

## **FINN'S EPIC FAILS BY PHIL EARLE, ILLUSTRATED BY AL MURPHY** **EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE PACK - 4X LESSON PLANS AND IDEAS**

Recommended for ages 10+

Lessons intended for use in Year 6 and Year 7

### **Explore themes of:**

**Starting secondary school:** Think about how Finn felt when he started secondary school. Write down questions you would like to ask current Year 7 students and discuss the mix of emotions you might feel about moving to a new school.

**Surviving Year 7 and helping others:** Follow Finn as he tries to survive his first year. Create your own 'Year 7 Survival Guide' with practical advice to help younger students feel more confident in their first year of secondary school.

**Online safety:** Notice what happens when Finn receives lots of messages. Sort a range of safe strategies to decide the best and most sensible choices to make and identify when it is important to ignore, block or ask an adult for help.

**Turning funny fails into stories:** Finn writes about his epic mistakes in his 'not-a-diary'. Write your own short, funny story about a personal fail and show how something embarrassing can become something to laugh about and learn from.

**Subjects:** • English • Computing • PSHE

### **ABOUT THE BOOK**

*Finn just wants to survive Year 7, but his life is destined to be a series of epic fails. It's only Tuesday and his scheming, unicorn-obsessed little sister has already stuck a horn to his head (with superglue) and his properly evil older brother has wedged him 278 times. And don't even ask what happened at swimming, in front of the WHOLE CLASS.*

*At least he has best friends Laszlo (a hopeless romantic) and Google (ask her anything) by his side as he attempts to turn failure into victory in his very own book that is definitely not a diary.*

**A hilarious new series by award-winning author Phil Earle which introduces Finn N. O. Hope and his life of epic failure! Perfect for readers of Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Loki and Tom Gates.**

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR - PHIL EARLE**

Phil Earle is the best-selling, award-winning author of more than twenty-five books for children and teenagers, including *When the Sky Falls*, which won both the British Book Award for Children's Fiction Book of the Year and the Books Are My Bag Readers Award for Children's Fiction, as well as being shortlisted for the prestigious Carnegie Medal.

### **ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR - AL MURPHY**

Al Murphy is an illustrator known for his distinctive, humorous artwork in children's books and commercial projects. He has illustrated a range of picture books and collaborated with various authors. In addition to his work in children's publishing, Murphy's illustrations have appeared in advertising, editorial and design projects for clients such as The Guardian, The Times and The New York Times. His style is characterised by bold lines, playful characters and a sense of wit that appeals to both children and adults.

# CONTENTS

## PRE-READING: FRONT COVER AND INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

### Transition to Secondary School (Year 6 → Year 7)

#### **Year Group Guidance: Which lesson should I choose?**

This transition sequence includes two lessons, designed for different year groups:

If you are in a primary school teaching Year 6, use Lesson 1

(Year 6 students explore their worries and questions about starting secondary school.)

If you are in a secondary school teaching Year 7, use Lesson 2

(Year 7 students reflect on their experiences and create advice to support Year 6 students.)

## **LESSON 1 (YEAR 6):**

### **EXTRACT 1: SURVIVING YEAR 7 (from Chapter TWO: pages 16-17) AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

ACTIVITY 1: ASK A YEAR 7!

ACTIVITY SHEET 1: MY TOP THREE QUESTIONS

Objectives: Recognise and express feelings about transitioning to secondary school, including both worries and excitements; generate thoughtful questions to learn from their peers' own experiences.

## **LESSON 2 (YEAR 7):**

### **EXTRACT 2: UNDER THE MICROSCOPE (from Chapter TWO: pages 16-17) AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

ACTIVITY 2: SURVIVE AND THRIVE

ACTIVITY SHEET 2: MY SURVIVAL GUIDE

Objectives: Identify common worries about starting secondary school and how to manage them; create a survival guide containing their advice that can be used by Year 6 to support their transition.

The following two lessons are suitable for teaching either in Year 6 or in Year 7:

## **LESSON 3:**

### **EXTRACT 3A: FINLEYCORN (from CHAPTER TWELVE: pages 91-92); EXTRACT 3B: MESSAGE MADNESS (from CHAPTER THIRTEEN: pages 103-104) AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

ACTIVITY 3: THINK TWICE

ACTIVITY SHEET 3: CYBER CHOICES

Objectives: Describe how receiving unkind or overwhelming messages can affect someone; explore different ways to respond to cyberbullying, including safe, responsible and practical strategies.

