



All Stars Netball Series

black dog books

Teacher Notes prepared by Fran Knight

Introduction

This group of eight books is about the girls in the netball team, the All Stars. Each book tells the story of one of the girls in the team. Reading the books will give any girl an insight into the rules and procedure of a netball game, while making it more lively by talking about the people who make up the team.

The reader is invited into the world of Mandy, Tara and Sarah as they build the team from scratch. Because each story is told from a different perspective, following the girls' lives as they cope with growing up, bullying, boyfriends and families, the story of the team and its development is followed, and each book is part of the whole.

The books are written by the Black Dog Books team of writers, and each is about 120 pages long. Girls from about grade 4 and older would be able to read these stories easily and enjoy the engaging style.

All of the books show friendships at its best. Sometimes friendships are stretched when one person does something the others disapprove of, but in every case the friendship is repaired.

The stories underline the value of friendships and forgiveness between friends. The reader can see for themselves that relations are sometimes strained, but all comes right in the end. All the stories have a strong ethical base.

Families figure strongly in the stories as well. They are always loving and forgiving. Each family is different and show the variety of families which exist in Australia. Bree and Sammy live with their divorced mother in All Stars 2: Bree, Centre.

When she remarries, Bree now has a step sister, Mel, whose mother is Malaysian and has gone back to live in



Malaysia, and a step father. As the story travels we hear of how the new blended family is coping and how Mel finally gets to speak to her mother after some strain has developed between them.

Josie's family in All Stars 3: Josie, Wing Attack, gives us another view, that of a large, noisy Italian family and its preparations for the older sister's wedding. It is funny and reassuring, warm and enveloping.

Tara, or Ishtara, in All Stars 8: Tara, Goal Keeper, introduces the reader to another family again, an alternative family. Tara's parents are concerned that she is playing a competitive sport, send her to an alternative school, and encourage her to call them by their first names.

The whole class will enjoy talking about the different styles of family, and could link them with the range of families in their own class.

See also our teacher notes for the individual All Stars books, available on the black dog books website.

www.bdb.com.au

Suggestions for use

1. A Reading Circle could be set up in a classroom where small groups of girls read one of the books, answering one of the introductory questions in their group and answering the questions for that story in their work books.



Classroom volunteers can sit with each group, and direct their reading.

Ask the library to buy one or two copies of each of the stories which each class group could borrow to read in a session each week. With all the girls in the class reading *All Stars*, why not have the boys in groups reading *The Legends Series* or the *David Mortimer Baxter Series* (both series by Black Dog Books)

2. Buy a set of the books for the whole class (there are 8 books, and depending on the size of your class, you may need 3 or 4 copies of each). Each child could select a different book to read. Or if you have a mixed class, then buy enough *All Stars* books for the girls, and *David Mortimer Baxter* books for the boys.

3. Read a book aloud to the class. Perhaps you could read *All Stars 1: Maddy, Goal Defence*, to the class, and so set the scene for different groups reading the rest of the series. The class could then choose which of the series they wish to read themselves or in their reading groups, following the lives of the girls.

4. Encourage students to read the book aloud using a tape recorder. They could then tape themselves reading a chapter, pass it on to someone else to read the next chapter, and so on until one book is read onto a tape.

These recordings could be shared between the class, or used with another class. (Some children may find this threatening, so may need to be given a different activity or allowed to record a chapter alone or at home).

Introductory activities

1. Draw up a Netball court on an A3 sheet of paper (you will need to look up a Sport Rules book in your library (Dewey 796) or check <www.netball.asn.au>).

Place each of the girls in the *All Stars* team in their positions on your plan of the court. Make sure that you include a heading and a key. Plan to include a drawing of their uniform, a drawing of the netball and a scoring card to show the results of their first match as outlined in *All Stars 1: Maddy, Goal Defence*.

2. Invite a state netballer to the class to talk to them about their sport.

3. Invite a physical education teacher to the class to talk about netball.

4. Map the netball court in the quadrangle if there isn't one in the school, to look at its dimensions.

5. Find out what the Australian Netball Team's mascot, banner or flag is.

6. Find out the names of the captain, coach and players in the Australian team.

7. There is an Australian Netball League. Find out how many teams are involved, and their names.

8. List the names of the people the class knows who play netball.

9. Can the class find out how many people play netball in Australia.

10. Have a physiotherapist talk to the class about netball injuries.

11. Invite a First Aid Officer in to talk about injuries and their prevention.

Whole class activities

1. Create a poster about the *All Stars* books, with pictures of the girls, a plan of the netball court, their uniform and their drink bottles.

2. Write a back story for one of the girls (a back story is the story behind the character, their past, their history).

3. Do a family tree for one of the families.

4. Write a story for the local newspaper about how the team was created.

5. Imagine you are the coach, Roxanne. Every time you are on the court, telling the girls what to do, your phone rings. Write up one of the conversations you have on the mobile when you are coaching.



6. List all the exercises and training that the girls do. Try some of them.
7. Pick one of the minor characters, one of the parents or a teacher or one of the younger siblings. Write a character outline for that person. Use what is known from the book, then add things you would like that person to be.
8. Friendship. Ask the girls who read one of the books to tell the rest of the class about a situation where friendship between some of the characters is under threat. For example, in *All Stars 4: Jess, Wing Attack*, the hero of this story, Jess, goes to a concert by herself, rather than go to a team bonding session. The rest of the girls are cross at Jess, but when she finds herself alone in the city they come to her rescue).
9. List the different kinds of families encountered in the All Stars books. Single mum, blended, one child, large family etc. These could be listed on a piece of butcher paper, with the characteristics dot pointed next to each one. Get the class to look and see if their type of family fits in with those listed.

About the Authors

Meredith Costain has written several books and is the editor of national children's magazine *Comet*. She regularly presents writing workshops for children in libraries and schools.

Karen Tayleur is a writer and an editor of children's books. Her other titles include the David Mortimore Baxter series, also published by black dog books.

Clare Renner started writing when her children were little and has published over 20 books. She teaches writing at RMIT in Melbourne and lives in Clifton Hill with her husband, three teenage children and two dogs Tibbi and Spider.

Maryann Ballantyne has been involved in publishing for over 20 years and loves creating books that kids want to read. She came up with the idea for the All Stars Netball Series.