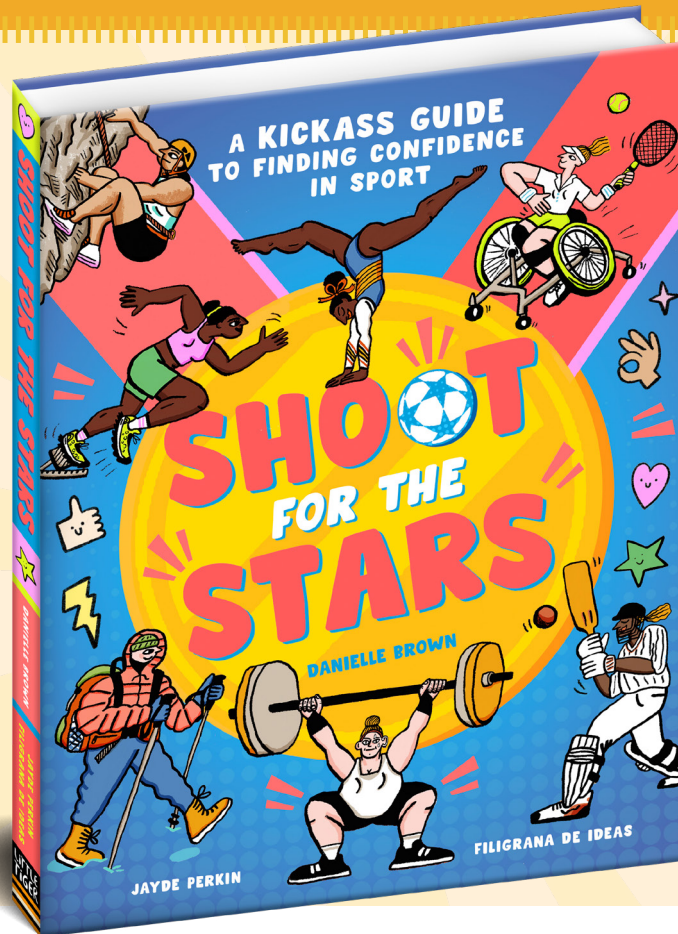
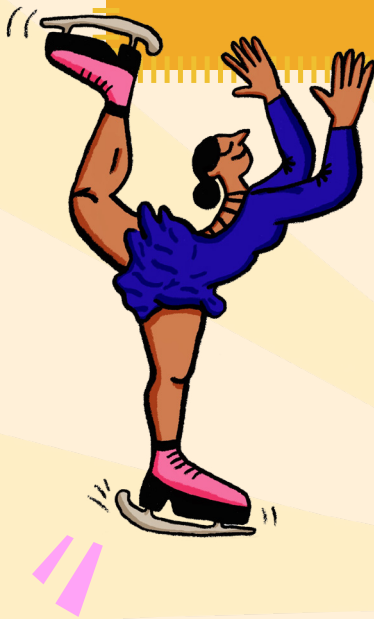


TEACHING NOTES FOR

# **SHOOT FOR THE STARS: A KICKASS GUIDE TO FINDING CONFIDENCE IN SPORT**



Author: Danielle Brown  
Illustrators: Jayde Perkin and Filigrana de Ideas

*These notes have been written by the teachers at the [CLPE](#) to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.*

These teaching notes have been written with children in Years 4–6 in mind but you will need to adapt them as appropriate to the needs and experiences of your own pupils.

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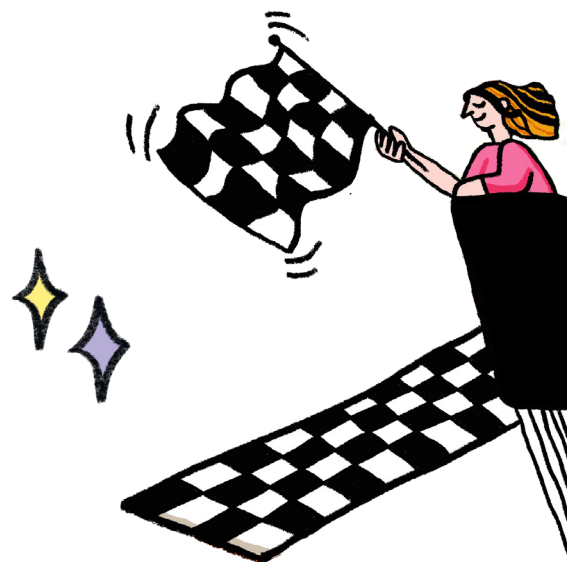
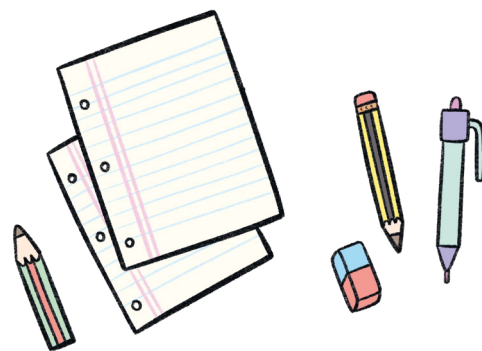
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## BEFORE YOU START:

