

# *My Name is Mina* by David Almond

*Notes and Activities for KS3*  
TEACHER PACK



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POD 5189 Part 1 of 2

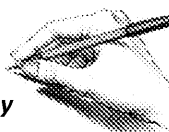
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# Teacher's Introduction

This resource has been designed to support teaching schemes related to the novel *My Name is Mina*.

For ease of use, it has been designed in two clearly defined parts:

- Student Resource Pack
- Teacher's Resource and Reference Aid

## Student Pack:

A worksheet has been designed for each chapter/section of the book and there is one per chapter. The activities are diverse and encourage development in Reading, Writing and Thinking skills.

As well as these, there are Starter Activities, Character Studies, Chapter Overview Tasks for when the reading of the book has been completed.

While activities are centred mainly around the Reading AFs, Writing AFs are also included. Comprehensive coverage of the AFs is provided. *There is a list of the activities and tasks included in the Teacher's Resource for easy reference when reviewing and assessing.*

The worksheets have been carefully designed to help maintain and stimulate student interest. They are placed at the top of each activity so that the student can see which skills are being used in that task.

Several discussion topics are suggested for group work, with pointers to aid discussion.

## Teacher Resource:

This novel may well prove quite challenging for both teacher and student, as the author has argued (within the text) with some conviction and is therefore bound to stimulate discussion. In this mind, a brief for home education and the legal requirements that surround it are included, as details of the home-educators official website.

A detailed list of the relevant assessment foci, an assessment focus table and AP are included for ease of understanding and assessment of activities.

Guidance and suggested answers for all student activities in this resource have been included. This will help teachers less familiar with the text and will also save the teacher time when marking.

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\* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers.



# Teacher's Guide to Home Education

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 applies to England and Wales. It states:

- Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory age.
- The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to be educated in a manner which is suitable to his age, ability and aptitude. Further that it should take into account the child's special needs either by regular attendance at school or *otherwise*.

This may be simply summed up to mean – education is compulsory, going to school is not.

The number of children being home educated in this country has grown considerably in recent years, although it is not, by any means, a new idea.

Parents decide to home educate their children for many reasons: religion; an inability to cope with school life (this is particularly so if the child suffers from some form of disability, is bullied; or just the simple desire to take responsibility for their own child.

Socialisation is often quoted as a reason against home educating. However, there are many ways for a child to socialise. Home education groups offer a surprising amount of regular activities. Local clubs such as scouts, guides, drama groups, archery, swimming clubs and so on, all offer a mix with a variety of age groups and are not segregated within their own age range. Home education is a sophisticated approach to life from an early age.

There is no set way to educate: some families do follow set hours and set courses, others take an autonomous approach whereby the child's interests and strengths are more strongly influenced. In some cases, it is not until the child reaches at least 12 years of age that they begin to study, and only then if that is what is felt to be the best approach for that child.

For more information please visit: [www.educationotherwise.net/](http://www.educationotherwise.net/)

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## Assessment Foci (AFs)

This resource provides a comprehensive range of adaptable resource activities for each activity is linked to the seven Reading Assessment Foci and each AF is addressed in at least one activity.

Whilst this is mainly a reading resource, Writing AFs have also been identified. AF1 – the use of correct punctuation – is covered 3 times. AF8 – the use of correct spelling – is not, however, directly built into any, or all, of the activities. Reference is made to spelling on a number of occasions.

Occasionally, assessment foci overlap for certain activities and where this is the case, it is noted. For example, AF1 and AF2 are both addressed in the same activity.

### Assessment Foci for Reading:

- **AF1:** Use a range of strategies, including accurate decoding of text, to understand and retrieve information, events or ideas from text.
- **AF2:** Understand, describe, select, or retrieve information, events or ideas from text, using quotation and reference to text.
- **AF3:** Deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from text.
- **AF4:** Identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts, including presentational features at text level.
- **AF5:** Explain and comment on writers' use of language, including grammar, punctuation, word and sentence level.
- **AF6:** Identify and comment on writers' purposes and viewpoints and their effect on the reader.
- **AF7:** Relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts and literary conventions.

### Assessment Foci for Writing:

- **W1:** Write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts.
- **W2:** Produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purpose.
- **W3:** Organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring events.
- **W4:** Construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs.
- **W5:** Vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect.
- **W6:** Write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation in phrases and sentences.
- **W7:** Select appropriate and effective vocabulary.
- **W8:** Use correct spelling.

### Speaking and Listening:

- Speaking and listening activities have also been provided throughout the resource.

