

BLOOMSBURY

RESOURCE PACK FOR KS3 & KS4 TEACHERS



INTRODUCTION

Skylarks by Karen Gregory is suitable for teaching to students of ages 14+, either as a set text in English, as a stimulus for PSHE and Citizenship discussion, or during extra-curricular sessions. The reading questions and activities suggested here cover literacy objectives, focusing on reading comprehension and inference, while also providing suggestions for Citizenship and PSHE links. In particular, they invite students to explore the importance of politics for young people: how young people become politicised, and what issues are important to them within their communities. However, these notes work primarily as an introduction to the themes and ideas within the book, taking students' understanding of the text to a new level and inspiring them to read further.

ABOUT THE BOOK

When she was little, Joni used to have dreams that she could fly. But these days her feet are firmly on the ground – they have to be when money's tight, her dad can't work and the whole family has to pull together to keep afloat.

Then she meets Annabel. Annabel is everything Joni isn't, and yet there's a spark between them. Though Joni barely believes it at first, she thinks they might be falling in love.

But when Annabel's parents find out about the relationship, it's clear they believe there are some differences that are impossible to overcome ...

Karen Gregory's heartfelt, thought-provoking second novel about love against the odds is perfect for readers of Lisa Williamson,

Sara Barnard and Sarah Crossan.







CURRICULUM FOCUS

Citizenship and PSHE education is an important component of the National Curriculum. The three core themes of the PSHE Association Programme of Study are considered to be: 'Health and Wellbeing', 'Relationships' and 'Living in the Wider World'. These notes will guide students to think about the following things:

1. Relationships

- The different types of relationships, including those within families, friendships, romantic or intimate relationships and the factors that can affect these (including age, gender, power and interests)
- The features of positive and stable relationships (including trust, mutual respect, honesty, equality) and those of unhealthy relationships (including imbalance of power, coercion, control, exploitation, abuse of any kind)
 - The diversity in sexual attraction and developing sexuality
 - The terms associated with sex, gender identity and sexual orientation and to understand accepted terminology
 - Peer pressure and how to manage it

2. Living in the Wider World

- The rights and responsibilities as members of diverse communities, as active citizens and participants in the local and national economy
- The similarities, differences and diversity among people of different race, culture, ability, disability, sex, gender identity, age and sexual orientation and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice, bigotry, bullying, and discrimination on individuals and communities
- The strategies for safely challenging stereotyping, prejudice, bigotry, bullying, and discrimination when they witness or experience it in their daily lives

 The primacy of human rights; and how to safely access sources of support for themselves or their peers if they have concerns or fears about those rights being undermined or ignored







KAREN GREGORY

READING GROUP QUESTIONS

- In The novel begins with Joni's family having a meal to celebrate her brother's birthday in a restaurant. How does the author Karen Gregory make the reader aware of the key themes in the novel in the first paragraph?

 What key words stand out to you?
- 2 In Chapter One, Joni's family come into conflict with other people in the restaurant. What is significant about this conflict? How does it represent the greater themes in the novel?
- 3. What is Joni's family dynamic? For example, what is Joni's relationship with her older brother, Jamie, as opposed to her younger brother, Jack? Can you pick out examples where the dynamic is positive, and where it is negative?
- In Chapter Three, Joni is officially introduced to Annabel. What is her reaction to shaking hands with her? What can you infer about Joni's feelings and motivations from this encounter?
- 5 The story is written in the first person, entirely from Joni's perspective. What is the effect of this? What is the reader's relationship with Joni?
- 6 At the end of Chapter Five, the tension between the family members escalates. How does the author achieve this? How do you get a sense of Joni's feelings in response to the tension?
- 7 In Chapter Seven, how does Joni's relationship with Annabel develop? What is the importance of prejudice and judgement in this chapter, and in the novel as a whole?
 - What is the significance of money in the novel? How do different characters represent different attitudes towards money?
 - 1. At the end of Part One, Joni and Annabel share their first intimate moment. How does the author portray Joni's feelings when they kiss on the jetty? How do these feelings quickly change and become something negative for Joni?

 Do you feel empathy for her?
 - How do Joni's family react to her same-sex relationship with Annabel?

 How does this contrast with the reaction of Annabel's family? Why do you think the author has decided to show this contrast?





READING GROUP QUESTIONS cont.