## **LESSON 4:**

### **EXTRACT 4: THE SINGLE GREATEST FAIL OF MY LIFE (from CHAPTER ONE: pages 7-10) AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

ACTIVITY 4: FUNNY FAILS

ACTIVITY SHEET 4: FAIL STORY PLANNING TEMPLATE

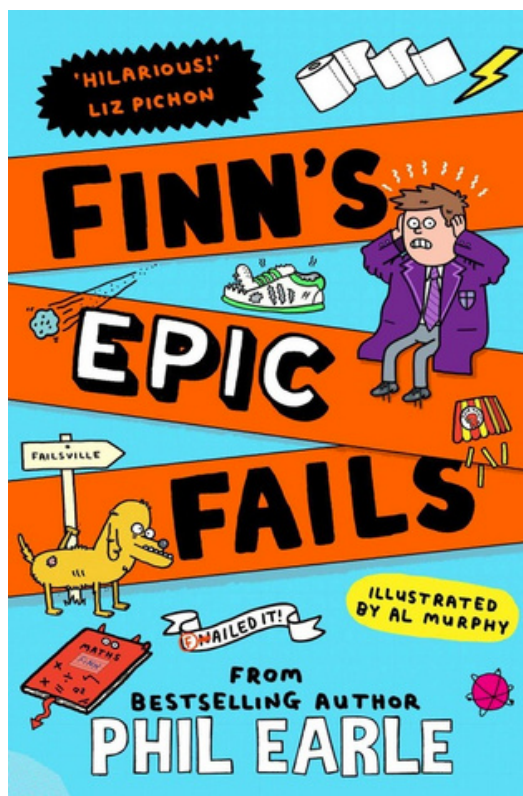
Objectives: Describe a personal fail from their own experiences, recognising what made it funny; plan and write a story using humour and exaggeration to make it entertaining, in a similar style to Finn.

## POST-READING: ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS

## NATIONAL CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES (KEY STAGE 2/3)



## PRE-READING: FRONT COVER AND INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS



### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the very first thing you notice when you look at the cover?
2. Does the cover make you want to read the book? Why or why not?
3. The title of the book is *Finn's Epic Fails*. What do you think 'epic' means here? What kinds of 'fails' do you predict Finn might have in the story?
4. The cover shows a boy (probably Finn). Look closely at his face and body language. What do you think he is feeling right now? How old do you think he might be?
5. On the cover you can see a dog, a chewed-up trainer, a sign pointing to 'Failsville', a toilet roll and a lightning flash. How do you think all of these might be connected?
6. What clues on the cover tell you this story could also be about Finn's school life?
7. Who is the author of this book (Phil Earle)? Have you read any of their other books, like *When the Sky Falls*, *Demolition Dad* or *Northern Soul* (for older readers)? If not, can you find out more about them?
8. Can you find the name of the illustrator on the front or back cover? (*Al Murphy*) What do you notice or like about their artwork?
9. Now read the blurb on the back of the book. What new information does it give you about the story?
10. After looking at the cover and reading the blurb, what questions do you have? Make a list and see if you can answer them as you read.

## **LESSON 1 (FOR YEAR 6 STUDENTS)**

### **EXTRACT 1: SURVIVING YEAR 7(FROM CHAPTER TWO: PAGES 16-17)**

*I know you probably think I'm making it up, or exaggerating, but I promise you, stuff like this happens to me ALL THE TIME. It's like I'm cursed, like the entire world is waiting for me to fall on my face again and again, so they can video it and slap it all over the internet.*

*It seems to be getting worse now I'm not protected by that beautiful bubble we call junior school.*

*I need help, guidance. I need someone out there, ANYONE, to explain to me how I'm meant to SURVIVE year seven when:*

- *my family are the BIGGEST, most UNSTABLE atomic bomb,*
- *my teachers are UNIVERSALLY cast from the scariest movie in Hollywood,*
- *year seven has put me under the biggest microscope known to man.*

*I don't even want much, you know?*

*I'm not greedy. I don't want to be the most popular, the best- looking, the sharpest-shooter*

*or even the biggest brain. According to someone close to me (AKA my tormentor/ brother Jonah) I already LIVE with that person (the bighead).*

*All I wanted was to get through life unscathed. Anonymity? I'd take it. Better that than be known for ALL the WRONG reasons.*

*But the problem is, it doesn't work like that for me. The SECOND I open my eyes . . . WHAM, I am UP TO MY NECK in FAILS. It doesn't look or feel pretty, and as for the smell?*

*Well, you wouldn't bottle it and give it to someone for Christmas, believe me.*

*So things need to change. The scales need rebalancing, because if I'm going to survive year seven I'm going to need more 'Finn's Wins' and WAY LESS 'Finn's Fails'. (See? SEE? I am witty, and sharp. I can do this. PLEASE, let me do this.)*

*So I'm starting here, with this . . . whatever it is. IT IS NOT a diary by the way.*

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How do you think Finn feels about secondary school? Which words or phrases show this?
2. In what ways is this different from his time at junior school?
3. He tells us that his life is like he is 'cursed'. Have you ever felt similar to this because things kept going wrong?
4. What does Finn compare his family to? Why do you think he chooses that way to describe them?
5. Finn also says that Year 7 has 'put him under the biggest microscope known to man'. This is a metaphor. What do you think he actually means by this?
6. From the extract, who does Finn say frustrates him the most?
7. Do you think Finn's family or teachers understand how stressed he feels? Why/why not?
8. Why would he want to make it clear that his book isn't a diary?
9. Could Finn start to feel differently about Year 7 after a few weeks as he settles in?

