



# ALFIE GREEN and the Bee-Bottle Gang

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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 Fitzer, 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
- Keeping 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 has been kept after school for dreaming during maths. As he heads home through the park, he discovers that the bees are in uproar. A Hebe bush explains that some children have been trapping bees in bottles to kill them and that now all the bees are threatening to leave the park for good.

Later in the park with Fitzer, Alfie discovers that Whacker Walsh and his gang are the culprits. Alfie mounts a successful bee rescue, but Whacker sees him and now he and Fitzer face the prospect of an angry Whacker looking for revenge.

Alfie asks the Wise Old Plant for help and he suggests that Alfie visit the Queen of all the bees. She lives in Honeycomb Mountain, in Arcania, and fierce warrior bees guard her. The Wise Old Plant gives Alfie a note in a bottle to introduce him to her and to ask her for her help with Whacker and his gang.

Before he can reach Honeycomb Mountain, Alfie must travel through Firethorn Valley. With the help of an accommodating flying broom, a flight over the valley seems to be the best option. Things don't go smoothly and a little matter of dirty fuel for the broom almost has them barbecued on the valley floor among the deadly Firethorn bushes. However the bush manages to clear his jets just in time.

When Alfie meets the queen, her awesome size and fierce warrior guards are very intimidating, however she smiles when she reads Alfie's note and gives him some of her warrior warning perfume to help him deal with Whacker.

Back in Budsville, Whacker and his gang have a nasty surprise waiting for them.

Next morning they ambush Alfie and Fitzer in the park on the way to school determined to punish them for freeing the bees.

Alfie unscrews the top of the bottle of the Queen Bee's perfume and there is an ominous angry buzz as a dark cloud of warrior bees appears from nowhere.

The squadron of bees launch a stinging attack on Whacker and his gang who take to their heels whooping and yelling.

With the danger gone, Alfie and Fitzer head for school and the Hebe bush smiles quietly knowing that the bees are now safe from the Bottle gang.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read pp.12–14. The Bee Bottle Gang are trapping the bees in bottles and letting them die. This is very cruel. What do you think being cruel means? Do you think that humans have the right to treat other species any way we like? Write down some examples of humans being cruel to animals. How do you think we should treat animals? What about the animals we use for food?
- Read pp.23–25. Whacker is now determined to punish Alfie for freeing the bees. Luckily Alfie can ask the Wise Old Plant for help. Have you ever been in a similar situation? What would you do if you were in a similar situation? Do you know where to get help? Do you know what to do if you saw this happening to someone else?
- Read pp.49–53. Alfie is terrified. He is hurtling down into firethorn valley with showers of blazing thorns flying up at him from every side. What frightens

you? How do you feel when you are frightened? What can you do to control or soothe your fears? Who would you speak to?

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. I love Honey

Read p.19. Fitzer loves honey. He eats it with lots of things. Think of five more things that you could eat with honey. Pick two good adjectives to describe each of these dishes. Use the adjectives to describe the colour, the taste, the smell, the feel of it on your tongue or what it looks like on your plate. Draw an illustration for each of them.

### 2. No More Honey

Read pp.18–19. Fitzer didn't like bees because he had been stung by one. He forgot that bees provide us with honey, which he loves. Make a list of all the foods we eat and say which plants and animals they come from. Which animal do you think gives us the most food? Make another food list to show how many of our foods come from Ireland and how many are imported.

### 3. The Note

Read pp.62–65. When Alfie delivers the note from the Wise Old Plant to the Queen Bee she smiles at him. What do you think

the Plant had written in the note to make her smile? Do you think they were friends? Write a translation of what you think the note said. Remember that the note is written in Arcanian. Leave in some of the Arcanian punctuation marks. What do you think their full stop looks like?

### 4. Afterwards

After school that day, Whacker and his gang met up to discuss what happened to them. What do you think that they said to each other? Did they moan about their stings or did they plan to get Alfie another time? Do you think that they were sorry now about what they did to the bees? Did they learn anything?

Write all the names of the gang members on a large sheet of paper and then draw speech bubbles beside their names. Write into the bubbles what you think they said to each other. Remember some may speak more than once.

### 5. I've Been Stung

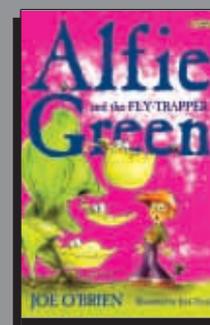
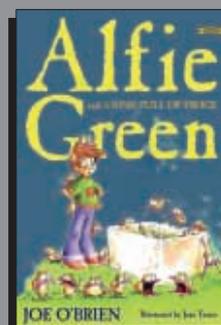
Read p.72. Adam Burke has been stung on his neck and ears. The stings will be red and swollen. Draw a picture of what he looked like afterwards. Read p.18 for a clue!

## 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 a Sink Full of Frogs*  
*Alfie Green and the Fly-Trapper*