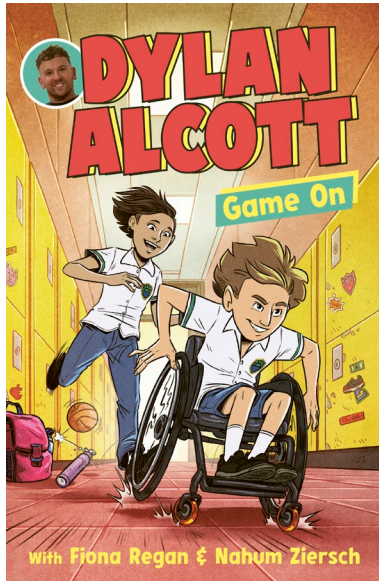


Classroom Resources



Dylan Alcott: Game On

Dylan Alcott, Fiona Regan & Nahum Ziersch

BOOK SUMMARY

A great middle-grade read for all kids – fun, funny and relatable. Just like Dylan!

My life so far has been pretty awesome.

At home I've got a great family (sure, even my big brother, Jacob, when he's not being a total pain) and my pet legless lizard, Pogo (she can lick her own eyeballs, really). Then there are my friends Yusuf and Gemma, and my best mate, Hannah. In between there's coding, shooting hoops and mixing tracks.

Now it's time for something new – high school.

When old and new friends collide, a teacher called Grumps is on his tail, and the school talent show looks like turning into a real-life drama, twelve-year-old Dylan discovers his family motto has never been more true – it's not all about you.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- AC9E6LE01
- AC9E6LA02
- AC9E6LA08
- AC9HP6P01

THEMES

- Families
- Belonging
- Choices
- Resilience

Recommended Reading Ages: 9+

Resources Created For: Upper Primary

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NOTES BY:

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Classroom Resources

Before Reading

1. Establish a class learning wall to record vocabulary, questions and answers, relevant information, quotes, examples of writing techniques and speculations.
 - a) Start with students' responses and speculation about the questions below.
 - b) Encourage students to add questions or reflections they might have during the reading to the learning wall.
2. Have students heard of Dylan Alcott? What do they know about him?
 - a) Some will know him as a sports star, others as an entertainer and actor, others might know he has been Australian of the Year. Some may know he is an advocate for disability.
 - b) If possible, take some time to look at some video clips of Dylan's various achievements such as the Paralympics and his [Australian of the Year acceptance speech](#).
3. What sort of reasons might there be for people to need a wheelchair?
 - a) What other disabilities are known to the students, whether at school or outside it?
 - b) Are all disabilities visible/obvious?
 - c) What do we mean by invisible disabilities? Name some of these.
 - It may be appropriate to tell students about the worldwide [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower](#) support, to make students aware of this initiative.
4. What does the expression 'Game on' mean to students? Generally, it means that something challenging and/or exciting is about to begin and that the speaker is ready for that challenge.
 - a) When and where have students heard it used?

During Reading

1. The narrative opens as Dylan and Hannah, along with their best friends, Yusuf and Gemma, are about to start high school. Everyone feels differently about big changes such as this. For some it's very overwhelming and for others it's no big deal.
 - a) Think of a scenario that is a completely new experience (if the class is Year 6, starting high school may be appropriate). Take a class poll to see how students feel about this situation, e.g.

Excited	Confident	A bit nervous	Anxious	Terrified
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 - b) Have students been in a similar situation such as joining a club or team, or moving to a new school? What was the hardest part about it?
 - c) What do students know about what high school is like and how things are organised? (What do they know – for example, from siblings who already attend high school, or open/orientation days they have been to – as opposed to what they've seen on TV or movies, or read in books).
 - (i) From what students know about high school, what are they most concerned about?

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2. What does the word accessibility mean in relation to disability? This [website](#) might be helpful.
 - a) How is Dylan's school not providing accessibility?
 - b) What accessibility measures are in place at students' own school? Think about the needs of a variety of disabilities such as mobility, sight, hearing and neurodiversity.
 - c) What measures do students notice in their local communities such as shops, libraries, parks etc.? For example, Dylan mentions accessible beach mats (p. 100), which enable people in wheelchairs to get onto the beach and into the sea.
 - d) Conduct a class audit of accessibility features within the school. What is missing or what could be added for better accessibility?
 - Remind students that accessibility is not just about physical spaces, but also includes online spaces and different forms of communication.

Characters

1. Create character profiles for each of the four main characters: Dylan, Hannah, Gemma and Yusuf. Include details of their appearance, personality, speech and actions.
 - Include quotes for each observation.
2. Create a character web to show connections between the main characters and the secondary characters and others.
3. Readers will quickly notice the diversity of characters in *Dylan Alcott: Game On*; Dylan, his friends and classmates have a diverse range of disabilities, cultural & racial backgrounds and family structures, amongst others.
 - a) Does this diversity reflect the demographics of students' school and community?
 - b) Is this diversity of characters reflective of the broader Australian community?
4. Discuss the idea of a 'sympathetic character'. Compose a shared definition and put it up on the learning wall.
 - a) Which of the characters in *Dylan Alcott: Game On* might be described as sympathetic?
 - For each character identified, students should provide at least two examples/quotes which support their opinion.
 - b) Alternatively, some of the characters in the novel are unsympathetic. Identify which characters could be described this way.
 - c) Choose two characters from the text, one sympathetic and one unsympathetic. Create a Venn diagram to explore their similarities and differences.
 - d) Why do authors include both sympathetic and unsympathetic characters in their writing?
 - e) Do any of the characters display traits that are both sympathetic *and* unsympathetic?
 - (i) For example, while Dylan is generally very likable (sympathetic), there are times when he behaves in ways that are selfish and inconsiderate (unsympathetic).
 - (ii) Jacob is also an interesting character to discuss here. Ask students to consider how he usually behaves at home, particularly towards Dylan, as well as considering what happens when his friend is nasty to Dylan in Chapter 22 (p. 197).
 - (iii) Is anyone ever entirely sympathetic or unsympathetic?