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## AF Table: List of Assessment Foci Related to

Page Numbers	Activity
9–20	Moonlight, Wonder, Flies and Nonsense
9–20	Creating Your own Characters
9–20	Some Things are Very Strange
23–34	Bananas, Weirdos, a Beautiful Tree and Boring Heaven
23–34	An Extraordinary Fact
23–34	Talking to Mina
37–61	Dinosaurs, French Toast and a Journey in the Underworld
37–61	Points of View
37–61	Almond's Writing Style Under the Microscope
37–61	A Chance to Experiment
65–66	Thoughts About the Archaeopteryx
69–82	Ernie Myers, Rubbish, Dust, Metempsychosis and a Blue Car
69–82	Stories, Plot Lines and Structures
69–83	Fiction, Fact or Myth
87–98	Sprouts, Sarcasm and the Mysteries of Time
87–98	Now Write Your Own Poem
103–115	Persephone, Daftness and Absolutely Nothing
103–115	What Does the Author Mean?
119–132	Fig Rolls, Pee, Spit, Sweat and All the Words for Joy
119–132	Some Rather Interesting Questions
137–151	Grandpa, Missing Monkeys and Owls
137–151	Writing for Effect
155–171	SATS Day, Glibbertysnark and Claminosity
155–171	Almond Asks Questions!
155–171	What About Mina and Mrs Scullery?
175–187	Eggs, Chicks, a Belly and Poems
175–187	Now You Try.
191–201	Spaghetti Pomodoro and a Dream
191–201	Missing Punctuation
205–245	The Story of Corinthian Ave
205–245	All About Journals
247–249	A Story Without Words
247–249	A Story With Words
253–264	Chicks, a Lethal Cat, Limplessness
253–264	The Real Mrs Scullery
287–300	A Dream of Horses
287–300	The Nature of Bravery
287–300	What Makes a Good Climax?
287–300	One Last Extraordinary Activity
FINAL TASK	A Chance to Write Your Own Prequel

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## Blank APP Grid

Assessment Focus .....

Name ..... Date .....

Tasks:

Assessment Notes:

Levels	Level Descriptors
Level 3	
Level 4	
Level 5	
Level 6	
Level 7	
Level 8	

Last time you were assessed for this level you achieved:  
This time you achieved:

What you still need to do:

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**Assessment Focus** R2 Understand, describe, select, or retrieve information from texts and use quotation and reference to text.

**Name** .....

**Date** .....

**Tasks:**

Pages 23–34 Bananas, Weirdos, a Beautiful Tree and Boring Heaven

Pages 119–132 Some Rather Interesting Questions

Pages 155–171 SATS Day, Glibbertysnark and Claminosity

Pages 205–245 The Story of Corinthian Avenue

Pages 287–300 The Nature of Bravery

**Assessment Notes:**

Students that achieve in any given level can achieve more than one level.

If all level descriptors are met, a student displays some understanding of the next level they can be moved to the next level.

Students may move to the next level if they meet one of that level's descriptors.

Levels	Level Descriptors
<b>Level 3</b>	You have made notes and observed the most obvious points. Not all of your work has displayed an understanding of the points made. You have included some relevant comments, quotations and references.
<b>Level 4</b>	You have made some good relevant points. Your work is mainly supported by reference to text and/or relevant points.
<b>Level 5</b>	You have made points that illustrate your understanding of the text. You have supported your points with the correct quotes or references.
<b>Level 6</b>	You are now showing an ability to identify the relevant points and references fully support your ideas.
<b>Level 7</b>	Your points are progressively more accurate. The evidence you use is also increasingly accurate.
<b>Level 8</b>	You are beginning to identify more insightful points and features. You are now supporting your points in a way that shows you are reaching understanding of the text.

Last time you were assessed for this level you achieved:  
This time you achieved:

What you still need to do:

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**Assessment Focus R3 – Deduce, infer or interpret information, events**

Name .....

Date .....

**Tasks:**

Pages 9–20 Creating Your Own Characters  
Pages 103–115 What Does the Author Mean?  
Pages 119–132 Some Rather Interesting Questions  
Pages 137–151 Grandpa, Missing Monkeys and Owls

**Assessment Notes:**

Students that achieve in any given level can achieve more than one. If all level descriptors a student displays some of the next level they can be moved to the next one of that level's descriptors.

Levels	Level Descriptors
<b>Level 3</b>	You have understood some basic meaning from text, although your understanding is supported by reference to the text and tended to be personal. You have started to display a basic understanding of the text.
<b>Level 4</b>	You have now started to understand more about the hidden meaning of the text. You have also collected some evidence from the text to explain your understanding. Some of your deductions are vague and sometimes consist of speculation.
<b>Level 5</b>	You have selected evidence from across the text to support inferences. You have clearly uncovered hidden meaning from text.
<b>Level 6</b>	Your ideas and explanations are firmly based within the meaning of the text. You have been able to see beneath the basic text and reveal further meaning. an attempt to further explore the writer's intentions. You have considered the overall implications of the text.
<b>Level 7</b>	You have interpreted this text in a sophisticated way. You have looked at the complex ideas and meanings of the text and made connections between them. You have connected ideas within the text and considered facts and opinions.
<b>Level 8</b>	You have used logic and reason in understanding the text. You have reflected upon creative insights. You have further developed your points with a broad textual understanding.

Last time you were assessed for this level you achieved:  
This time you achieved:

What you still need to do:

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**Assessment Focus R4** – Identify and comment on the structure and organisation of the text and its grammatical and presentational features at text level

Name .....