## **ACTIVITY 1: ASK A YEAR 7!**

**Before You Start:** To get the most out of this lesson, please make arrangements in advance with your local secondary school to involve their Year 7 students in responding to your class's questions.

- Begin the lesson by reading the provided extract in which Finn candidly describes his anxieties about surviving Year 7, a place he says is 'designed for maximum humiliation and despair.' Use the discussion questions to guide students in exploring Finn's fears, unpacking why he feels this way and considering his concerns about how he will manage and get through the year.
- On the board, create two headings: 'Things I'm Excited About in Year 7' and 'Things I'm Worried About in Year 7,' then give each student two sticky notes to record their thoughts.
- Ask students to write one thing they are excited about on one note and one thing they are worried about on the other, reassuring them that all responses will remain anonymous. Collect the notes and place them under the appropriate headings on the board. Read a selection aloud to highlight common themes, showing students that many of their peers share similar feelings and concerns.
- Some students might express worries such as feeling nervous about making new friends, worrying about getting lost in a bigger school, fearing that lessons will be harder or imagining that older students might be intimidating. Others may share excitement about new subjects, clubs or meeting new people, highlighting the mix of anticipation and anxiety that often comes with starting secondary school.
- Acknowledge that having mixed feelings is completely normal and that everyone experiences a combination of emotions when facing a big change.
- Encourage students to think about the successful transitions they have already experienced throughout their school life, from starting their first year to moving up each subsequent year. Emphasise how these experiences have helped them develop new skills, build confidence and grow in resilience, equipping them to handle the next step into secondary school.
- Explain that they will naturally have many questions about secondary school and that asking questions is a positive way to prepare, reduce worries and feel more confident.
- Tell students that the best people to answer their questions are the Year 7 students themselves, as they have recently gone through the transition and can provide honest, practical advice. Let students know that you have arranged for Year 7 students at your local secondary school to respond to their questions. This could be via a video call, written responses, or a short visit to your classroom, depending on what is most practical.
- Give each student a copy of the provided activity sheet. Ask them to record one thing they are excited about and one thing they are worried about, reflecting on their earlier discussions. Next, have them write their top three questions they would like to ask Year 7 students about life in secondary school. Support students by providing them with a list of question words, such as who, what, where, when, why and how, to help them frame their questions clearly. Once these have been generated, share them with the Year 7 students, so that the class can benefit from their first-hand experiences, advice and insights.



# LESSON 2 (for Year 7 students)

## EXTRACT 2: UNDER THE MICROSCOPE (FROM CHAPTER TWO: PAGES 16-17)

*I know you probably think I'm making it up, or exaggerating, but I promise you, stuff like this happens to me ALL THE TIME. It's like I'm cursed, like the entire world is waiting for me to fall on my face again and again, so they can video it and slap it all over the internet.*

*It seems to be getting worse now I'm not protected by that beautiful bubble we call junior school.*

*I need help, guidance. I need someone out there, ANYONE, to explain to me how I'm meant to SURVIVE year seven when:*

- *my family are the BIGGEST, most UNSTABLE atomic bomb,*
- *my teachers are UNIVERSALLY cast from the scariest movie in Hollywood,*
- *year seven has put me under the biggest microscope known to man.*

*I don't even want much, you know?*

*I'm not greedy. I don't want to be the most popular, the best-looking, the sharpest-shooter or even the biggest brain. According to someone close to me (AKA my tormentor/ brother Jonah) I already LIVE with that person (the bighead).*

*All I wanted was to get through life unscathed. Anonymity? I'd take it. Better that than be known for ALL the WRONG reasons.*

*But the problem is, it doesn't work like that for me. The SECOND I open my eyes . . . WHAM, I am UP TO MY NECK in FAILS. It doesn't look or feel pretty, and as for the smell?*

*Well, you wouldn't bottle it and give it to someone for Christmas, believe me.*

*So things need to change. The scales need rebalancing, because if I'm going to survive year seven I'm going to need more 'Finn's Wins' and WAY LESS 'Finn's Fails'. (See? SEE? I am witty, and sharp. I can do this. PLEASE, let me do this.)*

*So I'm starting here, with this . . . whatever it is. IT IS NOT a diary by the way.*

