



## Teaching Guide for *Little Big Sister* by Eoin Colfer

### Aims of this teaching sequence:

- To explore a high-quality picture book which enables children to put themselves inside the story and empathise with characters and their issues, problems, and situations.
- To explore different themes and develop an understanding of them through discussion and making connections with their own lives.
- To encourage children to see how respectful interactions build and nurture positive relationships.
- To reflect on empathy, what it means and its importance.

### Oral Language Skills – Questioning

Before Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Hide the title* – Prediction – This is the front cover of the book that we will reading today. What do you think this story will be about? – talk with partners for 30 seconds.</li> <li>• Looking at this front cover, what connections can you make to other books you have read? What similarities can you find?</li> <li>• Do you think that this book will be a fiction or non-fiction text, why?</li> </ul>
Author/Illustrator Reveal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firstly, we will look at the author. Who can tell me, what is an author?</li> <li>• The author of this story is Eoin Colfer. Have you ever heard of Eoin Colfer before?</li> <li>• So, if an author writes the words in the story, what do you think an illustrator does?</li> <li>• The illustrator of this story is Celia Ivey. Has anyone heard of Celia Ivey before?</li> </ul>
Title Reveal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The title of this story is <i>Little Big Sister</i>; what do you think that means?</li> <li>• From hearing the title, what do you think this story will be about?</li> </ul>
Introduction
<p><i>Little Big Sister</i> is a book about a girl called Starr. Starr is adventurous, loves mischief and playing with her sister Babes, which is short for Barbara. Starr has a medical condition called dwarfism, has anyone ever heard about dwarfism before?</p> <p>Dwarfism is where someone’s bones don’t grow into their average length. This means that someone’s arms and legs can be shorter compared with the rest of their body. People with</p>

dwarfism prefer the term 'little person' or 'little people' to be used, so that's the term we will be using.

During Reading (No need to ask each and every question in this list)

- Why do you think the girls were not supposed to skateboard indoors? What could happen?
- Why do you think Mum said that 'they were like squirrels'? What do you think she meant by this?  
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- The big yellow chair was 'beautiful' and 'fancy' – what other adjectives could we use to describe this chair instead?  
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- In this story, Babes is starting school for the very first time, do you remember starting school? What do you remember from that day? How were you feeling?
- Why do you think Babes wants to be called Barbara now?  
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- Why was Babes growing faster than Starr?
- Before we began the story we discussed the term little person, who can remember what we spoke about and what that means?
- Why do you think Starr has to go to a special doctor?  
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- In the story, Mum says that growing big is 'very important', what do you think she means here?  
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- Why do you think Starr did not love Sport's Day?
- How do you think Starr was feeling on her first Sport's Day?  
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- Why does Starr think she is no longer the big sister?
- If Starr was here right now, what advice, words of encouragement or support could we give her?  
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- Do you think the Triple A is a good idea? Should we have one in our school?
- What activities could we include in our Triple A?  
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- What do you think Mum means by 'Did you reach that star in her lullaby today?'.
- Starr is an inspirational character. What important lessons can we learn from her actions in this story?

### After Reading

- Talk partners – what did you think of this story? In order to answer this question you must use the most important word of all ‘...because...’.
- Having read this story, what connections can you make to this story and other stories you have heard? You can make connections to movies, tv shows, real life experiences or anything you can think of.
- Lots of stories have a message in them, do you think that there is a message in this story? What could it be?
- In the story, it told us how Starr’s teacher gave her a lower coat hook and a step ladder. Looking at our classroom now, if we had a friend who was a little person in our class – would our classroom be a suitable learning environment for them? Take 1 minute with a partner to walk around the room and think of changes we could make like Starr’s teacher.
- Do you think that the title *Little Big Sister* is a good title for this book? Why? Can you think of another title that might be a good fit?