Date .....

**Tasks:**

Pages 69–83 Stories, Plot Lines and Structures

Pages 137–151 Writing for Effect

Pages 205–245 All About Journals

Pages 287–300 A Dream of Horses

**Assessment Notes:**

Students that achieve in any given level can achieve more than one level.

If all level descriptors are met, a student displays some of the next level they can be assessed at.

Students may move to the next level if they meet one of that level's descriptors.

Levels	Level Descriptors
<b>Level 3</b>	You have identified some of the ways in which the author has organised the text. You have not properly said why you think he has done the things you identified.
<b>Level 4</b>	You have commented on the structure or organisation of the text. You have also made reference to the different ways in which the author has organised the text.
<b>Level 5</b>	You have commented upon the writing structure and you have explained this way. You have also shown that you plainly understand the author's deliberate choice of structure in his text in the way he has.
<b>Level 6</b>	You have completed a fairly detailed analysis of the text's structure with reference to its purpose. You have commented on how the structure of the text supports meaning.
<b>Level 7</b>	You have shown some ability in evaluating how the text is structured for its purpose. You have shown a fair understanding of the way in which a variety of texts have been structured.
<b>Level 8</b>	You have appreciated fully how the text's structure underpins the writer's purpose. You have displayed a good understanding of how the structure plays a role in the text. You have displayed a good understanding of how the structure plays a role in the text.

Last time you were assessed for this level you achieved:

This time you achieved:

What you still need to do:

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**Assessment Focus R5** – Explain and comment on writer’s use of language and literary features at word and sentence level.

Name .....

Date .....

**Tasks:**

Pages 37–61 Dinosaurs, French Toast and a Journey in the Underworld  
Pages 175–187 Eggs, Chicks, a Belly and a Poem  
Pages 175–187 Now You Try

**Assessment Notes:**

Students that achieve in any given level can achieve more than one. If all level descriptors a student displays some of the next level they can be moved to the next one of that level’s descriptors.

Levels	Level Descriptors
<b>Level 3</b>	You have identified some of the writer’s techniques although you do not explain why he has used them, nor have you established details of any effect he has had.
<b>Level 4</b>	You have commented upon some of the different ways in which the writer has structured his text. You have also shown that you understand some of the reasons why the writer has used language he has.
<b>Level 5</b>	You have successfully identified a number of writing techniques and explained how they have said what effect these techniques have upon the reader.
<b>Level 6</b>	You have analysed language in some detail. You have also applied your analysis to the text. You have commented on how the language has furthered the effect of the text.
<b>Level 7</b>	You have begun to look at and discuss the author’s language more fully and have applied the correct terminology. Your ideas are meaningful and cover a good range of the different features the author used. You have noted the contribution of these features.
<b>Level 8</b>	You are now showing a very clear understanding of the use of language in the author’s text, what it means and how it contributes to the overall effect of the text.

Last time you were assessed for this level you achieved:  
This time you achieved:

What you still need to do:

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**Assessment Focus R6** – Identify and comment on writer’s purposes, view  
text on the reader.

Name .....

Date .....

**Tasks:**

Pages 69–82 Ernie Myers, Rubbish, Dust,  
Metempsychosis and a Blue Car  
191–201 Spaghetti Pomodoro and a Dream  
253–264 Chicks, a Lethal Cat, Limplessness

**Assessment Notes:**

Students that achieve  
in any given level can  
achieve more than one  
If all level descriptors  
student displays some  
next level they can be  
may move to the next  
one of that level’s de

Levels	Level Descriptors
<b>Level 3</b>	You have identified the writer’s intentions. You have signified a response by commenting personally on this
<b>Level 4</b>	You are beginning to understand the writer’s purpose. You have made comments that show awareness of viewpoint.
<b>Level 5</b>	You have found out the main purpose of the text. You have explained the writer’s viewpoint with some detail. You have developed an awareness of the effects of the text on the
<b>Level 6</b>	You are more precisely identifying the main purpose of the text. You are beginning to trace ideas that occur within the text and a various effects are achieved by the use of specific words.
<b>Level 7</b>	You are gaining a better perception of the writer’s purpose. You are beginning to analyse the way in which viewpoint is created You are also beginning to analyse how writing technique affects
<b>Level 8</b>	You have developed a good understanding of the way in which the reader. Your ability to evaluate purpose and viewpoint in a critical sense

Last time you were assessed for this level you achieved:  
This time you achieved:

What you still need to do:

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**Assessment Focus R7** – Relate texts to their social, cultural and historical tradition.

Name .....

Date .....

**Tasks:**

Pages 9–20 Moonlight, Wonder, Flies and Nonsense  
 Pages 23–34 An Extraordinary Fact  
 Pages 87–98 Sprouts, Sarcasm and the Mysteries of Time  
 Pages 299–300 One Last Extraordinary Activity

**Assessment Notes:**

Students that achieve in any given level can achieve more than one. If all level descriptors a student displays some of the next level they can be moved to the next one of that level's descriptors.

