

RUNNING MY OWN RACE

TEACHING RESOURCE PACK



9781805133735 Paperback £7.99 Also available as ebook and audiobook

A brilliant debut coming of age story by Abena Eyeson.

Kofi's mum is determined he's going to be 'somebody'. But when Kofi is given a place at a prestigious private school because of his athletic ability, everything changes. Kofi dreams of being a professional athlete - but he soon finds following your heart isn't an easy road...

"I was rooting for Kofi all the way! A thoughtful read" Maisie Chan, author of Danny Chung Does Not Do Maths

"A joyous, gorgeous book" Nazima Pathan, author of Dream Hunters



About the author: Abena Eyeson was born in Ghana but has lived in the UK since the age of 12. She has won accolades for the FAB Prize, Jericho Prize and TLC Pen Factor. She writes picture books, educational non-fiction and has self-published YA. Abena lives just outside London with her husband and three children. It was her children that inspired her to put Black characters at the heart of her stories. *RUNNING MY OWN RACE* is her first middle grade novel.

About this resource pack:

There are two sections:

1. Book group discussion questions
2. Suggested classroom activities to accompany the book, focusing on themes of bullying and discrimination, resolving conflict, managing pressure and following your own path.

Activities link to the non-statutory PSHE curriculum and statutory Relationships and Health education curriculum, and to English in Years 5 and 6. Programme of study links can be found at the end of the resource.

RUNNING MY OWN RACE

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BEFORE USING THIS RESOURCE PACK

Racism and Bullying

Running My Own Race describes a class discussion about slavery, and descriptions of racism and bullying towards Kofi. These may be upsetting for pupils (and staff), especially if they have been a target of either or both. Any discussion and explanation of racism should be age-appropriate, but an example for this age group might be 'Racism is when someone is treated differently based on the colour of their skin, or their culture or nationality'.

During any discussion about racism and/or bullying, you should remind pupils of relevant whole-school values and rules about behaviour towards others, and the nonacceptance of any form of racism and bullying within school.

While using the book, be aware that some pupils may have experienced racism and/or bullying, or witnessed it happening to those they care for. There may also be pupils who are perpetrators or have witnessed those they know being racist. At no point should children feel pressured to share personal stories or disclosures, but it may be that Kofi's story enables them to do so if they wish (see note on 'distancing' below).

Safe teaching and learning methods

It is a good idea to read the book yourself before introducing it to pupils. You may also want to inform parents of its content as they might welcome the opportunity to prepare themselves for potential questions, or to read the book with their children at home and talk about the issues it raises together.

Ways of ensuring that teaching and learning is safe include:

- Agreeing and reinforcing ground rules for discussion and behaviour. Pupils should feel confident that what they express and share in discussion is done so in a safe and non-judgmental environment.
- Considering pupils with lived experience, known or unknown. Even if you do not know if a child in your class has been impacted by bullying or racism, act on the basis that someone has. This will ensure your approach is sensitive and inclusive, and potentially enables voluntary disclosure. It may also help a child who has been a perpetrator of racism and/or bullying to consider their own actions.
- Distance learning by using the book to reflect on Kofi's experiences, not pupils' own. At no point should pupils be asked to share experiences if they don't wish to do so. Distancing can enable children to relate a character's experiences to their own, and potentially act in a way that benefits them as a result.
- Encourage and respond to questions, but be clear that pupils can also ask questions or share something with you individually. Ensure pupils know where else they can get support if they need it, both in and out of school. Your school's approach to, and non-acceptance of, bullying and racism in any form should be emphasised throughout discussion.

If a child says or discloses anything which causes concern, you must follow your school's safeguarding policies and procedures. If you are unsure of these, speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead, or contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before reading

Look at the cover and title.

- What do you think this book will be about?
- Does the cover make you want to read the book? Why/why not?
- What else about the book could make someone want to read it? (e.g. recognising the author; seeing a representation of themselves on the front cover; being interested in the topic)
- Think about the book's title *Running My Own Race*. Why do you think the book is called this?

Read the blurb on the back of the book together.