- As you read through the book, it would be helpful to use a group journal to organise and store discussions and responses to the text. The journal can be a place to capture reflections on the content, as well as how the writer uses language for effect.
- As you read, you may also want to encourage the group to pause to consider words and phrases that may or may not be familiar to them and to discuss and clarify their meanings. These might include but will not be limited to vocabulary and phrases in the book such as 'catapulted', 'overwhelmed', 'ligament', 'judoka', 'puberty' or 'gymnastics'. Add these to a glossary, following up on new and unfamiliar vocabulary by using photographs and video sources to bring these words to life and support the pupils in understanding them in the context of this book. Concepts such as 'kickass' can also be introduced prior to sharing the book.
- Alongside the group journal, you may wish to encourage the children to keep a personal journal as you read, as Danielle suggests in *Shoot for the Stars*. The pupils might be invited to think of the book as a workbook or manual: Danielle often poses questions to the reader, offers opportunities to make lists or reflect and includes prompts for journal entries. Children could use these instructions to create their own simple origami book:

<https://clpe.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-approaches/book-making-teaching-approach>.



## READING ALOUD AND KEY TALKING POINTS:

- Begin by considering the book as an object, sharing the cover and blurb, and asking children to consider it carefully. Ask them what expectations they have of the book they are about to read — the genre, the potential subject matter and text layout, and whether they are able to make any connections between this book and other books they already know. Ask the children to justify their predictions about the book's content, drawing out any connections they may have made to other books. Record the children's initial responses and return to these as you read the book, comparing their initial thoughts to the later reflections they have as they read.
- Encourage the children to consider the cover and make connections between this book and others like it they might know.
- *What do you think about the cover of the book? How does it make you feel? What features catch your eye? Why? What can you say about the layout and appearance of the cover, the typeface used for the main title and author? How do the colours chosen for the cover design make you feel? Why do you think these particular colours may have been chosen?*



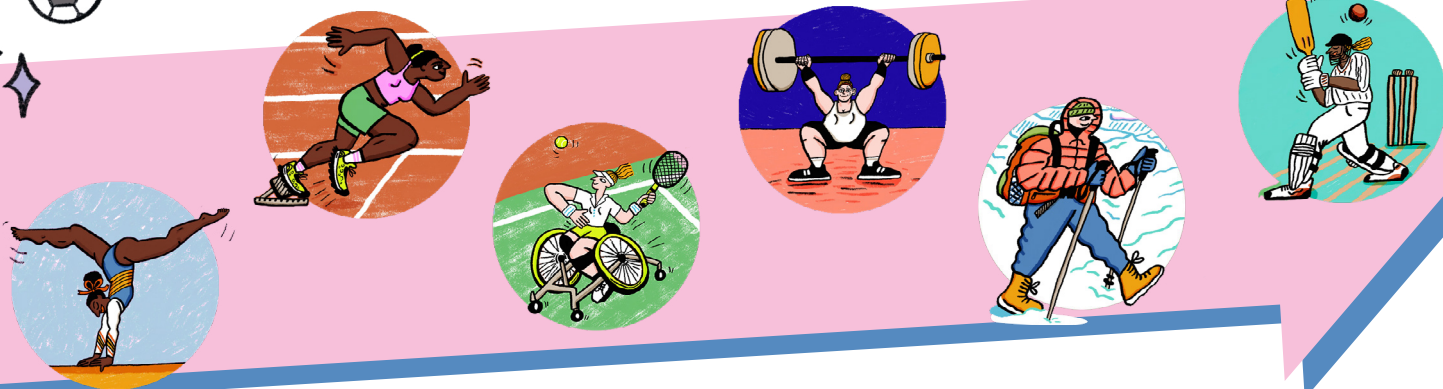
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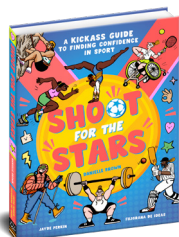
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- What does the title 'Shoot for the Stars' suggest to you? How does it feel to be given this instruction? What might 'shooting for the stars' involve? What do you take from the subtitle, 'A Kickass Guide to Finding Confidence in Sport'? What type of 'guide' do you think this book might be, and what might make it 'kickass'? What do you understand by 'finding confidence'? What does it mean to be confident? How might this relate to the illustrations of the gold medal and the various sporting activities we see? What do these illustrations make you think about? What do the other shapes — the stars, hearts, lightning bolts, thumbs-ups and OK signs — add to your response? What do you think the book designer is trying to convey to us as readers? Does the cover make you want to read this book? Why? Why not?
- Do you recognise the name of the author?
- Although she has written a range of non-fiction books for children, they may not know Danielle Brown primarily as a writer. Depending on their age, they may not be aware of her background as a double Paralympic gold medallist, five-time world champion, world number one for her entire career, and the first disabled athlete to represent England at the Commonwealth Games in an able-bodied category. If they haven't heard of her or know very little, take the time to watch some videos or read some newspaper articles about her achievements.
- Does knowing more about Danielle Brown change what you think this book will be like? Do you think that having a world champion write this book would make people more likely to read it and follow the advice within? Why or why not?



