

Billy Elliot

Melvin Burgess

Teacher's Guide and Key

Guide

This materials in this kit should be used in conjunction with the reading of the novel by Melvin Burgess, Billy Elliot. References are made to page numbers where certain passages must be read in order for comprehension to be complete. Also, because of the length of the text, the guided reading section has been prepared with an aim to assist students in their reading of the text, and so in order to work most effectively, these tasks should be done in the order suggested.

Pre-reading, 3 tasks

The pre-reading section consists of three tasks which should definitely be done with students before attempting to read parts of the text.

- 1. Which profession?** Vocabulary for extracurricular activities. This is a matching task intended to guide students into the mindset of a parent who might not want their son to do ballet.
- 2. The Main Characters.** Story Building/Characterization. Students read bits of text about the two main characters, answer questions and complete a reading task in order to become familiar with their individual situations and the basic plot.
- 3. Communities and Coal Mining.** Reading and listening task.
Student read the definition of community and answer questions about what communities and clubs they belong to. The text by Jackie also appears as an audio file (Audio text 1). This is done in order to raise awareness about what it means to belong to a community, and in particular Billy Elliot's. Students could be asked to think about the question, If you were Billy Elliot and you lived in this house and in this place where everyone does mining, and you wanted to do ballet, what would your concerns be? *We're too poor, no one else here does ballet, I should work harder at what my family does, etc.*

Guided Reading tasks

This section consists of extensive reading tasks which will aid students in their reading of the novel, or parts of. In part, they should also provide a way for to explore the central themes of the story while helping students with the language as well. A brief glossary of some of the words and expressions is included in the key, to be used at the teacher's discretion.

Because the chunks of texts have been extracted with special attention to the plot direction, these tasks should be done in order. The reading consists of 4 or 5 texts in varied writing styles, including dialogue, action, and introspective writing. There is an audio recording for one of the texts (see audio list and notes in the worksheets)

Page numbers are included so that readers can easily find the references in the text, as well as read the surrounding passages as they wish, see fit. It is assumed that students will read the

passages where specifically instructed to do so, and hoped that they will be inspired to read as much of the novel as they can!

1. Billy, Jackie, and Ballet: This mixed skills activity is based on a passage of the novel where Billy has recently discovered his passion for ballet, and at the same time becomes more aware of the trouble he's in when his father catches him in the act.

Students read the passages and complete a language work task focusing on nouns and adjectives used to describe emotions. Then there are two speaking tasks: 1) prediction of the plot, and to practice the new language, 2) a role play where students can take the parts of Billy and Jackie and create the dialogue which they think will take place between father and son. Finally, students can do a reading task where they identify bits of speech taken from the dialogue. This should also help them check their predictions about how the argument went.

2. Billy and Miss Make a Plan: This passage is where Miss suggests to Billy that he is good enough at ballet to consider auditioning for the Royal Ballet School, a professional school in London. Students are asked to read the text and complete a gap fill with verb + preposition phrases. After answering comprehension questions, they can discuss whether Billy should take Miss up on her suggestion or not.

3. Climax and Conflict: This task consists of reading three extracts from the novel, each a different point of view of the main characters Billy, Tony, and Jackie, at key moments for them. Students read the texts, then complete a matching task with questions. The text for Jackie also appears as an audio file (audio text 2) Then as a way of checking comprehension, consolidating, and getting them to make predictions about what might happen based on their knowledge of what's happened so far, they do a language work task where they complete *If clauses*.

4. The Audition: This part of the story is one of the most critical as it tells about how Jackie and Billy endured the audition in London. Students are asked to complete a reading and matching task where they read sentences about the two characters' impressions and decide in which context they belong. Students can then read the appropriate chapter(s) to check and discuss the different issues for each character.

5. The Two Letters: Billy receives two important letters in the novel. The first one is from his mother, written to him when he was young, and which he carries around with him as encouragement and to remember her by. The second is the letter of acceptance from the school. This task asks students to read the passage where Billy receives the second letter, and then complete a reading and writing exercise focusing on formal and informal expression. The second writing task is for students to imagine what Billy's mother might have said to him and write this letter. They can then check their versions with the one in the book on pg. 10.