- Does the blurb make you think about the title differently?
- What kinds of issues might the book explore?
- How does the blurb make you feel about the book you're about to read?

After reading

- What did you think of the book? Did your emotions change while reading it? How did it leave you feeling at the end?
- Throughout the book Kofi comes under a lot of pressure. Where were these pressures coming from, and why? Do you think those involved realised how Kofi felt?
- Why was it important for Kofi to 'run his own race'? How did he manage to do this by the end of the book?
- Miles calls Kofi "state-school boy" and Darren calls him "posh boy". What are the differences between the two 'worlds' Kofi finds himself in, and the way he describes his home and his school life? What are the benefits and drawbacks to Kofi of both 'worlds'?
- Why does Mum say "Typical! Expecting Black children to only be good at sports" and "Why do you want to conform to the stereotype they have of Black boys"? Use pupils' responses to discuss stereotyping: why it happens and why it is limiting – to those who are stereotyped but also those who are not.
- What do you think of the way the school dealt with Miles's racism towards Kofi? Could they have dealt with it differently? Why are people racist towards others?
- Why does Miles bully Kofi? Why would Miles feel threatened by Kofi, and why does feeling this way lead to bullying?
- Why doesn't Kofi tell anyone about Miles's behaviour to begin with? How does Miles make Kofi feel?
- What does Kofi mean when he tells Miles "If it had been me who did that to you, I swear down I would have been expelled"? Do you agree with him?
- How do you think the restorative justice session helped both Kofi and Miles change? Do you think it sounds like a good approach to resolving conflict?
- Would you recommend this story to others your age? Why/why not?

LESSON ACTIVITIES

Character studies

As a class, talk about the main and minor/supporting characters in the book, and first impressions of or pupils' reactions to them. For example, who do they like/not like? Who do they relate to? Encourage pupils to give reasons for their answers, using examples from the book.

Ask pupils to choose one of the characters below and create a character study or file about them, using clues, quotes and evidence from the book. They should include:

- A description of what they look like
- The kind of person they are
- Some of their key characteristics
- What their character is most proud of
- Their main strengths
- Any weaknesses
- How they think their character is feeling
 - at the beginning of the book
 - at the end of the book

- Challenge pupils to find one key quote that sums up their character's personality.

When pupils have completed their character studies or files, choose some volunteers to share theirs with the class, and compare the evidence they have used.

- Mum
- Dad
- Kofi
- Charlie
- Christine
- Abigail
- Coach McDonald
- Miles



LESSON ACTIVITIES

Identity and 'running your own race'

I am... And I am also...

In twos or small groups, ask pupils to make a spider diagram/mind map of Kofi's characteristics (what kind of person he is) and abilities. Can they see any contrasting characteristics (e.g. between the person he is at home and the person he is at school)?

Then ask them to think about everything that contributes to Kofi's identity (e.g. people, school, his community and culture, his skin colour) and include these things on the diagram.

Finally, ask pupils to use the diagram they've created about Kofi to create a spider diagram/mind map about their own characteristics and what/who contributes to their identity. Encourage them to think as broadly as they can – they could even include the food they eat and the clothes they wear, things which are important to Kofi.

Running your own race

Discuss the title of the book and gather some ideas about what it could mean. Introduce (or recap on) the terms 'literal' and 'metaphorical'; see if pupils can think of other examples of these.

Kofi wants to be a professional athlete, but are there any other characters in the book who are 'running their own race'? For example: Abdul (page 37) wants to be 'a big-time record producer' despite people laughing at him; Abigail was determined not to go to Nunford School and wants to be an engineer. Ask pupils to think about what their 'own race' would look like – it could be something they really want to do, a dream job, or a choice they want to make for themselves. Ask them to depict what this would look like – this might be through writing, drawing or another creative way.

In small groups or as a class, ask pupils to discuss how the following characters influence Kofi and his ability to 'run his own race'. Do they influence him positively or negatively? Ask them to pick out some examples of how they do this (e.g. things they say and/or do)?

- Mum
- Dad
- Coach McDonald
- Charlie
- Miles
- Abigail

LESSON ACTIVITIES

Activity continued...

