

Your Next Read

Teaching Notes



Will Fin Win?

Written by Jane Godwin

Art by Tom Jellett



Teaching notes by Emma Egan

As a teacher librarian and passionate advocate for reading, I created the *Your Next Read* teaching notes to be both curriculum-connected and educator-useful. Each set of notes is grounded in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA V9) to ensure teachers can confidently link quality literature to learning outcomes across key learning areas. My aim is for these notes to do more than tick curriculum boxes. I want them to help educators create rich learning experiences and bookish conversations sparked by stories that act as windows, mirrors, and sliding doors and invite every child to see themselves and others in new ways.

The *Your Next Read* framework also intentionally incorporates the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP). Many Australian schools draw on both ACARA and PYP approaches, and I see great value in including both. The PYP focus on inquiry, conceptual understanding, and learner agency complements ACARA's emphasis on critical and creative thinking. Together, they provide a holistic way of engaging with stories, encouraging children not only to learn to read but also to choose to read with purpose, joy, and connection.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Megan Daley".

Megan Daley

Curriculum Framework

- The Your Next Read teaching notes are designed to align with the Australian Curriculum (ACARA) and the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) learning areas and outcomes. All literature and recreational reading also support both the PYP Approaches to Learning and ACARA General Capabilities and Cross-curriculum Priorities, encouraging students to think critically and creatively and to view learning as an active, dynamic process.
- The Your Next Read series aims to nurture the joy of reading, with educators playing a key role in the development of the knowledge and skills needed to access text.

These teaching notes aim to:

- Connect *Will Fin Win?* to curriculum for meaningful classroom use and real-world connection.
- Prompt student inquiry, discussion, and creative response.
- Foster independent, confident readers who read for purpose and pleasure.

By linking stories to meaningful learning experiences, these notes encourage students to inquire, reflect, and create, building a bridge between reading in school and choosing to read beyond it.

Synopsis

Fin really wants to win a race at sports day. He never wins anything! He's in first place until a puppy runs onto the track, causing him to fall behind. Fin is upset that he didn't win. Soon after, he meets a girl called Lavender at the park and discovers that the puppy is hers. Then Lavender's puppy, Buddy, goes missing! They find him trapped in the drain. Buddy escapes and runs towards the road, but Fin races after him and catches him just in time. Lavender and her parents give Fin a medal for saving Buddy. Fin has finally won something.

From the Author

I once walked past a trophy shop with my young nephew, which prompted a discussion about the fact that if they really wanted to, anyone could just enter that shop and get their name engraved on a trophy or medal. 'So you could have a first-place medal or a big trophy when you hadn't actually won anything at all?' my nephew asked me. It made me reflect on the idea of winning, and external rewards, and the deeper satisfaction that comes from having done something you're proud of.

From the Artist

The illustrations for Will Fin Win? were created on an iPad App called Procreate. It is fast becoming a worldwide standard for illustrators, cartoonists and animators, and it comes from Hobart, Tasmania! Working on the iPad can speed things up a bit, especially in the case of a book with many pages. I can draw straight onto the layouts and then use those sketches as a guide for the final 'inking', again done in Procreate using various brushes that try and emulate ink and watercolour. Saves paper too!

Themes

Perseverance: Trying your best even when things go wrong.

Friendship & Belonging: Including others, welcoming new people.

Fairness & Empathy: Understanding feelings and responding kindly.

Resilience: Handling disappointment and finding new ways to succeed.

Courage & Responsibility: Taking action to help others (Fin rescuing Buddy).

Identity: Everyone has different strengths; success can look different.

PYP Central Ideas

- Taking action, even when things are difficult, can make a positive difference.
- Challenges help us learn about ourselves and strengthen relationships.
- Everyone has different strengths, and success can look different for everyone.

Concepts

Responsibility: caring for animals, learning about safety and understanding the consequences of choices.

Perspective: seeing situations from different viewpoints – parents, nanny, birds, siblings.

Change: unexpected events, new arrivals, shifting routines, growing confidence.

Identity: noticing the different roles children can take on (helper, carer, problem-solver, brave kid).

Ethics: understanding right and wrong, fairness, kindness towards animals.



Getting to Know the Book (dialogic questions)

Pre-reading

- Point to the parts of the book when I call them out: spine, front cover, back cover, blurb, title, series icons.
- Can you find the author's name on the cover? The illustrator's name?
- What does the title tell you about the book?
- What do you notice first on the cover?
- How do you think the boy in the red shirt is feeling? Why?
- What do you think the dog is doing in the race?
- Who do you think 'Fin' might be? What makes you think that?
- What do you think this story might be about?
- Where might this story be set?
- Discuss sports days: How do you feel before a race or special event?
- Talk about winning and losing: What does it feel like? What helps us cope?
- Introduce vocabulary: race, medal, ribbon, lead, puppy, drain.