Context

Friendship—Phrasal Verbs and Questionnaire, *Are you a good friend?* Students read a passage about friendship and find phrasal verbs to match to their definitions. Then using these verbs they complete a gap-fill exercise which is also a questionnaire about friendship.

The Miner's Strike: Students watch footage from a BBC report about the 1984 Miner's Strike, and complete a vocabulary exercise. This is to prepare them for reading the text which is Billy's account of the strike in his town. Follow-up?

Currency Calculations: As part of this task, students complete a matching exercise where they guess how much various items cost in the English currency. This is to familiarize them with the currency, and sensitize them to the little amount of money they had.

Opposites (rich vs poor, male vs female, father vs mother, masculine vs feminine)

Word Work

Crossword puzzle with verbs for actions and body parts—possible collocations? Stretch, bend, etc.—interactive crossword with figures? Twist neck, pick up leg

Description on pps. 31-2, could the students read and then perform the movements? Find ballet text or instructions somewhere—possibly comic? Wikipedia? Ballet terms?

List of possible research topics and resources:

- Miner's Strike, 1984, England
<http://www.strike84.co.uk/gallery.htm>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUapdl7_KCg
- Workers striking in other contexts, settings—audio or visuals, articles?
- The Ballet—famous male ballerinas, traditions behind ballet in other countries, Russia for example,
- Boys and dance, e.g., Palestinian boy in Israel,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4sNyojWxRc>

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Three Pre-reading Activities

1. Which profession?

Imagine you are the parent of a young teenage boy who has been talking about what job he would like to have when he grows up. If you were one of the following four people, in your opinion which profession do you think would be most suitable for your son? Complete the table.

A theatre actress from a large city	A businessman	A taxi driver	A coal miner
<i>Painter</i> <i>Studio musician</i> <i>Civil engineer</i> <i>Ballet dancer</i> <i>University professor</i>	<i>Surgeon</i> <i>Studio musician</i>	<i>Wrestling coach</i> <i>Bartender</i> <i>Civil engineer</i>	<i>Footballer</i> <i>Shopkeeper</i> <i>Wrestling coach</i>

footballer ballet dancer painter studio musician surgeon bartender university professor shopkeeper civil engineer wrestling coach coal miner fisherman

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Pre-reading Activities

2. The Main Characters

The two main characters in this novel are Billy Elliot, an eleven-year old boy and his father, Jackie, who is a coal miner. Billy's mother has passed away, and Billy and his older brother, Tony, live with their father and grandmother. Tony and Jackie worked as coal miners in the local mines, but are currently off work and not making any money as the miners are on strike. Read what Jackie says about his son.

Well, I worry for the boy. There's no one to look out for him since his mam died. I do what I can for him but a boy needs his mother. Especially a boy like that. P. 14

What kind of boy is Billy? *Unique, different*

Billy is my son and I stand by him till the day I die, but. Put it like this: he's a bit of an individualist. He's always got these weird things he's trying to do. It used to be balancing a stick on the end of his nose....Then there was the cardboard box. He used to sit in it singing to himself. That's just kids, you might say, but Billy was ten. I'd not be see dead in a cardboard box when I was ten...but what about the neck twisting? That went on for ages. He'd turn round and look behind him, twisting his neck round as far as he could, over and over again. He said it was just a habit, but what sort of habit is that? It's not like picking your nose or biting your nails...You can't stop him. He can't stop himself. P. 36

What does he like doing? *Physical things with his body, singing, and he can't stop doing them*

Why is Jackie worried about him? *He thinks these habits are weird*

What do you imagine Jackie might rather have Billy doing? *More ordinary things that boys his age do, like playing football*

Look at this fight we're in now. It's a fight for our future, for our community. It's a fight for my job and for Tony's job—but is it a fight for Billy? See our Billy a quarter of a mile underground hacking the coal out, the sweat running black, in your eyes, down your back. That's not our Billy. All I could ever do for him was pay his way and I can't even do that now.