Going back to their own description or drawing of their 'own race', ask pupils to think about who or what might influence them achieving this, and whether these are positive or negative influences.

When Kofi is running he says 'It's like I'm free and floating on air like... a super fast superhero' (page 4) and that it gives him a 'warm, zingy feeling' (page 99). Ask pupils to think about something they love doing and write down the feelings it gives them. To help, give them a sentence starter like 'When I'm _____ it's like...' or 'When I'm _____ it makes me feel...'.

Discuss with pupils whether it is always easy for someone to achieve their dreams (or 'run their own race')? Introduce the word 'motivated' if pupils don't know it already and talk about how someone can stay motivated if pursuing a dream takes a long time or doesn't always go to plan. Ask them to come up with some phrases that people could say to help themselves or someone else stay motivated (e.g. 'don't give up!' 'you've got this!' 'you can do it!' etc).

Ask pupils to use the positive phrases to design a motivational poster that would encourage other people their age not to give up on their dream. It might help to imagine creating the poster for a friend or someone they care about, or even for themselves. See if they come up with some positive or motivational images as well (e.g. a picture of someone achieving their dream; people cheering; a medal etc). Use the posters to make a class display.

Bullying, discrimination, change and conflict

One of the most shocking aspects of the book is Miles's racist bullying of Kofi. Ask pupils to identify when being unkind turns into bullying (e.g. bullying happens several times and is on purpose). As a class, list some reasons why people might bully others (e.g. because of difference; feeling threatened; wanting power over someone). Ask them to pick out different examples of how Miles bullies Kofi and help them see how these escalate.

Discuss the different ways that the following characters in the book react to or deal with Miles's bullying of and racism towards Kofi. What do they say or do (or not)? As a class, discuss what any of them could have done differently to help prevent Miles's bullying escalating.

- Christine
- James
- Coach McDonald
- Ms Wilmington (chapter 11)
- Mr Fortesque

Focus on Christine and James and the differences in how they behave when Miles is bullying Kofi. If pupils don't know it already, introduce the word 'bystander'. Why do people like James say nothing, even when they know a situation is wrong?

LESSON ACTIVITIES

Activity continued...

In twos or small groups, ask pupils to imagine that they are the characters below, and to create a thought cloud showing what that person is thinking and feeling about what is going on.

- Kofi (e.g. angry, confused, scared)
- Miles (e.g. angry, jealous, powerful)
- James (e.g. scared of Miles, worried, ashamed)
- Christine (e.g. brave, angry, caring)

As a class, compare what groups have put in their clouds. Do any characters have the same or similar feelings? Are there any conflicting/contrasting feelings (e.g. for James)? Discuss how people can feel the same feelings but for different reasons, or conflicting feelings at the same time.

Dealing with pressure, change and conflict

Throughout the book Kofi is having to deal with more and more pressure. In small groups, ask pupils to draw a picture of Kofi in the middle of an A3 piece of paper. Around the outside, they should write down all the things that are putting pressure on him (e.g. Mum, school, community expectation, Miles etc.), and draw a red arrow from that thing towards Kofi. Compare diagrams with the whole class. How would someone feel with that much pressure on them?

Another way to do this is to bring in a small rucksack or a bag, plus some objects that represent different pressures. Choose someone to stand at the front and ask the class to call out something that is putting pressure on Kofi. For each pressure, add an object to the bag. How does it feel each time an object goes into the bag? Ask the class to give a solution for dealing with each pressure – each time they do take an object out of the bag. How does the bag feel now?

Read the chapter about restorative justice (chapter 25). On page 216 Kofi says 'I stop, feeling... weirdly light, like I've got rid of something that was weighing me down'. Why do pupils think Kofi's feelings change? Why do they think Miles's feelings change?

Charlie (page 81) and Christine (page 117) both tell Kofi to stand up for himself against Miles, and Abigail (page 138) tells him "You've got to start believing in yourself and that things will change for the better if you do something about him." Discuss this advice with pupils. What advice would they give Kofi?