- II. What or who do you consider to be the main villain or enemy in the novel? Is it a person, an object, an emotion or an idea? Support your opinions with evidence from the text.
- In Chapter Fourteen, why is Jamie so adamant that his sister go with him to see the local MP to fight the buyout? Why does he think it is important to campaign against what he sees as an injustice? Do you agree with him?
- How does Joni become more and more invested in the campaign as the novel progresses? How does she become 'politicised'? Do you think we see her character go through a transformation of sorts?
 - What do you think are the two main storylines in the novel? How do they contrast and complement one another? Why do you think the author, Karen Gregory, decided to structure her novel in this way?
- 15. 'This novel is about injustice, in all its forms'. Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons why/why not. How would you change the statement?







SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: EXPLORING OPPOSITIONS

• Discuss the book in terms of the following oppositions:

Create a short piece of drama in groups, depicting one of these oppositions in relation to the story.

RICH

POOR

LOVE

HATE

JUSTICE INJUSTICE

POWER WEAKNESS







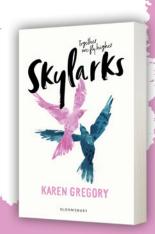
ACTIVITY 2: PERSONIFYING MONEY

- In the novel, money is often as much of a central character as Joni herself. Pick out moments in the novel where money might be considered to be the most important character.
- Imagine that money is a person. What do they look like? What do they speak like? What are their ideas and morals?
- Imagine that Joni is having a discussion with your personified version of 'money'. What would she say? What would 'money' say back? How would the two characters behave and interact?
 - Create a piece of written dialogue in which Joni has a discussion with your personified version of 'money'.

Personifying Money	







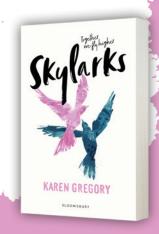
ACTIVITY 3: FAMILY MONOLOGUES

- Re-read Chapter One. Pick out moments from the text where you can infer the family dynamic.
- In groups of five (where one of you is Joni, one of you is Jamie, one of you is Jack, one of you is Mum and one of you is Dad), recreate a moment of conflict or tension in Chapter One in a freeze-frame. Don't use words or sounds; just use your bodies to convey the family dynamic (e.g. facial expressions, body language, levels).
 - Choose one of the family members and write a monologue in-role as that character, expressing how you feel.

My Monologue







ACTIVITY 4: LETTER TO MY MP

- Can you think of an example of how politics is important to you? Share it with the class.
- Why do Jamie and Joni write to their MP? What is their motivation?
- What are you passionate about in your community? What do you wish you could change?
- Write a letter to your MP outlining your chosen issue, how you feel about it, and your argument for change.







ACTIVITY 4: LETTER TO MY MP

Sender Name Sender Address Sender Postcode

Recipient Name Recipient Address Recipient Postcode Date

Yours sincerely,





ACTIVITY 5: CAMPAIGN PRESENTATION

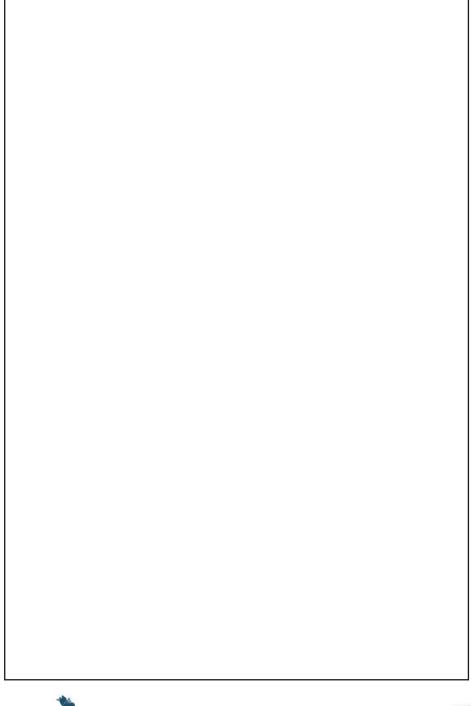
- Re-read Chapter Seventeen. What elements have the group gathered together to make a successful campaign?
 - In pairs or groups, put together a presentation to support your campaign from Activity 4. Think about how you will persuade your audience.
 - Create a poster to represent your own campaign from Activity 4. Remember to include an interesting logo and a catchy slogan.







ACTIVITY 5: CAMPAIGN PRESENTATION My Campaign Poster







CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE COMPLETED THE SKYLARKS RESOURCE PACK

Don't forget to hold on to everything that you've created, as you never know when it might come in handy for future endeavours – and remember to share your work with us on Twitter by tagging @KidsBloomsbury!

The Bloomsbury kids team