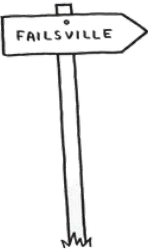


### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you think Finn feels about secondary school? Which words or phrases show this?
2. In what ways is this different from his time at junior school?
3. He tells us that his life is like he is 'cursed'. Have you ever felt similar to this because things kept going wrong?
4. What does Finn compare his family to? Why do you think he chooses that way to describe them?
5. Finn also says that Year 7 has 'put him under the biggest microscope known to man'. This is a metaphor. What do you think he actually means by this?
6. From the extract, who does Finn say frustrates him the most?
7. Do you think Finn's family or teachers understand how stressed he feels? Why or why not?
8. Why would he want to make it clear that his book isn't a diary?
9. Could Finn start to feel differently about Year 7 after a few weeks as he settles in?
10. If you were giving tips to someone like Finn on how to survive Year 7, what would you say?

## ACTIVITY 2: SURVIVE AND THRIVE

- Begin the lesson by reading the provided extract in which Finn candidly describes his anxieties about surviving Year 7, a place he says is 'designed for maximum humiliation and despair'. Use the discussion questions to explore his worries, draw parallels with the students' own feelings about starting secondary school and consider how their experiences compare with his expectations.
- Ask students to close their eyes briefly and think back to their final weeks of Year 6. Invite them to focus on how they felt about leaving primary school and starting somewhere new.
- Next, prompt students to reflect on their first day or first week in secondary school and consider how those feelings may have changed since then.
- Write two clear headings on the board: 'What I Worried About Before Starting Secondary School' and 'What I Know Now'. Provide each student with a sticky note and request that they write down one worry they had before starting secondary school. Reassure them that their response will remain anonymous.
- Collect the sticky notes and place them under the first heading. Read some aloud to demonstrate that many students shared the same fears. Discuss whether these worries actually happened, how students coped and what helped them adjust. Record key reflections under the 'What I Know Now' heading to highlight how students' understanding and confidence have grown.
- Explain that Year 6 students often feel nervous and may not always ask adults the questions they really want answered about secondary school. Point out that Year 7 students, having already experienced the transition, are experts and the best people to provide honest and realistic advice. Introduce the task by stating that today students will help younger children by creating a 'survival guide' for Year 6 students.
- Create a list of categories on the board that could be included in the survival guide, such as lessons, homework, friendships, teachers, organisation and any others the students suggest. Discuss each category and add practical advice and ideas to the board so that they can use them during their task.
- Provide students with a model structure for their survival guides, including key sections to organise their ideas clearly. Suggested sections could include a cover page, a welcome message, top tips, myth versus reality, what I wish I had known, a school map, timetable tips, a list of important people to know such as the headteacher, form tutor and heads of year and an encouraging message to end.
- Using a blank piece of paper or the provided activity sheet with a template, demonstrate how to fold it along the lines into thirds to create three panels. Explain that using both sides produces six sections, similar to a leaflet, which can be used to organise the survival guide.
- Following this, allow students time to plan and begin writing their survival guides. Encourage students to refer back to the categories, advice on the board and the model structure to organise their ideas. Remind students that their guides should be sensible and supportive. Encourage them to personalise each section with drawings, examples or tips from their own experiences. Circulate around the room to answer questions and offer suggestions. To finish, set aside a few minutes for students to share their guides with a partner or small group. These could then be given to students in feeder primary schools to help them understand what to expect, feel more confident and benefit from real advice.

# FINN'S EPIC FAILS ACTIVITY SHEET: MY SURVIVAL GUIDE

		
---	---	---

# LESSON 3

## EXTRACT 3A: FINLEYCORN (FROM CHAPTER TWELVE: PAGES 91-92)

Anyway, the poster of me was stuck on top of his frame, a single piece of slightly creased white A4 paper, with a banner at the top, which read HAVE YOU SEEN THIS POKÉMON???

Underneath there was a photo, slightly blurred, but still PAINFULLY clear, of me, with an empty toilet roll superglued to my forehead and a face FULL of multicoloured scribble.

In the photo I wore an expression of pure undiluted anger, identical to the one now, when I realized what was going on, and who was responsible.

‘JONAAAAAH!’ I yelled, terrifying everyone in the corridor, including a couple of burly year ten rugby players. Ripping the poster down before anyone else saw, I read what he had written underneath.

‘FINLEYCORN has been spotted roaming the corridors of our school, but BEWARE, he may be in disguise. Approach with caution. Can bite when provoked, or fart when under pressure. If spotted, text FINLEYCORN to this number.’

I stared at the phone number. It looked familiar. I knew it but couldn’t place it . . . until it hit me. The number on the poster was MINE.