- Open the book and share the illustrations, quotes from young sportswomen, dedications, title page and Table of Contents on page 6, and discuss:
  - How do the illustrations — of gymnasts, sprinters, wheelchair tennis, weightlifters, hikers, cricketers, rock climbers— support your prediction about the content and connect to the author? Consider the six quotes from school-age girls talking about their experience of and feelings about sport: do any of their feelings or experiences resonate with you? Do you agree or disagree with any of them? How might they relate to this book, and why might they have been placed here? What tone is set by these voices, the style of illustration and the layout and decorative backgrounds, and how do they make you feel? Children might comment on them being friendly and unthreatening, and associated with growth, potential and celebration of achievement.
  - What can you learn from the Contents page? Does this reflect what you thought the book would be about? What do you notice about the language of the chapter headings? Children might notice that they are short and punchy, that they sometimes sound like slogans ('Love Your Body', 'See It, Be It') or use features more typical of spoken language ('You Are Awesome. Yes. You'; 'School Or Sport? Why Not Both?'). Why do you think these language devices have been chosen? What further clues do you think these chapter headings might give about the contents and tone of the book? Children might associate this language with a positive, empowering and optimistic attitude.



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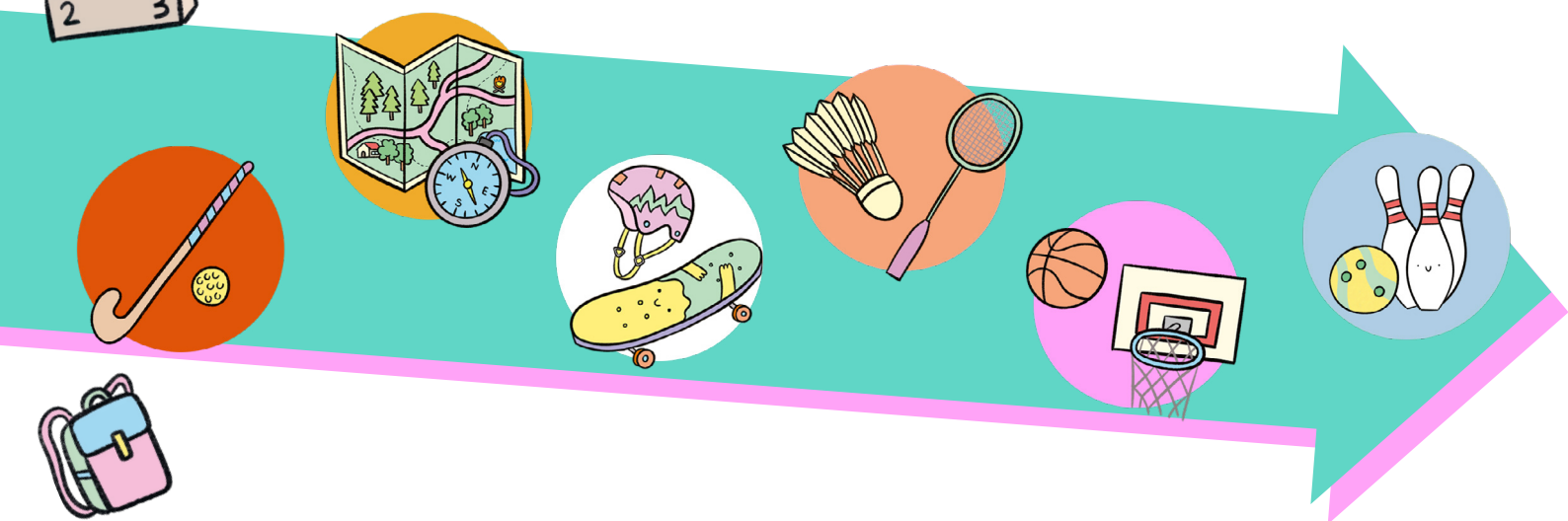


- Read Danielle Brown's 'Welcome' (pages 7–9) aloud, sharing the way the text, photographs and illustrations look on the page — the kicking judoka, Danielle with her gold medal and draped in the Union Jack, the call-out panels, the different typefaces and font sizes. Give the children time to reflect on and discuss what they have heard, and then consider:

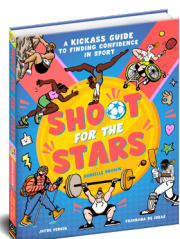
- *Who is speaking and what do you learn about her? What she has done in her life and what she does she want to achieve with this book?*
- *What words and phrases stand out for you as Danielle welcomes you? What tone does she adopt? What does she do to introduce herself as your potential role model and mentor? Children might mention how modest and self-effacing she is, given her incredible achievements: why do you think Danielle emphasizes how ordinary she is and how unbelievable her success has been? How does this make you feel about her and her book, and what you might gain from it?*
- *What do you think is the main message in this introduction? Can you summarise the key points?*
- *How has the book designer used the visual elements of the page? How does this relate to what Danielle wants to say? Does it support you in your navigation and understanding of the pages and the objective of the book?*

- The opening chapter ends with a pen portrait of Japanese alpinist Junko Tabei: share the double-page spread (pages 10–11) about this 'Awesome Athlete'. Allow children time to reflect, and then discuss:

- *How does reading about Junko make you feel? What impression do her life and experiences in sport make on you? Why do you think Danielle decided to include Junko's story in her book?*
- This is the first of several biographies the children will read, and a great example that the children can use when writing their own. Encourage them to think about the language used, as well as the presentation on the page, the information shared, the use of two photographs (a candid one and one of Junko 'in action'), and the quote beginning 'Technique and ability alone...': *how are each of these different elements used to steer your thoughts about Junko and the attitude she embodies?*



- The following section looks at Chapter 2 'Your sport is out there' in some detail. This can be used as a model for the way in which the children could then independently explore Chapters 3–6 and 8–12, which follow a similar format. (Elsewhere, Chapter 7 presents some 'Top Trumps'-style mini-biographies of outstanding sportswomen, while Chapter 13 is a reference guide to a plethora of sports children might try.) You could provide photocopies of Chapter 2 (pages 12–25) for the children to highlight, mark-up and annotate with distinctive features or memorable language and layout.



