

# CALL ME ALASTAIR

CORY LEONARDO

## CONTENTS

### LESSON PLAN ONE – LOWER KS2

Curriculum Links, Objectives & Outcomes

Lesson Plan

*Activity Sheet One: Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries*

*Activity Sheet Two: My Bowl of Cherries*

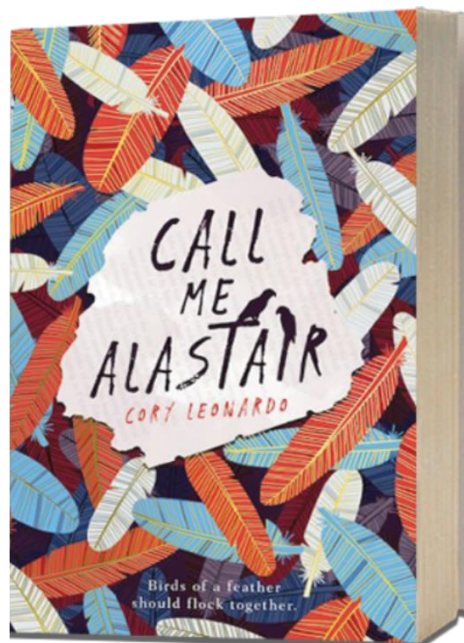
### LESSON PLAN TWO – HIGHER KS2

Curriculum Links, Objectives & Outcomes

Lesson Plan

*Activity Sheet One: Compare the Poems*

*Activity Sheet Two: Inspiring Poems*





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## LESSON PLAN ONE – LOWER KS2




### Curriculum Links


English – Reading, comprehension:

Pupils should be taught to:

- 
- Understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by:
    - checking that the text makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and explaining the meaning of words in context
    - preparing poems to read aloud, showing understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action
  - Participate in discussions about both books that are read to them and those can read for themselves



### Objectives

- 
- To encourage children to show their understanding of the book by asking questions and discussing their views with others
  - To consider and compare poems within the book
  - To learn a poem by heart
  - To create their own poems, inspired by the book, to read aloud and perform

### Outcomes

Children will learn to explain and discuss books they have read or had read to them. They will realise their own abilities in considering and assessing poetry. They will choose a poem of their own from the book, to learn by heart, and create one of their own to read to the group.



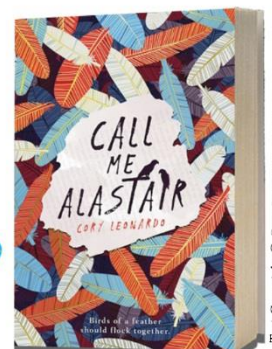
### Resources

Prior reading and or listening to the book *Call Me Alastair* by Cory Leonardo.

### Supporting Resource Sheets

*Activity Sheet One: Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries*

*Activity Sheet Two: My Bowl of Cherries*






# CALL ME ALASTAIR


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## Lead in






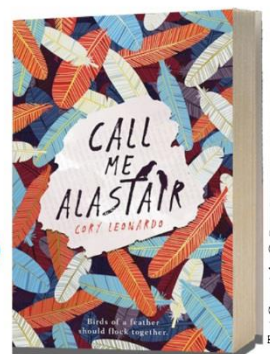
Lead children into considering the unusual style and content of the book with the inclusion of letters and poem. Discuss the characters and the changing points of view between them. Reflect on the idea of using a pet shop as the initial location of the story and discuss the other locations.

How far did children enjoy the use of poetry in the story?



## Main Task

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1. Together, browse through the book, selecting poems from pages 38, 84, 137, 145, 155, 175/6, 181, 187, 211/12, 229, 244, 264/5, 309, 341, 349. Explore opinions of the poems, and offer explanations to further develop understanding.
  2. Compare the structure of some of the poems. For example, not all are rhyming poems, most are what might be called free verse, or modern poetry, which may not rhyme, though could include alliteration and rhythm. Often, these can seem more like prose.
  3. Read the limerick on page 175, and invite children to create a few of their own. Consider the poem on page 211 called '*Jabberplopsky*' which is a nonsense poem, inspired by Lewis Carroll's '*Jabberwocky*', and discuss the explanation of it on page 213. Talk about the letter poem on page 341 and follow by explaining and debating the different styles of these three poems.
  4. Provide each child with a copy of *Activity Sheet One: Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries*, which is an extract from a letter in the book (page 330). Read it together, considering its philosophy and message.
  5. This letter to Fritz, from Bertie (Albertina) Plopky, describes life as '*just a bowl of cherries*' in which she compares the good parts of life as times to be savoured and enjoyed, like the fruit of the cherry, and the things in life which are not liked as the 'pits' to be set aside, or dismissed completely.
  6. Discuss and explain the implications of this extract, and encourage children to talk about the *cherries* and the *pits* in their own lives. For example, good things such as family, food, health, friends and pets, or whatever they feel is important to them. On the negative side, they may include loneliness, sadness, boredom, loss of a loved pet, toy, or family member, or perhaps losing in a race or game.
  7. Follow the discussion by providing children with *Activity Sheet Two: My Bowl of Cherries*. Ask them to create lists of their 'fruit of the cherry,' and 'pits of the cherry'.
  8. Tell children to then use the lists as an aid to help write a letter poem about their 'bowl of cherries'. This could be addressed to a favourite person or toy.
- 