Levels	Level Descriptors
<b>Level 3</b>	You have identified some of the historical and social background.
<b>Level 4</b>	You have connected some of the common features in the text. You have made basic assumptions about characters and settings and meanings for the reader and the author.
<b>Level 5</b>	You have noted relationships between texts – both likenesses and differences. You have explained something of the way context may contribute to meaning.
<b>Level 6</b>	You have looked in some detail at some of the features used by writers. You have given a clearer explanation of how context can contribute to meaning.
<b>Level 7</b>	You are now beginning to display a reasonable ability to analyse texts. You are influenced by earlier contexts. You evaluate themes and settings and characters.
<b>Level 8</b>	You now have a good knowledge of how text relates to context. You can now explore the meanings of context produced within texts. You have shown an ability to sustain analysis of text and context.

Last time you were assessed for this level you achieved:  
 This time you achieved:

What you still need to do:

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# Teacher's Notes on the Activities

## Starter Activities

As the main protagonist (Mina) in the book is home educated, it will help students of the character, her ideas, thoughts, actions and feelings if this area is explored. The starter activities have been structured towards discussion and further exploration.

### The Truth about Home Education

Some teachers may wish to follow this activity up with a short discussion. Notes a statement.

- It is better to be home educated because you can do what you want.  
*Students begin either by agreeing or disagreeing. At this point, start by asking only. Positives can be things such as studying what you want to rather than the education round your life rather than your life round it, e.g. rather than on a day when the sun is shining, the day can be more flexibly arranged towards the strictures of a National Curriculum, a student can concentrate on their passions, what **they can do** rather than **what they can't**.*
- It is worse to be home educated because you don't have any friends.  
*Further questions may be asked: do any of the students know of a child who is home educated? If so, of person are they, e.g. shy, aloof, different, the same as anyone else? Do home-educated children make friends? What clubs or societies could they join? Do they have friends in school? Is everybody friendly in school?*
- It is better to go to school because that is the only way you learn.  
*Introduce the idea that learning takes place in different ways. Mina likes to learn and through conversation. Ask how they feel they learn best – is it by watching, doing it themselves, being told information, reading information or a mix of these? Can they identify their learning strategies?*
- It is bad to go to school because teachers sometimes shout at you.  
*This one is bound to cause some fun, let the children have their say! Teachers sometimes get exasperated. Point out the two sides to every story aspect. Teachers are shouted at in getting students to complete work and, if it is not effective, it is better. At the beginning of the book, Mina is adamant that Mrs Scullery is bad, but she admits that she might not have been as bad as she had said.*

### Understanding a Little More About Discrimination

- Mina feels upset although she tries not to show that she cares.
- Mina felt unable to go to school because she was unhappy; she found it difficult as other children made fun of her because she was too serious. She spent a lot of time on her tree. She pretended to be strong, saying she didn't care about other children.
- People often discriminate against other people because they have a lack of understanding. The other person is different in some way.

### Group Starter Activity – Character Studies – Mina – Mina's Mum – Mrs Scullery

*N.B. Some teachers may prefer to use all three character profiles in one teaching session and share information with the rest of the class.*

#### Mina:

- **Question 1:** Mina is many things. She's a bit of a rebel but she's also quiet. She is not content to sit and listen, she wants to know why and she often questions. She likes to get things right and is not afraid of pointing out when she thinks (the suffering Mrs Scullery) is wrong about something. Because of this, the other children are afraid of her; in the playground she is a bit of a loner. Mina is shy despite her outward confidence. She is sad since the death of her father. Mina is unwilling to compromise; she wants to be right.

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- **Question 2:** Mina often thinks about having friends and did once nearly at school. Once she is home educated she is happier and convinces herself of this underneath this though we can see that actually she wants to be liked. She is not having a friend or making the effort to be friendly.
- **Question 3:** Mina is taken out of school by her mum because she is unhappy to conform to the rules and has to question everything that happens. This brings her to the teacher and her peers. So, no, she is not a coward. In many ways, she is just a child.
- **Words that describe Mina:** Lonely, sometimes sad, courageous, clever, intelligent, thoughtful, shy.

#### Mina's Mum:

- Mina's mum is kind and understanding. She is not afraid to stand up to Mrs Scullery when Mina gets into trouble at school for deliberately spoiling her (Mrs Scullery's Glibbertysnark and Claminosity – pages 155 to 171). She puts Mina's feelings first and treats Mina as an equal and trusts her to find her own way in her own time. She is not over-protective.
- Mina's mum is important to the story because without her Mina would not have been home educated. The story would be very different.

#### Mrs Scullery (real name Mrs Sculley)

- Mrs Scullery is the stereotyped version of the stressed teacher. She is often over-reactive to cope with Mina's questions – she sees Mina as challenging her authority. She is in a state of high anxiety so when Mina spoils her paper she feels like she has to bring the matter before the head teacher.
- Mrs Scullery is important to the story because it is through her inability to see Mina's personality. Later on in the book, we also see how Mina begins to see things from perspectives other than her own as she admits that perhaps Mrs Scullery wasn't always right. This, again, helps to define Mina's journey.