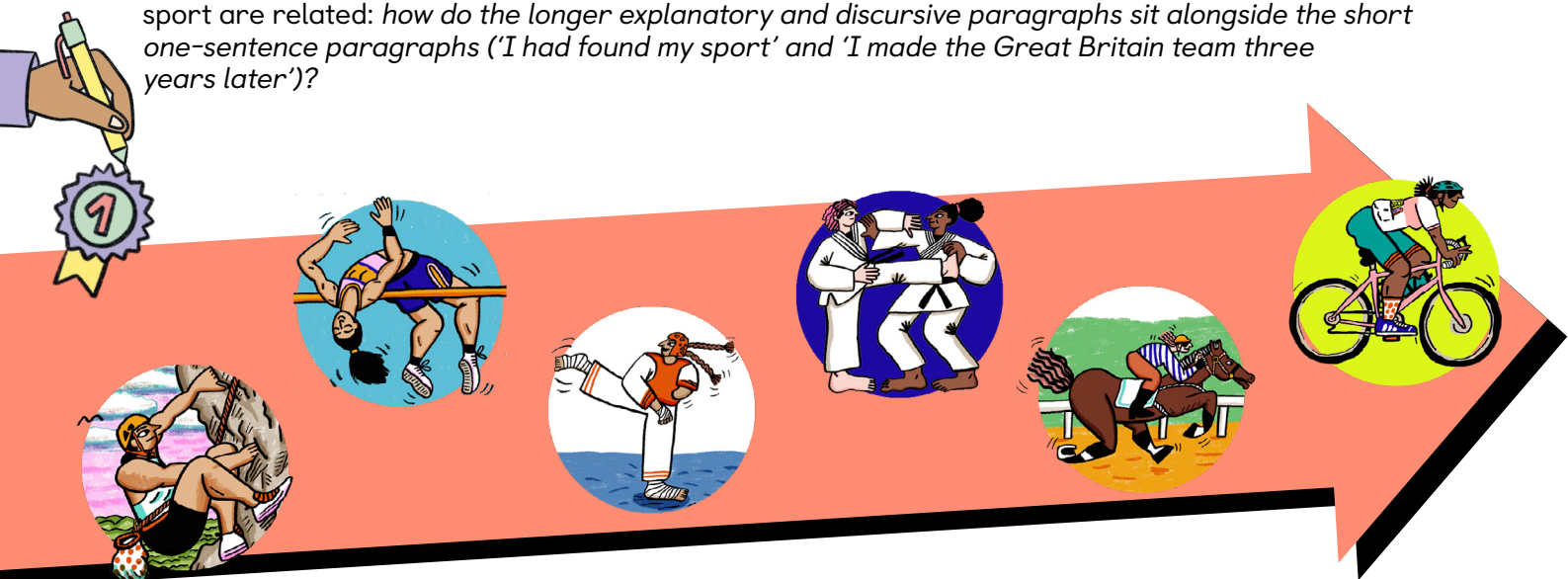
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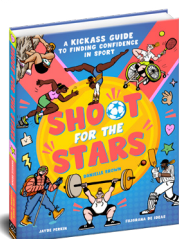
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- Begin by looking at the chapter heading 'Your Sport is out there' and the arrow pointing onwards into the book, 'Take a shot at:' *What does this chapter title make you think, what do you think the chapter will be about, and how effectively does it seize your attention? What do you understand by the idiom "take a shot at"? Why might it be appropriate here? What is the purpose of the text below 'Take a shot at'? How does it prepare you for the content of the chapter you are about to read?*
- Read the opening four lines of text in the blue box about 'athletes who discovered their sport when they were infants' and the large text in the pink box ('and then there were people like me...') aloud. Share the 'My Story' text, from halfway down page 13 to the end of page 14. After reading, discuss: *how does Danielle's own story compare with those she opened the chapter with? How do you feel when you read about her diagnosis of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome? How does she tell the story of how she discovered archery and the progress she made in that sport? How do the two photographs of Danielle — in her wheelchair on page 13 and about to leash the power of her bow at the bottom of page 14 — help you to understand the challenge of Danielle's CRPS and the way she has performed as an athlete on a world stage?*
- Encourage the children to consider how Danielle's account of her diagnosis and the discovery of her sport are related: *how do the longer explanatory and discursive paragraphs sit alongside the short one-sentence paragraphs ('I had found my sport' and 'I made the Great Britain team three years later')?*