And I'm not sure I ever will again. P. 14

What kind of fight is Jackie in? *for future and work, and he's not sure he'll win*

Is Jackie a good father? How do you know? *He's worried about his sons' future and how he'll provide for them*

Why does he think Billy could never be a coal miner, like himself and Tony? *Maybe because he's unique, he's not strong, he's sensitive*

Many possible answers

Now read what Billy says about dancing.

That ballet, it's addictive, you know. I was thinking about it all the next week. One and two and up and down. When you put your arms and legs into those positions, it's like a note of music. You hold it in the air...and then, whoosh! It goes off into the rest of the tune.

The only thing with it is, it makes me feel like a right sissy. I mean! Ponce, two, three, twat, two, three and prat about and four and five and six and shite shite shite...Imagine what me dad'd say! Or Tony! They'd go barmy! I mean, what good's ballet down a mine? The union leader says they have a secret plan to close all the mines down, so if he's right I might as well be dancing as owt, because there won't be any mines left for me to go down by the time I'm old enough. P. 25-6

What does Billy like about dancing?

What doesn't he like about it?

Make lists below:

Cons	Pros
<p><i>makes him feel like a sissy</i> <i>his Dad and brother wouldn't like it</i> <i>it's addictive</i> <i>you can't do it down a mine</i></p>	<p><i>it's like music</i> <i>it's got rhythm and it's physical</i> <i>it's addictive</i> <i>it's an alternative to going down a mine</i></p>

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Pre-reading Activities

3. Communities and Coal Mining

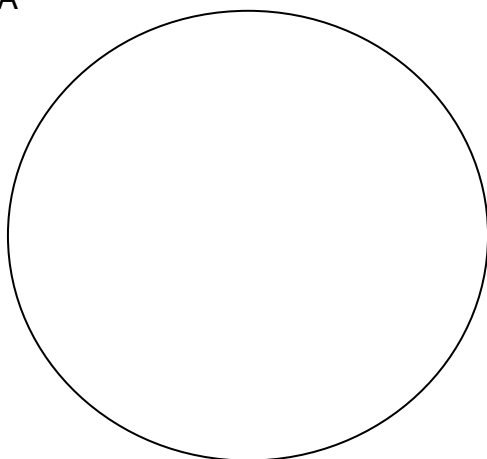
A. Read this definition of community from *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

community |kəˈmyoʊnɪtē|
 noun (pl. **-ties**)
 1 a group of people living together in one place, esp. one practicing common ownership: *a community of nuns*.
 • a particular area or place considered together with its inhabitants : *a rural community*.
 2 [usu. with adj.] a group of people having a religion, race, profession, or other particular characteristic in common : *Rhode Island's Japanese community* | *the scientific community*.
 • a body of nations or states unified by common interests : [in names] *the European Community* | *the African Economic Community*.
 3 a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests,

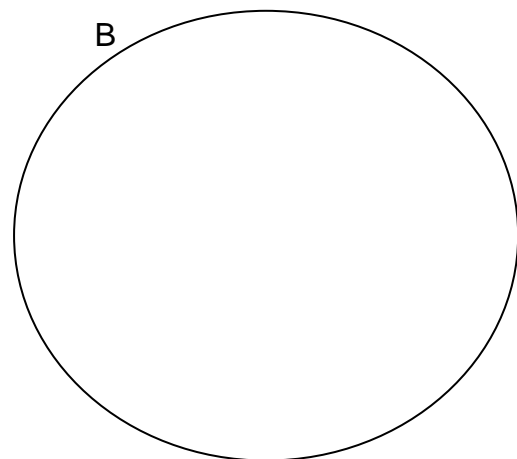
Are you a member of a community? In which sense? *Yes, footballs, school clubs, European community, etc.*

In the circle A write names for the communities you belong to. In circle B, write the names of communities your partner belongs to. Are any of them the same?

A



B



What does it mean to you to be part of that group? *You belong to something, you have to attend meetings, follow rules, help the others in the group, etc.*

What happens when one member of a community wants to be different? *Everybody gets upset and it's hard for that person who is different. People often fight, and in the end they have to accept it or change.*

B. Billy Elliot's family belongs to a small, closely-knit community made up of working-class coal miners from northern England. When the miners went on strike to show Parliament they wanted better working conditions, they depended on each other to cooperate, or do the same thing so that their cause would be stronger.