#### Diary of a Home-Educated Girl/Boy

This task may be ongoing for the duration of study time. Diary presentation is optional. Students should document what they have done, where they have been, who they may have met, how it has affected them, and so on. Extracts from the diary may be read out loud in class as part of sharing activities. Students should make at least three entries a week.

#### Overview Pages

##### Pages 9–83 – Class Quiz

(This activity can be done individually or in teams of two or more. Sheets should be printed on A4 paper.)

- 1) You go mad
- 2) Wonder
- 3) Inside the head
- 4) A blackbird flew down and laid an egg in his hand. He waited for the chick to hatch and then he tried to disturb it.
- 5) Falconer Road
- 6) Bananas, marmalade and chocolate
- 7) A dinosaur with wings and feathers
- 8) Heston Park
- 9) Twenty
- 10) Persephone
- 11) The King of the Underworld
- 12) Snuggle down
- 13) The birds
- 14) Fragments of human skin
- 15) A cat
- 16) A horse

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**Pages 87–171 – Anagrams**

Most of me is not me.  
 Sarcasm is forbidden.  
 Extraordinary activity.  
 Lend me your feathers.

**Pages 87–171 – Who Am I?**

- 1) Ernie Myers
- 2) Mrs Scullery
- 3) Sophie Smith
- 4) Grandpa
- 5) The monkey that grandpa promised to bring home to Mina
- 6) Grace – the old lady who talks to Mina while she is in her tree

**Pages 175–300 – What Else Do I Know?**

- 1) Blackbird – ‘Well done blackbirds you are extraordinary.’
- 2) Goldfinch – ‘A flock of Goldfinches is called a charm.’
- 3) Skylark – ‘I recall the extraordinary fact that the skylark, unlike any other bird, sings at night on the earth...’

**Section by Section**

Many of the activities in this resource will have obvious answers that make sense familiar with the book or not. For the less obvious, guidance and further suggestions. Chapters/pages are referenced for ease of use.

**Pages 9–20**

NB. Mrs Scullery is indeed a teacher in distress. Her behaviour is highlighted through this activity. It is useful to have a brief class discussion after this activity to compare and contrast her perspective other than Mina's.

**Moonlight, Wonder, Flies and Nonsense**

Most likely descriptions are: Mina – doesn't like to be told what to do / daydreams / prefers to be on her own / is bright but can be very stubborn / is not able to follow instructions  
 Mrs Scullery – shouts a lot / is bossy / impatient / likes people to do what they are told

**Some Things are Very Strange**

The moon is full and bright – it bathes the street, the spires the distant mountains. A student could infer also here that the sky is clear because the temperature outside is warm. When the sun shine on your face it makes you mad.

Plans and creative writing: Mrs Scullery insists that a plan should be made and acting without a writing plans is nonsense.

Madness and William Blake: Blake was thought to be a misfit or outsider. He was called mad. People said he was mad. Sometimes he wore no clothes. He said that he saw spirits.

**Pages 23–34****Bananas, Weirdos, a Beautiful Tree and Boring Heaven**

Suggested answers to table:

*Why does Mina spend so much time sitting in her tree?* Mina likes to spend time on her own. When she is in the tree she reads, writes and watches what happens in the street. Students should also understand from this that Mina needs time on her own. Mina likes to be alone. When she can think about things.

*Why does Mina say that the kids from St Bede's are nothing to her?* The kids from St Bede's make fun of her.

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Why does Mina think that we might be living in Heaven right now? Mina thinks that beautiful. She lists the things she finds amazing, such as the solar system and black

What does Mina really mean when she says that even the angels get fed up with upset because her dad has died and left her alone. The idea of God sitting about seems unhelpful.

### An Extraordinary Fact

You may need to access a computer room for this activity in order for students to Alternatively, this activity could be set as homework to give them more time. Res be in the form of student presentations which will then count towards Speaking a

### Pages 37–61

#### Dinosaurs, French Toast and a Journey in the Underworld

Building tension can be done in many ways. In this chapter, Almond makes special Mina can see, smell, feel and hear. Students should be aware that this is not the be built into the text by shortening or lengthening a sentence. Short sentences can shallow breathing of a person who is afraid. Longer sentences can give a more re further task to follow on from this activity could be to ask students to experiment what kind of effect it has on the reader.

### Points of View

Students should show an understanding of the difference between writing in the for this activity. They should also be aware of other aspects as well as of vocabulary

### Almond's Writing Style Under the Microscope:

The chapter begins with Mina writing in the first person. The style is casual and c this gives the impression of reading from an actual journal and further distances writing feels positive. As well as this, the directness with which Mina catalogues that she is speaking directly to the reader – it is very personal.