### Cross Curricular Links/Further Activities

#### English

- Write a letter to Eoin Colfer or Celia Ivey telling them what you liked the most about their book.
- Create a well-done card for Starr for her achievements in Sports Day. Can you write her a nice message on the inside and design a cover she would like?
- Write a school newspaper article about sports day in the school, be sure to mention Starr and Babes’s achievements and any other key details from the text – the new triple A, the events on sports day, the former PE teacher grandad, what the trophies looked like etc.
- Write a diary entry as Starr or Babes on the morning before and the afternoon after sports day. Focus on how your character is feeling.
- Empathy – empathy is when you understand with your heart. On page 16 of the book, Starr see’s that Babes has climbed up to the tree house without any help. In the text it says that Starr is feeling sad. What other words can we think of? How would you feel if you were Starr? Write a diary entry of that moment with an emphasis on your feelings. Alternatively, use speech/thought bubbles for the characters. Children to write sentences of what Starr might be thinking in this scenario.
- Persuasive writing – If we had a Triple A at our Sports Day, what would you want to include and why? Write a letter to the principal explaining why you think this is a good idea and why your chosen activities are a good fit. It’s okay if you love sports day just the way it is, your job is to think of what others might like on Sports Day. Think of how you could make Sports Day as fun for others as it is for you.
- Discuss theme – what do you think the theme of this book is? Compile a list of ideas from the class. Today we will create acrostic poems using some of our theme words. If the children struggle to settle on one word – present them with words such as kindness,

equality, respect, empathy etc. Discuss their meanings and teacher model/scaffold an example on the board with the class.

- Oral language skills – retelling the story. Teacher to place 5 or 6 key images from the story on the board in a mixed up order. Work with the class to re-organise them into chronological order. In talk partners, children take turns using these images to retell the story to each other. Invite some children up to re-tell the summarised version to the class.
- Follow on writing task – what happens next? Write a short story about what happens next for Starr and Babes. You can draw your own front cover to go with your story also.
- Write a book review on this book, write what you liked about it, your favourite part, your favourite character etc. Can you make a comparison to another book? What score would you give it out of ten?
- Book recommendation – Starr loves to read. Could you write a book recommendation for her? Choose a book that you have read recently or your favourite book and write a recommendation for her. Explain why you like the book, your favourite character, why you think she might like it. Could you ask her for a recommendation? What type of books do you like?

## **Maths**

Data: Together we are going to decide on 5 different activities for our Triple A. They need to be activities that are accessible for everyone. Then we will create a tally chart together to vote on which 3 we will include. Can we then represent this information on a bar chart/pictogram?

## **Art and Design**

- Design a new front cover for the book.
- Design an inclusive playground. Think about our playground now, is it possible for everyone to enjoy it? Create a map of a playground that everyone can use and enjoy.
- Construction – using cardboard, blocks or Lego, can you build the playground?  
Extension – write a proposal piece to the principal about why your playground should be built and why it is more inclusive than the current playground.
- Look at the song lyrics on page 19, can you write out the lyrics and create your own lyric poster like the one in the book?

## **Music and Drama**

- Hot seating – child in role as Starr, Babes, Mum, the class teacher etc. Teacher announces who we will be interviewing. Encourage children to write 3 questions for the character in their copy or on a whiteboard. Invite a child up to the hot seat to act as one of the characters. Children interview that character. A fun ending to this activity could be to have a child in role as the P.E grandad giving the whole class instructions on what exercises to do.
- Look at the song that Mum wrote for Starr. Can we write a third verse together? Can we write some music to accompany it – use of percussion instruments such as shakers and

triangles and tuned instruments – glockenspiel/xylophones. Ukuleles and recorders could be used also depending on age/proficiency.

- Freeze frame – choose a moment in the story – the children stealing the treats, Starr skateboarding at sports day, Babes first day at school and conduct a freeze frame. Demonstrate a freeze frame for the children. Allow the whole class to participate and prepare in groups. Choose groups to showcase for the class.

### **SPHE – Respect, Empathy, Friendship, Myself and Others**

- Talking point  
Think of a time when there was something you were unable to do:
  - how did it make you feel?
  - What happened next?
  - Did someone help you?
  - If you see someone who is unable to do something what could you do?

If you ever see someone who has a problem you should find out if they would like any help. By doing this you are showing them that you care, that you respect them and you are sharing kindness.

- Create a Respect tree. Ask the children what coloured card they would like. Trace around their hand and cut it out. On the palm of the hand each child writes: Respect is... Then on each finger they write a word that could finish that sentence. Use each hand cut out to be the leaves on a tree display.  
Alternatively – the hand could read ‘our classroom is...’ and the fingers could read things like kind, inclusive, caring, helpful and friendly.
- Draw how you would feel when – \*teacher to read key moments of emotion in the story\*– The girls playing together, Babes first day, when the classroom equipment was too big, when the teacher made adjustments for Starr, Sports Day, winning a trophy, the ending.