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## Differentiation

Ask older or more confident children to write a short essay in the voice of Alastair, weighing up his 'bowl of cherries'. What would he list amongst the 'fruit of the cherry' and the 'pits of the cherry' in his life? What would be his reasons? His beloved sister Aggie would certainly be high on his 'fruit of the cherry' list.

## Plenary

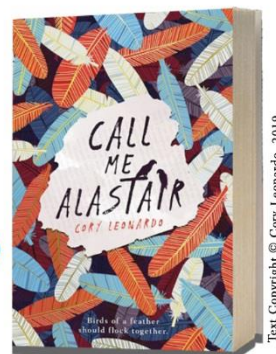
Ask children to read their poems and essays aloud, reminding them to use their voices to convey happiness or sadness through intonation, tone and volume.

## Extension

Ask children to choose a poem from the book to learn by heart.

Share the children's poems they have created on social media with the hashtag #CallMeAlastair

Invite children to view them.



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## ACTIVITY SHEET ONE: LIFE IS JUST A BOWL OF CHERRIES

This extract, from a letter to Fritz, from Bertie (Albertina) Plopky, in the book *Call Me Alastair*, by Cory Leonardo, describes life as 'just a bowl of cherries' in which she compares the good parts of life as times to be savoured and enjoyed, like the fruit of the cherry, and the things in life which are not liked as the 'pits' to be set aside, or dismissed completely.

*It's like the old song goes:*

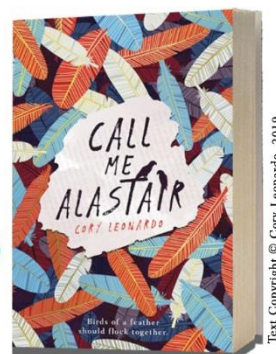
*"The sweet things in life, to you were just  
loaned...*

*Life is just a bowl of cherries."*

*That's something Alastair showed me, believe it  
or not. Life is a bowl of cherries, and you enjoy  
every last one while you got 'em there in front of  
you. But one more thing -*

*You leave the pits.*

*Pits? They're all those things you don't like, all  
the things you can't control. Sometimes you got to  
set those pits aside.*



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## ACTIVITY SHEET TWO: MY BOWL OF CHERRIES

Create two lists below, one should list some of the good things in your life, and the other should list the things you do not like. Use the lists to help you to write a 'letter poem' to a favourite toy or person about your 'bowl of cherries'.

FRUIT OF THE CHERRY

PITS OF THE CHERRY






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## LESSON PLAN TWO – HIGHER KS2

### Curriculum Links





English – Reading, comprehension:

Pupils should be taught to:

- Participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read themselves, building on their own and other's ideas and challenging views courteously
  - Maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by:
    - making comparisons within and across books
    - learning a wider range of poetry by heart
    - preparing poems to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone and volume, so that the meaning is clear to an audience
- 


### Objectives

- To encourage children to show their understanding of the book by discussing their views with others
  - To consider and compare a poem in the book with other poems
  - To learn a poem by heart
  - To create their own poems to read aloud and perform
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### Outcomes

Children will learn to evaluate and form opinions on a book they have heard or read. They will learn a poem by heart and compose a poem inspired by one in the book for presentation to the group as a performance poem.

### Resources



Prior reading and or listening to the book *Call Me Alastair* by Cory Leonardo.

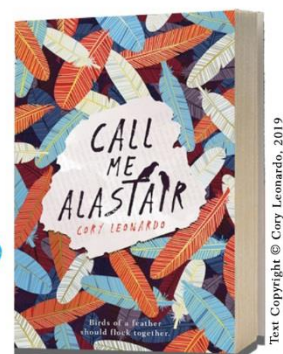
*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, by Robert Frost – Please find an edition of this poem online or in print to share with the class



### Supporting Resource Sheets

*Activity Sheet One: Compare the poems*

*Activity Sheet One: Inspiring Poems*






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## Lead in



Structure an initial discussion about the unusual style and content of the book, focusing on the inclusion of the letters and poems. Discuss the characters and the changing points of view between them. Reflect on the idea of using a pet shop as the primary location of the story, and discuss the other locations which followed.