At the top of page 40, Almond uses bold capitals – 'TOTALLY TOTALLY DELICIOUS' appreciation of her mum's cooking. The reader has a sense of her utter enjoyment

At the bottom of page 41, Almond begins a paragraph with a single word – 'Noise' heading or title that introduces a new idea or viewpoint to the reader. Before the events, now she is telling us what she is actually thinking. Almond makes good use the running of water through pipes, the chatter of television, dogs that bark and sitting alone in her bedroom surrounded by all this noise – 'the city rumbles and accentuating her sense of isolation.

Mina makes a conscious decision to write the story of the Underworld in the third interpreted in many ways, but one of the most obvious is to suggest that she is no feelings that this episode invokes in her. This is in direct contrast to the previous

**Mina in the Underworld:** One of the things that may be noticed here is that the this gives this section of writing a timeless quality, it has been suspended from the way in which the word 'Underworld' has been written upside down – obviously it reflects being underneath. Importantly too, it lends a spooky quality to the look

Most notable perhaps is the switching of page colour and font. The blackness of darkness of the Underworld. More subtly, the white font may be seen to symbol vulnerability – a small but bright light that indicates her strength and bravery – 'She and lost'.

The switch from first to third person is very important. It enables Mina to re-tell 'she was just nine years old. She was very skinny, Some folks said she was weird' in the spotlight; it has the result of letting the reader see more clearly. The reader thoughts and feelings.

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Some of Mina's personal history is woven into the story of the Underworld. She (or Henderson) singing a song about the mines – 'Your daddy's down the mine, my daddy's down the mine' – Mina looking for her father. It also provides a backdrop to the heritage and history of the area.

Imagery: 'a pale dangling light, crumbling steps, a black cat, the thickening layer of dust that never shines'

Good use of senses are made to introduce negative ideas: 'the stench of rot and decay'

## Pages 65–66

### Thoughts about the Archaeopteryx

*Almond uses differing font styles and sizes to emphasise ideas* – the larger the font, the more important the idea is to the reader. It also reflects the importance of an idea.

*Why does Almond place this section immediately after the story of the Underworld?* To place Mina firmly back in her world. Before she began the tale of the underworld when she and her mum made clay models of an archaeopteryx; it can be interpreted as a way of grounding her. Secondly, the way Mina questions the meaning of human activity suggests a feeling of isolation. After failing to find her father in the Underworld, this is a good way of showing her return to the real world.

*This section is very short* – it could be that Almond wanted to highlight Mina's desire to return to the real world. Introducing other ideas at this point would distract the reader. Also, the idea that 'the world is full of birds' is in itself very big – so even though the amount of text is small the impact is large.

*The effects of the text* on the reader is one of overall thoughtfulness. It imbues the reader with a sense of wonderment at the world and its ways. The idea of something as simple as a bird being able to fly is a challenging one. Almond means to challenge the reader. It makes the reader think about their race, their behaviours, attitudes and values.

## Pages 69–83

### Ernie Myers, Rubbish, Dust, Metempsychosis and a Blue Car

Students should display comprehension of symbolism. They should be able to identify the symbols and be able to show an understanding of what it means.

Suggested answers to questions:

- 1) Mina says she that she used to carve words into the trunk of her tree – things like 'I love everything' / 'Mum' / 'Dad'. Almond says the words are healing over now. He says he is nearly here. This means that Mina is getting better.
- 2) Using symbolism allows Almond to talk through Mina's voice about her grief and her desire to return to the real world.

### Stories, Plot Lines and Structures

Depending on student ability, some teachers may want to split the class into groups to discuss ideas and discuss plot structure.

An explanation:

In the preceding chapter (including 'Thoughts About the Archaeopteryx'), Mina discusses her death and God. She thinks about her dad and about Mr Myers who has recently died and talks about the many different ways in which people understand the afterlife. She says 'the universe is universe after universe – a flock of universes flying through time'.

Almond places this chapter before Ernie Myers, Rubbish, Dust, Metempsychosis and a Blue Car to show that she believes there may be an afterlife. In the next chapter, when she looks for her father in Heston Park, the reader is therefore more sympathetic to Mina's ideas.

### Fiction, Fact or Myth

Some of the things a student may identify here are: transmigration – Plato – Hinduism – metempsychosis – the Himalayas – astral travelling.

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**Pages 87–98****Sprouts, Sarcasm and the Mysteries of Time**

Depending on your students' age and ability, you may need to let them research or alternatively plan for access to a computer room or the school library.

**Pages 103–115****Persephone, Daftness and Absolutely Nothing**

Students should use various strategies to extract information about this character from the information provided and will also take note of what Almond says about Persephone, referencing against any other texts they may have read about her.

**What Does the Author Mean?**

Suggested interpretations:

- 1) I wish I was still young – I am still like you inside.
- 2) Dreams come and go – we have dreams and then we forget about them but they are always there.
- 3) We're not daft really.

**Pages 119–132****Fig Rolls, Pee, Spit, Sweat and all the Words for Joy**

Here, students should demonstrate a clear understanding of sentence structure, using the information without losing the sentence meaning.