Pre-reading sentence starters (make predictions)

- I think the story will be about ...
- Fin might ...
- The dog could ...

Post-reading

- What are some things Fin is good at?
- Why does Fin want to win something?
- How does Fin show kindness?
- What is something Lavender is good at?
- What does this story teach us about winning and losing?
- How do the characters change from the beginning to the end?

- Why is helping Buddy an example of being brave?

English Prep: ACELY1649

English Year 1: ACELY1650

English Year 2: ACELY1660

Vocabulary Words

These words from *Will Fin Win?* can be used for word walls, acting (students act out select verbs) or vocabulary match-ups (word match-up with picture). They help students deepen comprehension and transfer new vocabulary into their own reading and writing.

- Relay (p.21, p.22)
- Sprint (p.18)
- Trophies (p.8, p.58, p.84)
- Prickles (p.68, p.71, p.72)
- Rescued (p.85)
- Scared (p.72)
- Worried (p.67)
- Stumbles (p.17)
- Practise (p.56)



Will Fin Win?

Curriculum Connections

ACARA Australian Curriculum Version 9

Learning Areas:

English – Literacy; Literature; Language

Health & Physical Education (HPE) – Personal, Social and Community Health

General Capabilities:

- Personal & Social Capability – self-awareness, resilience, teamwork
- Ethical Understanding – Considering consequences, empathy
- Critical & Creative Thinking – Making connections, predicting outcomes

Content Descriptors:

Will Fin Win? sits most strongly with **English** (Foundation–Year 2), and **Health & Physical Education** (Foundation–2) in ACARA V9.

English (Foundation–Year 2): ACELY1650, ACELY1660, ACELY1670, ACELT1581, ACELT1591, ACELT1596, ACELA1443, ACELA1452, ACELA1462, ACELY1656, ACELY1666, ACELY1676

HPE (Foundation–2): ACPPS001, ACPPS015, ACPPS019

International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP)

Transdisciplinary Theme: *Who we are* (exploring relationships, responsibility, community and empathy)

Key Concepts:

- Responsibility (Fin and Lavender make decisions that affect others).
- Perspective: Understanding how different characters feel.
- Change (Lavender moves house; Fin's understanding of success changes).
- Connection: Friendships connect actions, choices and outcomes.

Related Concepts:

- Empathy
- Community
- Identity
- Change

Student Agency/Action:

- Making choices
- Taking action to help others
- Responding creatively and responsibly to challenges

Approaches to Learning (ATL) Skills:

- Social Skills (collaboration, helping others)
- Communication Skills (expressing ideas and responding to others through discussion)
- Thinking Skills (problem-solving, predicting, creative responses)
- Self-management Skills (managing emotions, staying calm)

Learner Profile Attributes:

- Caring: Fin helps Buddy and supports Lavender
- Risk-taker: Fin tries new challenges (racing, helping the puppy)
- Communicator: Making new friends, expressing feelings
- Balanced: Learning about strengths beyond competition
- Reflective: Fin considers what winning really means



Will Fin Win?

Curriculum Connections

Activity Cards

Use these cards as response prompts for individual students, reading groups or as homework tasks. Responses could be recorded on mini whiteboards, in writing journals, shared butcher's paper or as recorded voice notes to capture evidence of comprehension.

- Write a personal 'I can win by ...' statement. Illustrate it!
- Create a comic strip of the Buddy rescue scene.
- Act out ways to include someone in a new game.
- Hot seat: students interview each other as Fin and Lavender.
- Write a postcard from Lavender to her old school.
- Design a new cover for the same title!
- Design a safer dog lead.



Mini Race Drama – Act Out the Cover!

Learning Outcomes:

- Builds imagination and comprehension
- Helps students infer emotions and actions
- Gets kids moving

Learning Area: English Foundation/English Year 1, Drama Foundation-Year 2

Content Descriptors:

ACELY1646 – listen to and respond orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations

ACELY1656 – Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions

ACADRM027 – Explore role and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation and process drama

Students work in small groups to recreate the scene from the cover

What they do:

- One plays Fin
- One or two play the other runners
- One plays the dog
- Others can be the cheering crowd
- Freeze-frame at the moment shown on the cover
- Then students freeze and act out what might happen next

Feeling and Friendship Chart

Learning Outcomes:

- Develops empathy and emotional vocabulary
- Links literacy to personal experience and social skills
- Supports understanding of character motivation