LESSON ACTIVITIES

Friendship

As a class, make a list of friendship qualities – how do true friends act and what kinds of things do they do and say for one another? How should a friendship make you feel?

Working in pairs or small groups, ask pupils to consider the following friendship pairs in the book and decide if it is a true friendship. Ask them to give examples of things that the characters say and do to support their answer.

- Charlie and Kofi
- Christine and Kofi
- James and Miles
- Charlie and Kayden

Kofi tells Christine that he could never be friends with James because James knew what Miles was doing was wrong, but never stopped him. Ask pupils if they think Miles and Kofi could ever be friends. Why do they think this?

THANK YOU FOR USING THIS RESOURCE PACK

Please share your feedback with us: marketing@nosycrow.com

These resources are written by education writer and consultant Lucy Marcovitch

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Full curriculum links and further resources available on the next page

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CURRICULUM LINKS

The resource links to the following statutory and non-statutory areas of learning:

English

The Book group discussion and some lesson activities cover statutory and non-statutory requirements of the Years 5 and 6 programme of study in Reading (word reading and comprehension) and aspects of Writing.

Primary Relationships and health education: statutory guidance (July 2025)

General primary guidance

- 24. The focus for primary relationships education should be on teaching the skills and knowledge that form the building blocks of all positive relationships
- 27. Primary relationships education should be anchored in an understanding of positive relationships... in addition, pupils should understand about bullying, and that this can include the use of derogatory terms relating to sex, race, disability or sexual orientation.

Area of learning	Core area	Details
	Caring friendships	• how important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends. • the characteristics of friendships that lead to happiness and security, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties. • How to manage conflict, and that resorting to violence is never right
	Respectful, kind relationships	• the importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness. Pupils should have opportunities to think about how they foster their own self-esteem and build a strong sense of their own identity, including through developing skills and interests. • about different types of bullying ... the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders ... and how to get help. • what a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive or lead to bullying and how to challenge a stereotype.
Health education	General wellbeing	• that bullying ... has a negative and often lasting impact on mental wellbeing and how to seek help for themselves or others

CURRICULUM LINKS

Non-statutory PSHE programme of study (KS2)

Area of learning	Core area	Details
1. Health and wellbeing	Mental health	• H18. about everyday things that affect feelings and the importance of expressing feelings • H24. problem-solving strategies for dealing with emotions, challenges and change, including the transition to new schools
	Ourselves, growing and changing	• H25. about personal identity; what contributes to who we are (e.g. ethnicity, family, gender, faith, culture, hobbies, likes/dislikes) • H27. to recognise their individuality and personal qualities • H28. to identify personal strengths, skills, achievements and interests and how these contribute to a sense of self-worth
	Friendships	• R11. what constitutes a positive healthy friendship (e.g. mutual respect, trust, truthfulness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, sharing interests and experiences, support with problems and difficulties) • R13. the importance of seeking support if feeling lonely or excluded • R16. how friendships can change over time, about making new friends and the benefits of having different types of friends
	Managing hurtful behaviour and bullying	• R19. about the impact of bullying... and the consequences of hurtful behaviour • R20. strategies to respond to hurtful behaviour experienced or witnessed... how to report concerns and get support • R21. about discrimination: what it means and how to challenge it
	Respecting self and others	• R31. to recognise the importance of self-respect and how this can affect their thoughts and feelings about themselves

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Anti-Bullying Alliance: a membership organisation providing advice and support, CPD training and resources for anti-bullying week. Covers all aspects of bullying including racism.
<https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk>

BBC Teach contains a range of clips, videos and teaching resources about all aspects of PSHE education, including understanding difference, emotional wellbeing and the transition to secondary school.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/topics/cqvpny0867zt>

NSPCC:

Talking to kids about racism: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/children-race-racism-racial-bullying/>

Anti-bullying resources:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/anti-bullying-resources>

Premier League Primary Stars: free schools' resources for PSHE, including those with a focus on bullying, racism, building self-esteem and dealing with emotions.

<https://plprimarystars.com>

Show Racism the Red Card: anti-racism charity offering resources for all year groups, and training for teachers.

<https://theredcardhub.org>