**Some Rather Interesting Questions**

*Note: this activity overlaps to cover AF2 and AF3.*

Answers to questions:

- 1) Sophie and Mina make friends because they are both different from the rest of the class and awkward. (More-experienced students may like to explore the issues of being different; identify; there being a certain safety in numbers.)
- 2) Mina's pee joins the water cycle – it flushes down the drain and ends up in the ground, then the air and comes back down again as rain. Water is moving about all the time; the possibilities are endless.
- 3) The human body is made up of 65% water.
- 4) 35%
- 5) This word explains that bird's bones are full of air or they have air cavities in them light enough to fly.
- 6) Mina's mum says this because she is keen for Mina to make a friend. She is encouraging her to move in to Mr Myers' house.

**Pages 137–151****Grandpa, Missing Monkeys and Owls**

In this activity, students should try to create a different outcome for Mina. They should ensure that the reader understands that Mina's grandfather has come home after sailing. They should say what happens when he comes home.

**Writing for Effect**

Suggested answers:

- 1) Mina refers to Whisper the cat as her 'familiar little friend' – having a familiar connection to witchcraft.
- 2) Almond talks about owls and moonlight and black cats – it makes the reader feel that Mina's mum even says that Grandpa's house is spooky.
- 3) This piece of writing is subjective and also offers scope for AF W4, but it shows how the reader understands how to create atmosphere through the relevant choice of language.

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**Pages 155–171****SATS Day, Glibbertysnark and Claminosity**

Suggested answers:

- 1) Mrs Scullery makes the students feel anxious and upset. Some of the students were gripping the edges of their table so hard their knuckles showed white.
- 2) Mrs Scullery looked like she's spent the night seeing ghosts. Everything was over the place and her lipstick had missed her mouth, her eyes were red and done up wrong.

**Almond Asks Questions**

Mina is questioning the validity of SATS – she uses famous authors like Shakespeare to come they managed to write fantastic pieces without doing SATS or without some plan or making them make plans?

Mina is frustrated – when she writes her nonsense pages she is not being purposeful, nobody understands her and she cannot comprehend the necessity of SATS – why do everyone get so worked up about them? Why does Mrs Scullery behave as if she doesn't conform?

**Pages 175–187****Eggs, Chicks, a Belly and Poems**

Students should be able to explain the writer's use of language. They should show how Almond presents Mina, not only by the knowledge that she has but by the words she uses, like blackbirds as being extraordinary. She tells the blackbirds that they have created her.

In this way, he shows the reader that Mina is very thoughtful. She takes nothing for granted in a way that is different from a lot of other children her age.

By using the first person, he creates the sense of Mina personally telling us her story, drawing the reader into Mina's world. In this way, we feel very close to Mina.

Students should also comment on Almond's varying use of font styles – upper case letters to place the stress on a particular viewpoint or to state something she feels very strongly about. The different fonts may also be seen as representative of Mina's ever-changing feelings, as well as her nature and her wish to challenge.

**Now You Try**

This is basically a piece of creative writing. It is designed to show that the student understands the concept of writing styles. You may wish to ask them to rewrite this piece in another style. Once they get the idea about simply changing words, sentence length, etc. it will be easier to do the pieces more thoroughly.

**Pages 191–201****Spaghetti Pomodoro and a Dream**

Answers to table:

- 1) When Mina sits in her tree, she pretends she is in her own world, a world where she is safe. When she climbs down she is coming out of this dream world.
- 2) The silver cord keeps her safe. It is her way of getting home, of not getting lost.
- 3) Spaghetti pomodoro makes Mina feel ordinary again. Because it is an Italian food, it makes her think about travelling. This is how Mina gets to have her dream.

**Missing Punctuation**

My name is Mina. People sometimes think that I am weird. I once said I ought to have a de-strangification operation. I don't think she was nice. Sadly I don't see her now I have left. I sit in my tree and dream. Occasionally people go past and see me. One other day a nice lady called Grace saw me, she spoke to me, she had been in her dream. I often have dreams. I had one the other day. I didn't see any people in it though, just places.

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**Pages 205–245****The Story of Corinthian Ave**

- 1) A pupil referral unit. Ms Palaver and Mr Tench think it will benefit Mina to go.
- 2) Karl is kind and clever. 'He pretended to flinch as I stepped out. He put his hand to his forehead and laughed and he grinned.' (There are of course many more instances throughout the story of qualities with which Karl is endowed – this one shows both.)
- 3) Mina is unhappy and unsure of herself.
- 4) Malcolm ignores Mina's unfriendly attitude and treats her as an equal. He says she is because he understands that she is feeling nervous.
- 5) Mina is really happy to see her dad. She writes down on a piece of paper that she is glad.
- 6) They say things like, 'it's filled with possibilities and it's empty now, but one day it will be filled with something marvellous'. This shows that they understand how she is feeling and have to write if she doesn't want to. At Corinthian Avenue, they respect each other.
- 7) Mina remembers Colin Pope after she thinks about what her mum might have said. She realises that when she is not around, her mum might have a life of her own and that she should be with him that day, freed from her weird daughter?

