.30-33. Alfie has just lost his granddad; but his memory of how his granddad liked gardening makes him feel less sad. Why do you think that memories help us to feel less sad? Do

you have any special memories of someone that make you feel good when you think of them?

- Read pp.70-71. Alfie can talk to the plants. He keeps this ability a secret from everyone. Do you think it is always good to keep secrets? Are all secrets the same or are some secrets good or bad? When do you think it is wrong to keep a secret?

ACTIVITIES

1. Alfie's granddad

Read p.10. Alfie's granddad was very special. He could talk to plants and gave Alfie this magical gift. What do you think it would have been like to meet him? He isn't described in detail in the book. Pretend that you are Alfie and write a little profile of him. Include a drawing of him if you like.

2. The Crooked Tree

Read p. 57. The Crooked Tree stands in the middle of Arcania and holds the Crystal Orchid on its top branch. Draw a picture of the tree. What colours will you use? Remember it is a magic tree so use your imagination.

3. The Gift

Alfie now has a special gift. He can talk to the plants and understand them. If you were to be given a magical gift, what would you like it to be? Explain why you would want it and how you would use it?

4. Pleased to meet you

Read pp.6-40. When Alfie went to Arcania he met the tools for the first time. It can be a little awkward meeting new people for the first time. What sort of things should

you do and say to make everyone comfortable? Write a short list of DOs and DON'Ts that would help people relax and enjoy their first meeting safely.

5. I'm special too

Read p.24. Alfie is special. His granddad thought so and so do the plants. We are all special in many ways because we are loved. Can you draw around the outline of both your outstretched hands on a large sheet of paper?

Above one hand write **'I think I'm special because...'** Then write inside the hand all the ways that you think you are special.

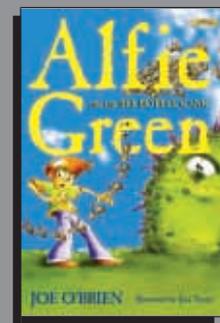
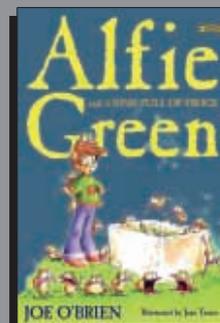
Above the other hand write **'We think you're special because...'** Then write inside each other's hands why you think that they are special. Be careful to leave no one out. You can colour the hands and keep them to remind you why you are special too.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR, JOE O'BRIEN



Joe O'Brien is an award-winning gardener who lives in Ballyfermot in Dublin. He is well known and has a high media profile including regular guest appearances on his local radio station, WDAR 96 FM. He is also highly involved with children's group projects.

Other books by Joe O'Brien



Alfie Green and the Sink full of Frogs
Alfie Green and the Bee-Bottle Gang