Learning Area: English Foundation/English Year 1

Content Descriptors:

ACELA1435 – Recognise that sentences are key units for expressing ideas

ACELA1454 – Understand the use of vocabulary in everyday contexts as well as a growing number of school contexts, including appropriate use of formal and informal terms of address in different contexts

ACELY1657- Make short presentations using some introduced text structures and language, for example opening statements

- Create a chart with character names (Fin, Lavender, Anna, Buddy) and rows for feelings (excited, worried, proud, happy, disappointed)
- Discuss and place character emotions at different points in the story
- Students share personal experiences that relate to these feelings
- Working as a team to fix a tricky situation

Design Your Own Medal

Learning Outcomes:

- Celebrates personal achievement beyond competition
- Links creativity with writing and self-expression
- Encourages positive classroom culture and self-esteem

Learning Area: English Foundation, English Year 1, Media Arts Foundation-Year 2

Content Descriptors:

ACELY1653 – Produce some lower case and upper case letters using learned letter formations

ACAMAM061 – Respond to media artworks and consider where and why people make media artworks, starting with media from Australia including media artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

ACELY1651 - Create short texts to explore, record and report ideas and events using familiar words and beginning writing knowledge

ACELY1661 - Create short imaginative and informative texts that show emerging use of appropriate text structure, sentence-level grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation and appropriate multimodal elements, for example illustrations and diagrams

- Students create a medal or ribbon for something they feel proud of (e.g. kindness, helping others, learning a skill).
- Draw and write a sentence about what the medal is for, inspired by Fin's special medal from Lavender.
- Display the medals and share stories behind them.

Race and Rescue Timeline

Learning Outcomes:

- Builds understanding of story structure (beginning, middle, end)
- Supports comprehension and oral language development
- Encourages memory and speaking confidence

Learning Area: English Foundation, English Year 1

Content Descriptors:

ACELY1650 – Use comprehension strategies to understand and discuss texts listened to, viewed or read independently

ACELY1660 – Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning about key events, ideas and information in texts that they listen to, view and read by drawing on growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features

ACELY1646 – listen to and respond orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations

ACELY1656 – Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions

- Provide students with these picture cards showing these key events: Sports Day race (p.14), puppy runs on track (p.16-17), meeting Lavender (p.28), rescuing Buddy (p.76), Anna's ballet concert (p.82), Fin receiving the medal (p.87)
- Students arrange cards in story order and retell the story orally, adding details about character actions and feelings.

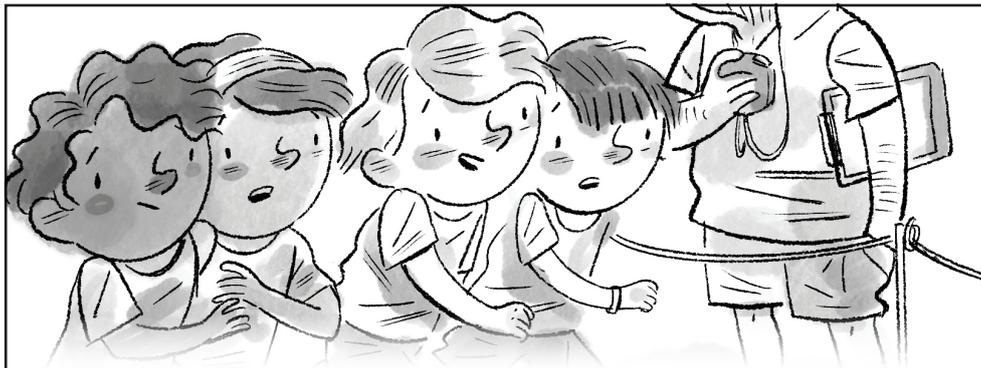
Race and Rescue Timeline



Educator Bookmark - Front

Note to educators: this bookmark is designed to be used as a quick prompt card for you or an adult helper. Consider it a summary of much of the content of these teaching notes to have beside you while reading.

This educator bookmark could also be sent home with a copy of *Will Fin Win?* as a homework task and as a guide to parents/caregivers as to how to extend the book reading experience.



Before Reading

- Picture Walk Prediction – Show the students the book cover and title and ask what they think the story might be about.
- Front Cover Scan – Ask students to identify the title, author and illustrator.
- Book Features Hunt – Have students point out parts of the book (front cover, back cover, spine, illustrations, chapter headings).
- Picture Prediction – Show one illustration (no text) and ask what might be happening in that part of the story.
- Genre Chat – Ask students whether they think this book is fiction or non-fiction and why.
- Vocabulary Warm-Up – Introduce words like race, puppy, medal and sports day and ask students to guess where they might appear in the story.
- Sports Day Chat – Ask students to share a time they joined a sports day or special event at school.
- Feelings Brainstorm – Discuss how it feels to win, lose, or try something new.
- Character Guessing – Ask students what type of characters they expect in a school-sports story (friends, teachers, teams, etc.).
- Movement Warm-Up – Have students do a simple running or stretching activity to connect with the story's theme of racing.
- Personal Connections – Students discuss times they tried something new, joined sports day or made a new friend.