- Invite the children to reflect on the number of sentences that use 'I' or 'my': *how do these first person pronouns offer insight into Danielle's experience and attitude?*
- Now go on to share pages 15–17, and ask the children to summarise what they have heard read aloud. *What did you find out about the variety of sports available to you, the importance of passion, and trying out a range of different sports to discover what each one demands of you and offers to you? Is there a sport you already enjoy? What do you like about it? Is there a sport you'd like to try but haven't yet? What appeals to you, and why?*
- Develop this discussion by considering the activity on pages 18–19. It would be worthwhile for the children to complete the activity and to explore the way it is presented to them as a reader: the language used, the layout and formatting, the features such as the quote from Danielle about why 'team sports aren't my favourite' and the green circle panel exhorting the reader to 'check out the handy list of sports' on page 168.
- Share the biography of 'Awesome Athlete' Bebe Vio on pages 20–21, and provide a copy of that of Junko Tabai on pages 10–11 for comparison. *What do you learn about Bebe from these pages? Why do you think Danielle chose to include Bebe's story in this chapter, at this point in her book? What does it have in common with that of Junko and how is it different?*



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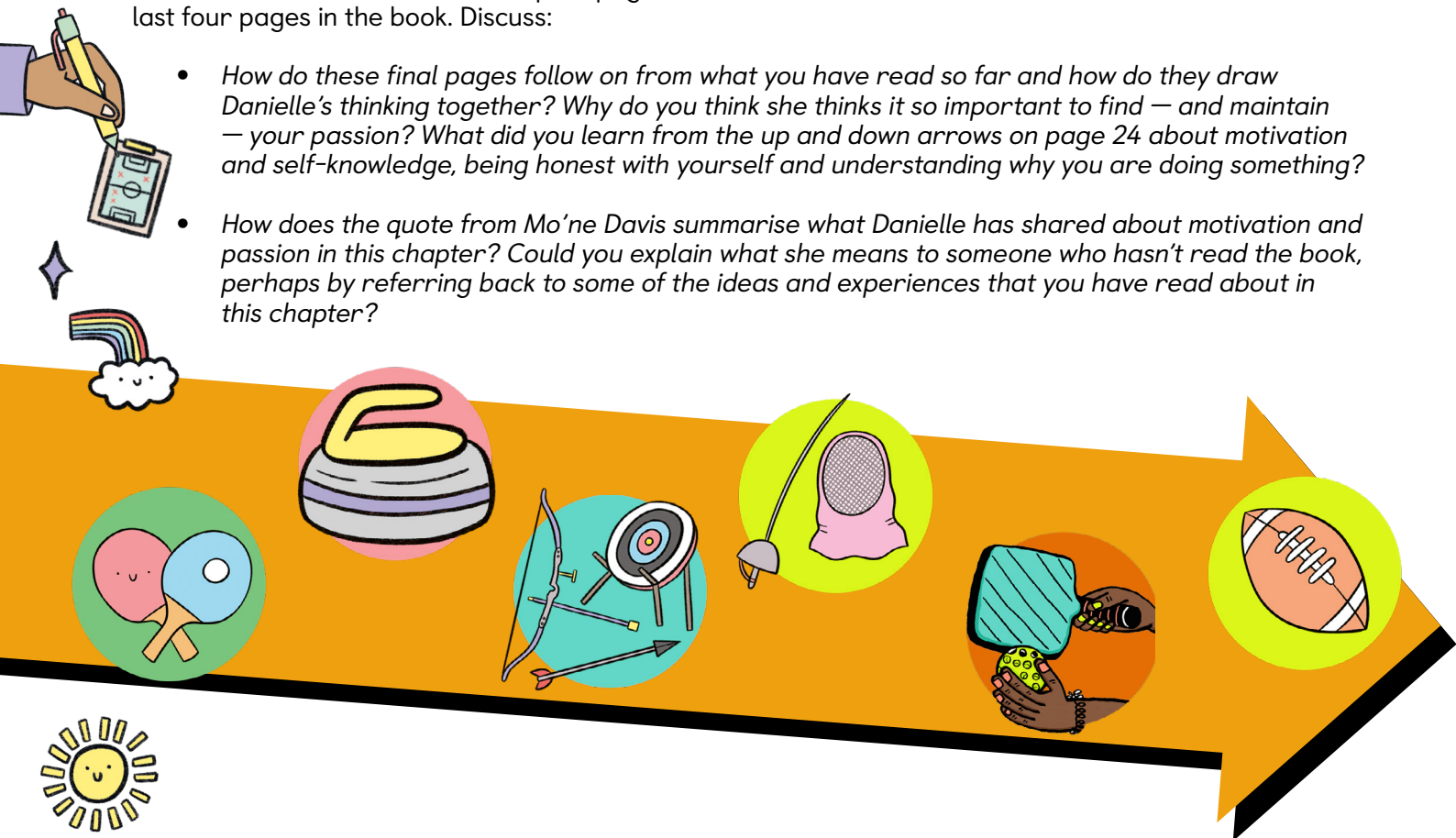
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- Now read on to the end of the chapter, pages 22–25, and allow time for the children to reflect on the last four pages in the book. Discuss:

- *How do these final pages follow on from what you have read so far and how do they draw Danielle's thinking together? Why do you think she thinks it so important to find — and maintain — your passion? What did you learn from the up and down arrows on page 24 about motivation and self-knowledge, being honest with yourself and understanding why you are doing something?*
- *How does the quote from Mo'ne Davis summarise what Danielle has shared about motivation and passion in this chapter? Could you explain what she means to someone who hasn't read the book, perhaps by referring back to some of the ideas and experiences that you have read about in this chapter?*



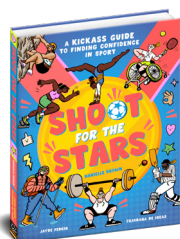
- Having modelled a way of navigating the various features of Chapter 2, you could invite the children to repeat this process for themselves with Chapters 3–6 (pages 26–89) and Chapters 8–12 (pages 98–167).