**Pages 247–249****A Story Without Words**

This is a group activity and covers Speaking and Listening as well as AF W1.

**A Story With Words**

Is a follow on from the previous activity, so the teacher may well need to plan for this activity sheet.

**Pages 253–264****Chicks, a Lethal Cat and Limplessness**

- 1) When Sophie visits Mina it is because she wants to show her that her leg is not a problem after her operation. She also wants to say hello and to tell Mina that she is still her friend. Sophie lives at the end of the street; this shows that Sophie likes Mina enough to risk her life. (Sophie is a cat at the end of the street; this shows that Sophie likes Mina enough to risk her life.)
- 2) Sophie would probably like Mina to come back to school. She tells Mina that she is a cat (Sophie is a cat at the end of the street) has said she would like her to come back too. Did Mrs Sculley say anything? Would she tell Mina? Is this Mrs Sculley's way of saying sorry?
- 3) Mina is pulled two ways. On the one hand, she wants to be like the other kids. On the other, she likes her life as it is. She sees a value in being able to do what she wants.
- 4) This makes a good ending because it comes just as Mina herself is wondering if she should go back to school. It also symbolises the approaching end of Mina's journey. Mina has been struggling with her dad's death and had withdrawn from the real world.

**The Real Mrs Sculley**

The real Mrs Sculley (Sculley) is probably somewhere between the two. At the beginning of the story, she paints a very grim picture of her. She shouts endlessly and is mean and sarcastic. But as the story continues, we catch small glimpses of her that casts a certain amount of doubt on her. Mrs Sculley says at one point that she may have exaggerated a little where Mrs Sculley is concerned.

The reason Mina calls Mrs Sculley, Mrs Sculley, is obvious enough. Sculley = kit. It's a bit of a thing to do, as far as Mina is concerned, as it lets her get a bit of her own back.

**Pages 287–300****A Dream of Horses**

- 1) The mythical beasts in Mina's dream symbolise souls from the afterlife. Early on, she sees her dad as a horse – strong and good looking. When the beasts tell her to wake up, she should wake up from her grief.

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- 2) The dream comes at the beginning of the chapter so that she might wake up to complete her journey and so the story ends.
- 3) The family living in Mr Myers' house are in trouble. It has to be something like her own problems – not being able to make friends. Because she feels sorry for now lives there, she makes herself go and say hello to him.
- 4) Whenever Mina finds something difficult, she writes in the third person – the problem and she can even pretend it's not really happening to her.

### The Nature of Bravery

Suggestions:

Mina shows different kinds of bravery throughout the book – she is not afraid of Palaver. She shows bravery when she goes to Corinthian Avenue because she is scared. At the end of the book, she is brave when she goes to say hello to Michael.

### What Makes a Good Climax

Throughout the book, it has been evident that Mina does not fit into the normal world. She found it very difficult to make friends. Her experiences at school have made her feel isolated. In the last chapter, we hear her struggling to pluck up the courage to go over and say hello to Michael living in Mr Myers' old house, and so when she finally does we know that she has been brave.

Some suggested quotes:

- **On page 15:** we are told that one of the nicknames she has at school is 'abandoned' which she starts after she gets in trouble one day and Mrs Scullery says it to her in front of the class.
- **On page 39:** one of the boys in Mina's class complains that she is being weird.
- **On page 69:** Mina tells us that she has carved the words 'Mina is lonely' into the wall of her room.
- **On pages 87/88:** Mina's mum talks to Mina about needing friends.
- **On page 121:** Sophie Smith asks Mina why she is so strange.
- **On page 259:** after Sophie Smith leaves, Mina says she wants to jump down and say hello to her and tell her she thinks she's nice too, but in the end she doesn't have the courage.
- **In the last chapter:** we hear Mina arguing with herself to go and say hello to Michael.

### One Last Extraordinary Activity

- 1) Almond retells this piece of the story because it plays a part in the history of the book. It is the moment when he first meets Mina after moving in to Falconers Road. By putting it at the beginning of *My Name Is Mina*, he links the books together.
- 2) Almond places it at the end because it is the end of Mina's journey. Students can discuss that it is also what enables the next story to be told in the way that it is. Without this, Mina would not be able to make friends, Michael would have had a different adventure and so *My Name Is Mina* would not have qualified as a prequel.

### Final Tasks:

- 1) To produce a journalistic style article about David Almond, it should include his name, where he lives, marital status, if he has always been an author, and so on. It should be written in a way that is interesting and engaging.
- 2) Write a review of *My Name is Mina*. Students should discuss storyline and characters. They should comment on suitability for age and give it a star rating of 1-5.
- 3) This task asks for a complete short story to be written. The title is 'Mina in the Underworld' which is the extract from the book but should have a different ending. Students should write about the events in the story towards the ending they choose. The story should begin with Mina's crumbling steps.
- 4) School play:
  - Produce a list of characters for a two-act play based upon the story they have read in the Underworld'.
  - Plan carefully where each act begins and ends.
  - Create scenes for both acts.
  - Write one full scene – this is to include dialogue and stage directions.

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