## EXTRACT 3B: MESSAGE MADNESS (FROM CHAPTER THIRTEEN: PAGES 103-104)

As I collected my phone from Mr Ranter at the end of the day, I intended to numb my humiliation by watching videos all the way home, except I couldn’t even do that in peace. Because as soon as I sat on the bus and turned it on, my phone started buzzing again. And buzzing. And buzzing. If I’d put it on the floor at the back of the top deck of the bus, it would have vibrated its way to the front faster than an Olympic sprinter.

My cheeks reddened, my throat tightened. Oh no, I thought, I wasn’t going to cry, was I?

Do that, and I’d become the WORLD’S biggest loser rather than just the school’s. But as I teetered on the edge, Laszlo, LASZLO, pulled me back, grabbing my phone and tucking it under his armpit so I couldn’t see it flash, or hear it vibrate.

‘Forget about it, matey,’ he said. ‘It’s Friday. By Monday morning they’ll have forgotten about it. It’ll be someone else’s turn.’

He patted me on the shoulder and I hoped he was right. A big chunk of me doubted it somehow, but him saying it was enough. He would have found the whole thing funny, HILARIOUS knowing him, but at the same time, he and Google weren’t pointing at me, or laughing, or making horse/ unicorn gags like ‘Hey, Finn, why the long face?’

All they did was change the subject and make plans for us to mess about over the weekend.

Laszlo didn’t give me my phone till we went our separate ways for home. I looked at the screen, couldn’t help it. It said, almost mockingly, YOU HAVE 489 NEW MESSAGES.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What happens in the first extract that causes Finn to become the centre of attention at school?
2. Who is responsible for taking the photograph that appears on the poster?
3. When the other students see the image, how do they respond? What does their reaction suggest about how people behave in groups?
4. According to the poster, what are people encouraged or instructed to do?
5. Why might this make the situation more humiliating for Finn?
6. How does Finn react when he realises that the phone number on the poster belongs to him?
7. How many messages does Finn receive about the ‘FINLEYCORN’ incident?
8. What does this show us about how quickly information can spread once it is shared digitally?
9. To what extent do you think Finn is being bullied in this extract? Would you say this behaviour is cyberbullying rather than a joke? Why or why not? Explain your answer in your own words.
10. If you were Finn, how would you feel receiving this large number of messages and what would you do first to protect yourself?

## ACTIVITY 3: THINK TWICE

- Start the lesson by playing a familiar text message notification sound for the class. Ask students if they recognise it immediately and encourage them to share their observations. Do they think the sound is coming from a real phone, perhaps theirs or even yours?
- Gradually increase the speed and frequency of the notifications so that it feels like hundreds of messages are arriving at once.
- Pause and discuss with the class: How does it feel when the sound keeps going off? Some might initially think that receiving lots of messages means someone is very popular. Use this moment to explain that, in reality, this kind of attention can feel overwhelming, stressful and even frightening.
- Introduce the story by explaining that Finn experiences exactly this kind of situation. Read the two provided extracts where he is receiving a huge number of messages. Use the discussion questions to explore how he reacts emotionally and what impact this flood of messages has on him.
- Highlight how the situation escalates quickly, with more people joining in, until Finn is faced with nearly 500 messages.
- Explain that this behaviour can be described as cyberbullying, which is defined as ‘the practice of bullying a person by sending messages or posting social media content of an intimidating, mocking or threatening nature.’
- Write this on the board and ask students to point out the parts that show how it meets the definition of cyberbullying, so they clearly understand the behaviour, its impact and why it is considered harmful.
- Following this, relate the incident to the real-life experiences of teenagers, many of whom face peer pressure, constant notifications or viral content that spreads rapidly, making it easy for unkind messages to reach large numbers of people. Say that many of those joining in might not even realise the effect of their actions, so it is important for students to think carefully about the choices they make.
- Talk about how even something intended as a joke among friends can become bullying when it spreads and the combination of social media and mobile phones can make these situations feel inescapable.
- Encourage students to think about what it might feel like to be in his shoes and how they would respond if it happened to them.
- Recap a range of strategies that students can use if they find themselves in a situation like Finn’s. These could include: speaking to a trusted adult, saving evidence of the messages, muting, blocking or reporting senders, taking breaks from their phone and remembering that the bullying is not their fault.
- Finish the lesson with the ‘Cyber Choices’ activity using the provided activity sheet. Students read a list of actions Finn could take and sort them into Helpful or Unhelpful choices. Afterwards, encourage students to share their decisions with the class and explain their reasoning, fostering discussion about safe, responsible ways to respond in situations like this.