- In each case:

- Invite them to consider the chapter heading and what it makes them think about, encouraging them to predict and consider how it might follow on from what they have already read. They could also consider the short texts in the 'Take a shot at' boxes at the bottom of each new chapter, anticipating what they are about to read and how it connects with what they have already discovered about Danielle, her experience and her approach to sport.
- Encourage them to summarise what they find out about Danielle at the start of each chapter, what she shares of her experience and how it deepens their understanding of her journey.
- Danielle unpicks how her own experience helped her to understand a specific aspect of being a sportswoman. Invite the children to paraphrase the message of these expository pages.
- An activity is presented, and the children could complete this in their personal journals, and reflect on how the activity is presented, in terms of language choices, layout and format.
- They will go on to read about another 'Awesome Athlete': ask them to consider what this particular athlete's story adds to their understanding of the chapter's subject matter. For example, consider why Caitlin Clark (pages 108–109) is a perfect individual to exemplify the message of Chapter 8 ('I believe in you'); or how Leah Williamson (page 118–119) echoes the message of Chapter 9, 'The Dream Team'.

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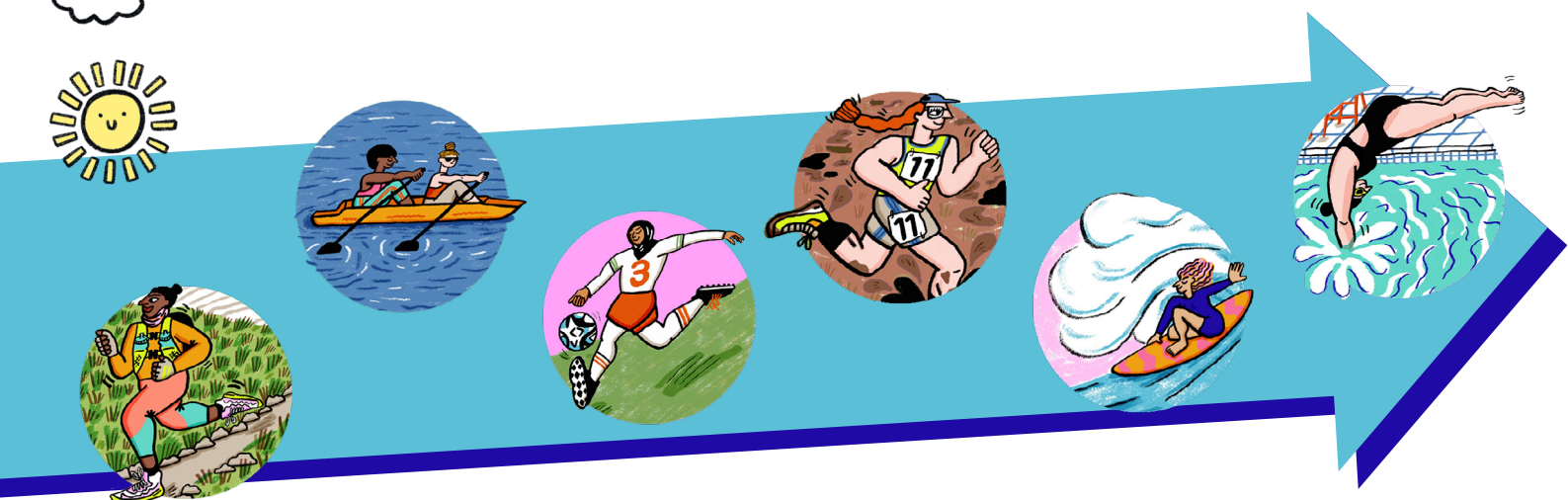
- Allow time for them to read to the end of the given chapter and reflect on how Danielle draws its messages together, usually with a powerful quote from an inspiring athlete.

- As they are quite different, it makes sense to consider Chapter 7 (pages 90–96) and Chapter 13 (pages 168–173) separately:

- Chapter 7 is a Hall of Fame, in which the stories of 40 exceptional sportswomen are helpfully summarised.