Educator Bookmark - Back

Note to educators: this bookmark is designed to be used as a quick prompt card for you or an adult helper. Consider it a summary of much of the content of these teaching notes to have beside you while reading.

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After Reading

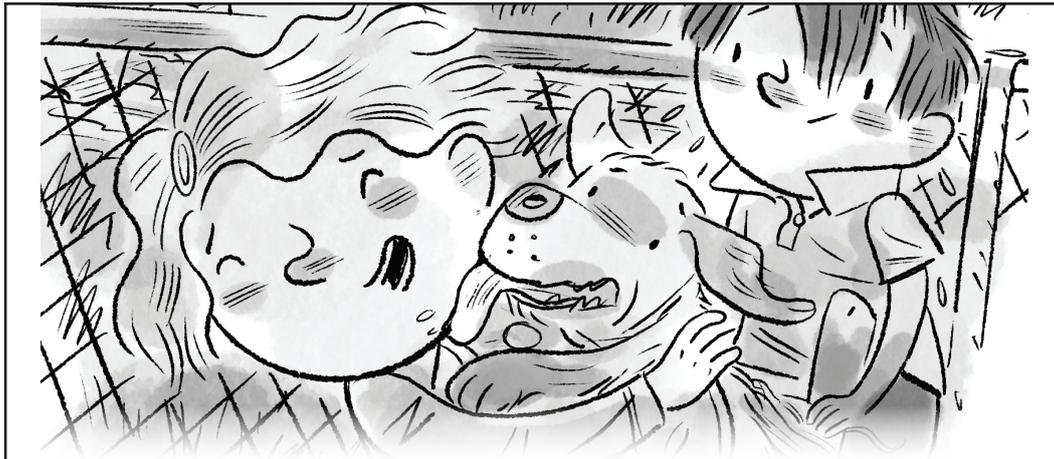
- In Chapter One – Why do you think Fin feels nervous about the race, even though he has been practising with Dad?
- In Chapter Three – Why do you think the other kids weren't sure about Lavender joining their soccer game?
- In Chapter Five – Why do you think Fin chose not to tell Lavender that Buddy was the puppy who made him slow down in the race?
- In Chapter Seven – Buddy ran away again – what do you think caused this to happen?
- In Chapter Nine – Why was the medal Lavender made for Fin so special to him?
- Retell the Story – Students retell key events in order (beginning, middle and end) using pictures, puppets or sentence starters.
- Character Feelings – Discuss how Fin, Lavender and Buddy felt at different points in the story and what changed those feelings.
- Real-Life Connection – Ask students to share a time they helped someone, learnt something new, or didn't give up – linking to Fin's resilience.
- What do you think this story is mostly about – is it winning races, making friends, helping others or something else? Why?

**YOUR
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READ**

Student Bookmark

Note to educators: this bookmark is designed to be photocopied (2 to an A4 page) and placed inside the front cover of *Will Fin Win?* for independent use by a student or reading group.

If you have class sets or multiple copies of *Will Fin Win?*, a laminated bookmark could be added to each copy for use in small group sessions. Laminated bookmarks can be sent home with a copy of *Will Fin Win?*



Keep this card alongside you as you read

Will Fin Win?

Before You Start

- Read the title and scan the front cover of this book for clues about the story. What do you notice?
- Turn the book over. Read the blurb and scan the back cover of this book for clues about the story. What do you notice?
- Read the first three pages of *Will Fin Win?* Are there words that do not make sense? Do you need to re-read the pages?
- As you read, look out for the following expressions on Fin and his friends' faces: happy, surprised, shocked, sad, excited, tired and happy.
- As you read, look out for the following things in the illustrations: water bottle, mirror, Lego man, ball, hat, dog, seatbelt, car, window, fence and a kite.
- As you read, look for words you do not already know and note them down.

After Reading

- Scan the text. Write a list of interesting words.
- Scan the text. Write a list of describing words (adjectives).
- Think about the feelings Fin had. Looking at the pictures below, which do you think Fin was feeling? When? 😊 😞 😡 😄 😊 😞 😞
- Tell someone near you about one time you have been really proud of something you did.

YOUR
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