# ACTIVITY SHEET: CYBER CHOICES

Imagine you are Finn and your phone is receiving hundreds of unkind messages after the 'Finleycorn' incident. Read the list of possible actions below. Sort each one into the correct column: Helpful Choices or Unhelpful Choices.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS	HELPFUL CHOICES	UNHELPFUL CHOICES	POSSIBLE ACTIONS
Reply angrily to the messages			Pretend everything is fine but keep my anger bottled up inside
Report the messages to the school			Tell a teacher, parent or trusted adult
Threaten someone in return			Post about the situation publicly on social media
Block the users sending messages			Ignore some messages and take a break from my phone
Don't tell anyone and try to deal with it alone			Save evidence of the messages (screenshots, logs)
Blame yourself for the situation			Join in with the jokes to fit in with peers
Stay calm and don't retaliate online			Forget social media and do something I enjoy

After finishing, discuss your choices with a partner or the class and explain your reasons for each one.

# LESSON 4

## EXTRACT 4: THE SINGLE GREATEST FAIL OF MY LIFE

(from CHAPTER ONE: pages 7-10)

*The single greatest FAIL of my life (one of MILLIONS, believe me) started with a slow handclap from the side of the swimming pool. It didn't just come from my classmates, who sat there, shivering, but from Mr Riley, AKA Rocky, Head of PE/torturer- in-chief.*

*'Finley Hope,' he bellowed, so loudly that the water rippled around me in fear, 'this is your last chance. Come back up again without that brick and I'll fail not just you, but every member of this class. And when you have to do the test again, I'll have you do it down the local sewage plant. There's a lovely pool there with every one of your names written all over it.'*

*As motivational speeches went, it wasn't quite what I'd hoped for, but with thirty-one pairs of eyes boring holes into me, I took a deep breath and dived, the weight of Dad's appalling pyjamas pulling me towards the bottom like an anchor.*

*If I hadn't been under so much pressure, I would've still been raging about why I was wearing pyjamas in the first place. I mean, who in the history of the universe has ever got out of bed and fallen straight into a swimming pool? Especially one as rank as this one. Half a dozen manky plasters had floated by me, and I swear blind I accidentally swallowed an entire toenail last time I dived for the stupid brick. Even the pyjamas I had on were ridiculous, as there was NO WAY I was wearing my own in front of everyone.*

*Like 99.9% of all my clothes, my 'jamas are handed down from my evil (more on that later) big brother, Jonah. And because I'm smaller than he is, I have to wear his 'jamas from when he was nine, WHICH ARE COVERED IN*

*cute dinosaurs.*

*'I can't wear those,' I'd moaned to Dad.*

*'You'll have to,' chipped in Jonah (helpfully).*

*'I'd rather wear Maisie's,' even though this was an impossibility. Maisie is my little, sinister, sis, and is five.*

*Still, her unicorn nightie is cooler than Jonah's pterodactyl abominations.*

*'I don't see what else we can do,' Dad said. 'I can't buy new ones just for you to sink in them.'*

*Firstly, this didn't feel massively supportive, and secondly, DID HE WANT ME BULLIED FOR THE REST OF MY DAYS??!*

*The answer, given that I was now sinking in HIS nightwear, was a clear and emphatic YES. Lord, they were horrible, all burgundy and brown swirls in a material so dense that once wet, they felt like lead. The only wardrobe they belonged in was a deep-sea diver's.*

*He'd only worn them once, when he had to go into hospital. I've no idea what the operation was for as whenever I asked, he turned ALL the shades of red IMAGINABLE, so it must have been something NASTY and frankly I don't even want to think about it.*

*Anyway, with the material finally pulling me to the depths of Davy Jones's locker, I managed, FINALLY, to rescue the brick and somehow thrashed my way back to the surface, where I was greeted by the most sarcastic cheers.*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What is your first impression of Finn from this extract? Does he seem funny, confident, clumsy or something else? Which parts of the text help you form that impression?
2. What exactly happens in his 'single greatest fail'? Describe it step by step. Where does it happen?
3. Which part of Finn's fail makes you laugh the most and why? How does Finn's sense of humour make the story more entertaining?
4. Why do we often find fails funnier when we're not the ones experiencing them?
5. Are there any parts of his fail that are relatable because they could happen to anyone?
6. How do Finn's thoughts about his fail reveal how he sees himself?
7. Think about your own biggest fail. What happened and how would you describe it?
8. Looking back, was your fail funny at the time?
9. Did you learn anything from your fail? What, if anything, did it teach you about yourself, others or trying again?
10. Can a fail ever be a good thing?