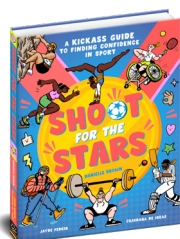
- *How does it feel to read about these athletes? Why do you think Danielle and the book designer chose to present it in this way, as well as embedding their stories in each chapter?*
- As well as the factual information about their sport, county and awesome achievement, Danielle presents 'trivia'. *What do you understand by this word, and why do you think she might have chosen to add this information for each athlete? Does it add to your understanding of each athlete to know something "extra" about her: that Fu Yuanhi started swimming to improve her asthma; that Ashley Fiolek works as a stunt actor and has a dog called Bambi; that Ronda Rousey runs an eco-farm? Perhaps it adds to your empathy or appreciation for these athletes? How does knowing these human characteristics add to your enjoyment of or engagement with the book?*

- Chapter 13 offers a reference guide to 72 different sports. *Which of these sports do you already know or have already tried? Is there a sport that isn't listed for which you could add an illustration and short description? What does the broad range of sports make you think about your own interests and what you might like to try?*



- You could end by reading Chapter 12, 'You are awesome. Yes, you!' (pages 154–167) together. In the discussion of this chapter, children can bring to bear everything they have learned so far about the book, from its organisation, layout and visual features to Danielle's use of examples from her own experience and that of other figures from sport. Give the children time to reflect on what they have heard, then discuss:

- *What do you think are the key points in this chapter?*
- *How does Danielle draw everything together in this penultimate chapter? What message do you think she wants to leave the reader with? After the 'reference guide' of Chapter 13, the book ends with quotes from Maisie, Summer, Poppy and Olivia, all aged between 11 and 13, and a final exhortation from Danielle. How do these girls' voices add to your appreciation of the text? How do Danielle's final words leave you feeling? As a reader, do you think you would be inclined to follow the guidance she has offered? Why? Why not?*



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- Ask the children to explore and discuss their overall responses to the text with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls 'the four basic questions' (*Tell Me (Children, Reading and Talk)* with *The Reading Environment*, Thimble Press, 2011). These questions are most frequently used to discuss fiction, but can equally be applied to poetry, illustrations and artwork, films and multimedia, and — as here — the book Danielle has written. They give children accessible starting points for discussion:

- *Tell me... is there anything you like about this text?*
- *Is there anything that you particularly dislike?*
- *Is there anything that puzzles you?*
- *Are there any patterns... any connections that you notice...?*

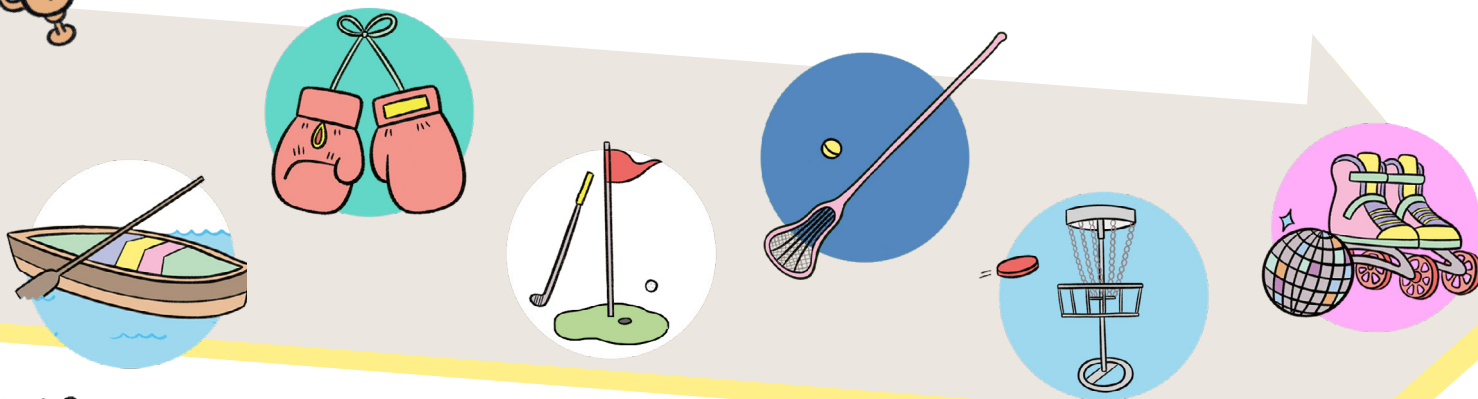
- Support the children's discussion. It could be interesting to guide the children towards considerations of what type of book this is: children may feel that it has elements of autobiography and biography, of persuasive writing and instructional texts, but also has something in common with picture books and illustrated non-fiction.

- As well as Aidan Chambers' four basic questions, give the children the opportunity to reflect on the following questions:

- *Did you enjoy this book?*
- *Who would you recommend this book to and why? What would you want to tell them about it and what would you leave them to find out for themselves?*
- *What do you think motivated Danielle to write the book?*
- *What questions are you left with after reading?*
- *What links do you see to other books, life stories and stories from film or television?*

- You could extend the discussion by thinking about:

- *Which athlete mentioned in the book interested you the most? Why do you think this was? Would you be interested in finding out more about them? How might you do that?*
- *Did any of the athletes included in the book remind you of people you know or remind you of characters in other books, films or real life?*



- In fiction, the author can be a different person from the narrator, who might be a different person from the main character. Consider how the different perspectives in this book:

- *How do the aspects of Danielle's life and the experiences of other real-life athletes that she shares compare to the characters and personalities you might encounter in a work of fiction?* Children might observe that in this book we don't see characters develop or interact with others to any great extent, although we do learn about Danielle's development as an athlete and a human being.