Re-read page 127 of the book, to remind children of Alastair's '*Simple, Yet Exceedingly Clever, Plan to Fly Out of Pete's Pet (and Parrot!) Shack for Good.*'

Continue with pages 130 to 136 where Alastair carries out his plan, only to be thwarted by Fritz. Discuss the paragraph towards the bottom of page 136, in which Alastair describes Fritz as his '*prison guard, defender of doorways, crusher of dreams.*'

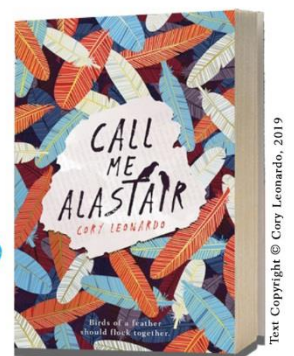
Ask children to see the situation through the eyes of Alastair. Do they consider these descriptions to be fair and accurate? Can they suggest others suitable for describing Fritz in this setting?



## Main Task

1. Revisit the poem, '*Stopped by a Fritz on a Snowy Morning*' on page 137 and on *Activity Sheet 1: Compare the Poems*. Read it through, stopping to discuss and explain the meaning and implication of each verse. For example:
  - a. Who is the person described in the first three lines of the poem?
  - b. What isn't clear to Aggie in the second verse?
  - c. What was Alastair's mistake?
2. Provide each child with a copy of *Activity Sheet 1: Compare the Poems* and read the poem on the sheet. Ask for the children's views on the content of the poem. How does it compare to Alastair's poem? For example:
  - a. Both take place on a snowy day.
  - b. Each describes an event.
  - c. They both have four verses.
  - d. They are both told in first person.
3. Now look at the structure of the poems, inviting children to identify the rhyming words, first in Alastair's poem and then in Frost's poem.
  - a. Can children see that the rhyming patterns are the same in both poems? The rhyme scheme is a.a.b.a.
  - b. Encourage them to also realise that the rhyming *sounds* are the same in each verse of the two poems.
  - c. Finally, note that both poems end with the repetition of the same line.

**Differentiation.** Explain to older or more confident children that a further similarity is that both poets have linked the end rhyming word of the third line of each verse to the first line of the next verse.










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4. Cory Leonardo, author of *Call Me Alastair*, states that she was inspired to write Alastair's poem by Frost's poem. Explain that 'inspired', in this sense, means to be motivated or encouraged to write something similar.
  5. Ask children to find and explore other poems about snow, from books or the internet, and learn one by heart to recite to the group.
  6. Invite children to use their wider reading of snow poems, and both Alastair's and Robert Frost's poems as inspiration to write their own poem about a snowy day (See *Activity 2: Inspiring Poems*).

## Plenary

Ask children to read their poems aloud as performance poems, reminding them to use their voices to convey meaning through intonation, tone and volume.

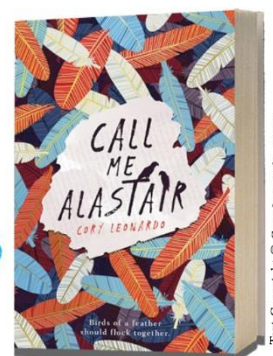


## Extension

Ask children to choose a poem from the book to be 'inspired by'.

Share the poems children have created on social media with the hashtag #CallMeAlastair

Invite children to view them.



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## ACTIVITY SHEET ONE: COMPARE THE POEMS

Compare the poem below to 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' by Robert Frost




### *Stopped by a Fritz On A Snowy Morning<sup>1</sup>*

*He looks at me with eyes aglow,  
His lashes trimmed with fallen snow  
And smile rolled out from ear to ear;  
My heart knows all it needs to know.*



*For Aggie, though, it isn't clear  
She'll be without her brother near.  
She didn't think that Fritz would take  
Just one of us away from here.*

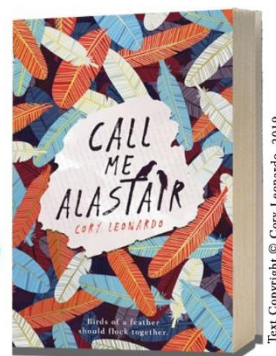
*I watch them leave, and in their wake,  
The heavy-laden storm clouds quake  
And loose a bitter howl with me –  
To wait so long was my mistake.*



*My heart's a ruined cavity  
And what remains: the cold debris<sup>2</sup>  
Of plans I had that weren't to be,  
Of plans I had that weren't to be.*

1. A poem with hints of Frost – Robert Frost. Inspired by his poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (minus the trees)

2. debris (duh-bree): what's left after something is smashed into a million pieces






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## ACTIVITY SHEET TWO: INSPIRING POEMS



Cory Leonardo, the author of *Call Me Alastair*, states that she was 'inspired' by Robert Frost's poem. Be 'inspired' by Alastair's and Robert Frost's to write your own poem following a similar pattern, with four verses, about a snowy day.