## **ACTIVITY 4: FUNNY FAILS**

- Start the lesson by reading the provided extract or opening chapter aloud to the class, where Finn recounts his 'single greatest fail' at the swimming pool. Encourage students to listen carefully to his words, imagining the scene and picturing Finn's reactions as the events unfold.
- After reading the extract, lead a discussion about Finn's fail and why it is funny. Ask students to describe what happened in the story and what made the situation so unexpected or silly.
- Highlight that although Finn feels embarrassed by his fail, the story is light-hearted and entertaining and that mistakes can be humorous when shared in the right way.
- Next, ask the students to think about small, everyday moments from their own lives when something went wrong, but in a way that was funny, unexpected, or slightly embarrassing. Have them share these moments with a partner, discussing what made the situations amusing and considering how they could tell their story in a humorous way.
- Tell the students that they will now use their own experiences to write their own 'fail' stories and that these stories should be written in a lively, engaging style similar to Finn's storytelling.
- Before they start writing, explain that planning their story first will help them organise their ideas, make their story funnier and ensure it has a clear beginning, middle and end.
- Give each student a copy of the activity sheet, which is divided into sections to help them plan their story: title, characters, setting, the fail moment, the lesson learned and how it ended.
- Model a short example by sharing a minor fail from your own life or a teacher-created example, showing how to fill in each section of the planning sheet. Allow the students time to brainstorm ideas and complete their planning sheets, reminding them to exaggerate and use humour wherever possible.
- Once they have completed their plans, explain that the remainder of the lesson will be spent writing their full 'fail' stories. Circulate around the room to support students as they write, offering help where necessary and encouraging them to illustrate scenes to make their story even funnier and more vivid.
- After students have finished writing and illustrating their fail stories, allow time for them to share their stories with a partner or in small groups so they can discover each other's funny fails and enjoy the humour in different experiences. You could also collect all of the stories and illustrations to create a class 'Fail Anthology,' which can be kept in the classroom for students to read each other's writing.

# FINN'S EPIC FAILS ACTIVITY SHEET

## FAIL STORY PLANNING TEMPLATE

<p><b>TITLE</b></p> <p>What funny or attention-grabbing title could you give your story?</p>	<p><b>CHARACTERS</b></p> <p>Who was involved in your fail? Were there friends, family, teachers or other witnesses?</p>
<p><b>SETTING</b></p> <p>Where did your fail happen? What details can you include to help your reader picture it?</p>	<p><b>THE 'FAIL' MOMENT</b></p> <p>What exactly went wrong? How can you exaggerate it to make it funnier?</p>
<p><b>LESSON LEARNED</b></p> <p>What did you learn from this fail, even if it's small or silly?</p>	<p><b>ENDING</b></p> <p>How did the story finish? How did the fail finally resolve or come to an end?</p>



## POST-READING: ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS

- **Author Study and Q&A Session:** Arrange an in-person or virtual Q&A session with the author Phil Earle if possible. Ask students to research his life and prepare questions about his inspiration, writing process and the experience of creating a book. This gives them the chance to learn directly from the author and offers a behind-the-scenes look at how stories are made.
- **Cover Recreators:** Look at the cover of Finn's Epic Fails, illustrated by Al Murphy, and discuss how it shows some of the characters and the humour of the story. Students can then design their own cover using drawing or digital tools to capture key moments and themes in their own creative style.
- **Alternate Endings:** Pick a fail or event from the book and write an alternate ending. Students can choose to make Finn's situation funnier, more heroic or completely unexpected. After writing, they can share their endings in groups and discuss how small changes in decisions or circumstances can transform a story.
- **Finn's Fail Fixers:** Students work in teams to brainstorm creative ways Finn could have avoided his epic fails. Each team selects one fail from the book and comes up with three imaginative solutions.
- **Point of View (PoV):** Rewrite a scene from the perspective of a different character to see how thoughts, feelings and reactions change depending on who is telling the story. You could try it from the point of view of one of Finn's friends or at home from his brother Jonah or sister Maisie.
- **Hot Seating:** Take turns sitting in the 'hot seat' as Finn or another character. Classmates ask questions about motivations, feelings or reactions and the student in the hot seat answers as their character. This develops empathy and understanding of character perspective.
- **Secondary School Simulation:** If you are in Year 6, mix things up and experience a 'mini secondary school day' to get a feel for Year 7 life. Students could follow a timetable with different subjects, move between classrooms and work with multiple teachers, simulating how a typical secondary school day runs. Afterwards, they can reflect on what was surprising about the day and share tips and strategies for managing the move to secondary school.
- **Uniform Up!:** Get hands-on experience with examples of your local secondary school uniform inspired by Finn's hilarious complaints on page 19. If possible, borrow sample blazers, ties or other items from the school so students can try them on, practise doing up the tie and mock-pack a rucksack with the books, kit and equipment they would need for a typical day. This helps them feel prepared and confident rather than floundering on their first day or week.
- **Subject Sampling:** Try mini-sessions of secondary school subjects that students may not have encountered in primary school such as cooking, technology or languages. They get a taste of new skills and challenges which helps them feel more confident and curious about what they will study in Year 7.
- **Write the Next Chapter:** Imagine students are the author and write the second chapter of the sequel, building on the sneak peek of the first chapter at the back of the book. Continue the story in Finn's voice, introduce new characters or create new epic fails. Share your chapters in groups or with the class and discuss how you kept the tone and humour of the original while adding your own ideas.