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- We find out a great deal about Danielle, her experiences, her heroes and her philosophy. *How do you think this book differs from an autobiography? How do you think that the author has chosen and presented the episodes from her life to tell it in a certain way for a certain audience?*
- *What do you think have been the most interesting aspects of this book, and how do they compare to other books you have read?*



- Ask the children to describe their favourite part of the book. Provide the children with an oral scaffold: 'the most memorable part of the book was... because...'; 'my top moment in the book was... because...'. Ask them to identify their favourite part of Danielle's story in pairs. Encourage children to give reasons for their choices and invite some children to share these.
- If possible, leave copies of the book in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or in a group.
- Children might like to use the book as it was intended - to find confidence. The children's goals could be connected to sport, or to another area of school or extracurricular life. This might work well as a start-of-year activity. You could set individual goals for the term or the year with the children, coming back to these to see if they have been achieved and setting new goals or looking at what extra support the children think they might need to reach their goals.
- Find out more about the author Danielle Brown by visiting her website: <https://www.daniellebrown.co.uk/>
- Share other books by Danielle Brown with the children and add these to your reading area.
- Make multimedia artwork in the style of Jayde Perkin's and Filigrana de Ideas' illustrations.
- Children could research the various athletes that Danielle mentions in the Hall of Fame further, and add biographies of their own role models.



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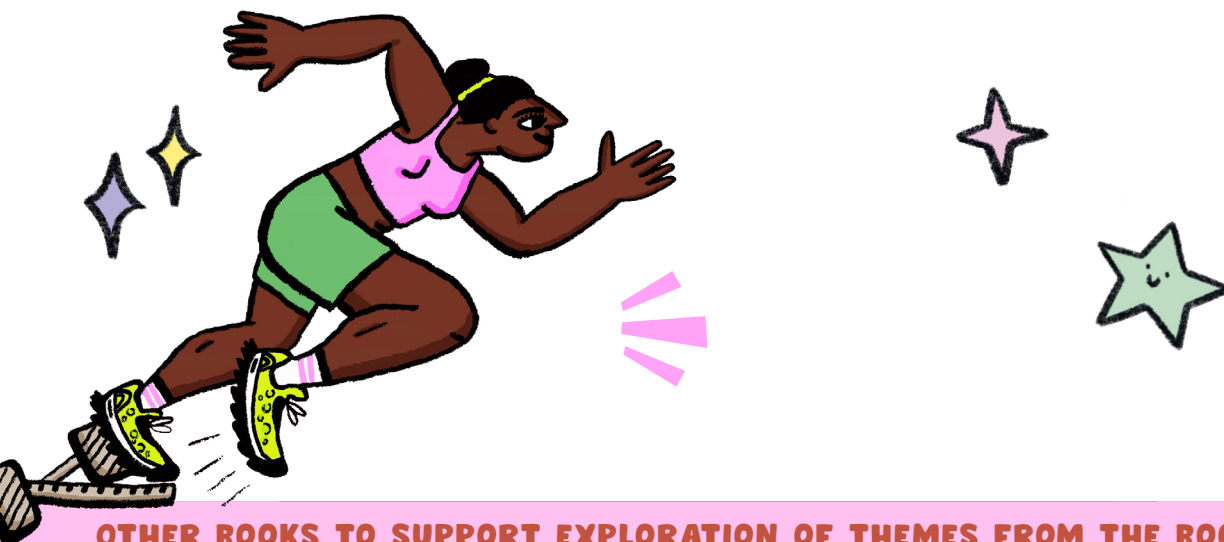
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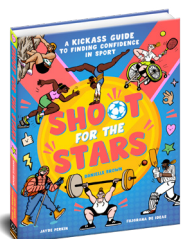
## OTHER TITLES BY DANIELLE BROWN:

- *Be Your Best Self* (Button Books)
- *Run Like a Girl: 50 Extraordinary and Inspiring Sportswomen* (Button Books)
- *Girls Rule: 50 Women Who Changed the World* (Button Books)
- *One Hundred Reasons to Hope*, with Captain Sir Tom Moore, illustrated by Adam Larkum (Penguin)
- There are numerous print and video interviews and programmes about Danielle available online.



## OTHER BOOKS TO SUPPORT EXPLORATION OF THEMES FROM THE BOOK:

- *Stories for Boys Who Dare to Be Different*, Ben Brooks, illustrated by Quinton Winter (Quercus)
- *Break the Mould: How to Take Your Place in the World*, Sinéad Burke, illustrated by Natalie Byrne (Wren and Rook)
- *The Little Leaders series of books*, Vashti Harrison (Puffin)
- *The Little People, Big Dreams series of books* (Lincoln Children's Books)
- *Be Amazing! An Inspiring Guide to Being Your Own Champion*, Chris Hoy (Walker Books)
- *Women in Sport, Women in Art and Women in Science*, Rachel Ignatofsky (Wren and Rook)
- *Stories for South Asian Supergirls*, Raj Kaur Khaira (Kashi House)
- *Roar Like a Lion*, Carlie Sorosiak, illustrated by Katie Walker (David Fickling Books)
- *You Are Awesome: Find Your Confidence and Dare to be Brilliant at (Almost) Anything*, Matthew Syed, illustrated by Toby Triumph (Wren and Rook)
- *Dare to Be You: Defy Self-Doubt, Fearlessly Follow Your Own Path and Be Confidently You!*, Matthew Syed, illustrated by Toby Triumph (Wren and Rook)



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