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After Reading

1. The motto for Dylan's family is 'It's not all about you'.
 - a) Why do you think this is a good motto for any family to have?
 - b) How do we see Dylan's family live out this motto?
 - c) How does Dylan come to a deeper understanding of what 'it's not all about you' really means over the course of the novel?
2. Many students find their friendship circles changing when they start high school. Sometimes, because there are often more students drawn from different feeder schools. Sometimes, because the (usually) larger numbers of people in a high school mean there are more likely to be people with whom you share interests. For many people, making new friends can be difficult. Dylan is finding it difficult to both accept that his friends appear to be moving in other directions and to make new friends himself.
 - a) Why do you think he reacts in the way he does to Hannah making new friends?
 - b) How does Dylan feel about making new friends at high school?
 - c) Does Dylan have any unique challenges to making friends?
 - d) How do Dylan's challenges in navigating a new environment affect the way he treats Hannah, Gemma and Yusef?
2. On the other hand, Hannah, who has always found it easy to make friends and appears to be doing so since starting secondary, finds her new friends are not what she thought.

'They're silly,' says Marnie. She's got that right. Hannah's the best dancer. Why didn't she tell them what to do? She wants them to stay friends with her. If they're her friends why won't they listen to what she wants?' (p. 203)

 - a) Discuss how hard it can be to be assertive and stand up for oneself.
 - b) Who has found themselves in this position? How did they resolve the situation?
 - c) What do students feel about Dylan's intervention to the dance group on Talent Night? Was he right or wrong to ruin their act? Why/why not?
 - d) What are some resources available to students if they need help with their friends or navigating big changes?
3. *'The thing I love about the rock pools is that loads of different creatures all live there together. They have their own needs, their own ways of feeding, their own ways of moving around, but they need each other. It's one of the things we've started learning about in science this year – it's an ecosystem (guess some of that learning is sinking in).'* (p. 103)

Discuss this quote in relation to the entire narrative.

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Writing

1. Gemma writes and performs slam poetry (spoken word poetry) for the Talent Night. Share with students some examples of slam poetry, for example: [12-year-old Solli Raphael](#), winner of the 2017 Australian Poetry Slam; or [Aiya's performance](#) at Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam Finals 2019.
 - a) How is slam poetry different from the poetry students have encountered before?
 - b) Do students prefer slam poetry to the more traditional forms of poetry they have encountered before? Why/why not?
 - c) Have students compose slam poetry on a meaningful topic of their choice and perform for an audience, perhaps at a school assembly or for parents.
2. Following on from the accessibility audit students did earlier, ask small groups of students to collate their findings into a report. Each report should include:
 - a) The accessibility features present at their school.
 - b) Accessibility features lacking from the school.
 - c) A proposed improvement to the accessibility of the school.This report could then be passed on to the principal or other relevant person for consideration.

About the Creators

Dylan Alcott AO is an Australian Paralympic gold medalist in two sports – wheelchair basketball and wheelchair tennis. He is also a radio host, television personality, keynote presenter and motivational speaker, entrepreneur, music festival owner and philanthropist. Dylan has competed in three Paralympics, winning gold and silver for wheelchair basketball in 2008 and 2012, and two gold medals at the Rio Paralympics in 2016 for wheelchair tennis. In 2021 he became the only male in any form of tennis to win the 'Golden Slam', winning the Australian, French, Wimbledon and US Open Championships, together with his gold medal from the Tokyo Paralympic Games. In 2017, he founded the Dylan Alcott Foundation, which focuses on helping young Australians who feel marginalised because of their disability fulfil their potential and achieve their dreams.

Fiona Regan lives in Naarm, Melbourne and spends lots of time reading with her kids. She's been writing stories since she was very young but as a grown-up she mostly told stories through emails and project plans in a range of different jobs. She studied writing and editing and has worked as an editor on several kids series. Her most recent studies were in sustainability, leading to her current work with food relief groups. Fiona also helps to run a toy library, so her house is well stocked with things to play with and read.

Nahum Ziersch is an illustrator and sports designer living in Adelaide, South Australia. He has illustrated and designed numerous covers and internal art for junior novels, readers and educational projects. A highlight from the many books he has illustrated is a series for NBA star Patty Mills called Game Day. Nahum has also worked extensively in the TV and Film landscape as a storyboard artist and in the gaming world. His love of sport has also inspired him to design professional sports logos, team wear and mascots for major national teams, along with designing the 2007 FINA Swimming Championships mascot.

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