## POST-READING: ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS

- **Author Study and Q&A Session:** Arrange an in-person or virtual Q&A session with the author Phil Earle if possible. Ask students to research his life and prepare questions about his inspiration, writing process and the experience of creating a book. This gives them the chance to learn directly from the author and offers a behind-the-scenes look at how stories are made.
- **Cover Recreators:** Look at the cover of Finn's Epic Fails, illustrated by Al Murphy, and discuss how it shows some of the characters and the humour of the story. Students can then design their own cover using drawing or digital tools to capture key moments and themes in their own creative style.
- **Alternate Endings:** Pick a fail or event from the book and write an alternate ending. Students can choose to make Finn's situation funnier, more heroic or completely unexpected. After writing, they can share their endings in groups and discuss how small changes in decisions or circumstances can transform a story.
- **Finn's Fail Fixers:** Students work in teams to brainstorm creative ways Finn could have avoided his epic fails. Each team selects one fail from the book and comes up with three imaginative solutions.
- **Point of View (PoV):** Rewrite a scene from the perspective of a different character to see how thoughts, feelings and reactions change depending on who is telling the story. You could try it from the point of view of one of Finn's friends or at home from his brother Jonah or sister Maisie.
- **Hot Seating:** Take turns sitting in the 'hot seat' as Finn or another character. Classmates ask questions about motivations, feelings or reactions and the student in the hot seat answers as their character. This develops empathy and understanding of character perspective.
- **Secondary School Simulation:** If you are in Year 6, mix things up and experience a 'mini secondary school day' to get a feel for Year 7 life. Students could follow a timetable with different subjects, move between classrooms and work with multiple teachers, simulating how a typical secondary school day runs. Afterwards, they can reflect on what was surprising about the day and share tips and strategies for managing the move to secondary school.
- **Uniform Up!:** Get hands-on experience with examples of your local secondary school uniform inspired by Finn's hilarious complaints on page 19. If possible, borrow sample blazers, ties or other items from the school so students can try them on, practise doing up the tie and mock-pack a rucksack with the books, kit and equipment they would need for a typical day. This helps them feel prepared and confident rather than floundering on their first day or week.
- **Subject Sampling:** Try mini-sessions of secondary school subjects that students may not have encountered in primary school such as cooking, technology or languages. They get a taste of new skills and challenges which helps them feel more confident and curious about what they will study in Year 7.
- **Write the Next Chapter:** Imagine students are the author and write the second chapter of the sequel, building on the sneak peek of the first chapter at the back of the book. Continue the story in Finn's voice, introduce new characters or create new epic fails. Share your chapters in groups or with the class and discuss how you kept the tone and humour of the original while adding your own ideas.

# **NATIONAL CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES (KEY STAGE 2/3)**

## **English**

### **Reading – comprehension**

#### **Pupils should be taught to:**

- maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by:
  - continuing to read and discuss an increasingly wide range of **fiction**, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks
  - recommending books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices
- understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by:
  - drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
  - summarising the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas

### **Writing: composition**

#### **Pupils should be taught to:**

- plan their writing by:
  - discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar
- develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by:
  - writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional)

### **Spoken language**

#### **Pupils should be taught to:**

- participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play/improvisations and debates

### **Computing**

#### **Pupils should be taught to:**

- use technology safely, respectfully and responsibly; recognise acceptable/unacceptable behaviour; identify a range of ways to report concerns about content and contact. (KS2)
- understand a range of ways to use technology safely, respectfully, responsibly and securely, including protecting their online identity and privacy; recognise inappropriate content, contact and conduct and know how to report concerns. (KS3)

### **PSHE (taken from Programme of Study for PSHE education: KS1-5)**

#### **Pupils learn:**

#### **Managing hurtful behaviour and bullying**

- R20. strategies to respond to hurtful behaviour experienced or witnessed, offline and online (including teasing, name-calling, bullying, trolling, harassment or the deliberate excluding of others); how to report concerns and get support (KS2)

#### **Social influences**

- R42. to recognise peer influence and to develop strategies for managing it, including online (KS3)

#### **Media literacy and digital resilience**

- L20. that features of the internet can amplify risks and opportunities, e.g. speed and scale of information sharing, blurred public and private boundaries and a perception of anonymity (KS3)

#### **Mental health**

- H24. problem-solving strategies for dealing with emotions, challenges and change, including the transition to new schools (KS2)