Listen to Jackie Elliot, Billy's father, talking about how important coal mining is to his community. As you listen, read along with the text. Then say whether the sentences below are true or false.

Being owed never won owt. I remember my dad on strike in the thirties. They weren't owed then—they had power. The coal they dug ran the factories, lit the streets and the houses, drove the ships across the water. Without coal the whole bloody country dragged to a halt. Look at it now—natural gas, oil, nuclear energy. You don't have to go and dig oil and gas out of the ground with your bare hands, you just tap down into it and it shoots up like a bloody fountain. Nice and easy. And cheap.

Well, I'll tell you what. If Thatcher came here today and said to me, Look, we're going to close down the mines and we're going to open up a whole bloody great town full of shiny new factories...I don't know rightly if I'd say yea or nay, but at least it'd be some sort of hope. Not like this. Not like, you lost aren't cost-effective, so sod off. That's Thatcher. She must have a fist where her heart is. The whole bloody community is going to be left to rot. She just doesn't care. (Jackie Elliot, p.14-15)

1. Jackie's father, Billy's grandfather, was a coal miner. T
2. People in England used coal as their main source of energy. T
3. Getting coal out of the ground is easier work than getting oil or gas. F
4. Thatcher is going to open up new factories in Jackie's town. F
5. It costs too much money for the government to keep the coal mines open.T
6. Jackie thinks that Thatcher is a very caring person. F
7. Jackie has hopes for the future of his community. F

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A Short Glossary

Note: While these definitions are correct according to the context in which they are found in the novel, in many cases the meanings are not limited to what is written above.

A hiding:	a beating
Banned:	prohibited
Beaten to buggery:	badly beaten up
Bonkers:	crazy
Drag to a halt:	to slow down gradually and stop
Fag:	cigarette
Fit:	good physical condition
Git:	unpleasant person
Go barmy:	to go crazy
Grubby	dirty, grimy
Hacking:	to cut or dig with heavy blows
Lass(es):	young girls
Owt:	anything
Pansy:	(informal, offensive) an effeminate or homosexual man
Pinny:	apron
Poof:	gay man
Posh:	upper class
Shed:	a simple roofed structure used as a storage space
Snort:	to make a sound through the nose to express indignation
Sod off:	go away and leave me alone
Stamina:	energy, resistance
Summat:	something
To boot out	tell someone to leave
To tap:	to draw liquid through the spout of something
To wind (someone) up:	to tease or irritate someone
Waste ground:	unused ground
Wits:	intelligence

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Guided Reading Activities

1. Billy, Jackie, and Ballet

Read the passage where Billy talks about doing ballet and how it makes him feel.

I was jumping so high, I could see out of the window and right over the shed where they kept the sports gear. Miss kept saying to me, "It's not just height, Billy. Where's your control? You're not concentrating!" Well, I was concentrating. I was concentrating on getting up high. It just made me feel so good, floating up over the heads of them little lasses. They were like little bits of fluff floating around me knees.

I could do all the plies and the jumps and font de bras and all that. Miss says I've got promise. She spends half the lesson just teaching me—she doesn't bother with the others half the time. They're always moaning on about it.

"Can we have a go, miss? When's it our turn, miss? It's not fair, miss, just because he's a boy, miss..."

...Oh, I'd got right into it. I was looking forward to the Saturday lesson all week. Once I started, I could just go on forever. It was right what Debbie said about stamina. It may look easy, but it's not. It's hard. I'd got so fit it'd made me better at footy and running and everything. I could keep going for hours. (p. 46)

Now read the next passage where he gets caught in the act.

I must have been mad.

It had to happen. I was kidding meself. Michael kept warning me. "He'll find out. What are you going to do then?" I knew he was right, but it was like, if I kept on doing it and not thinking about it, nothing'd happen. I kept thinking, just this week, just one more lesson, then I'll go back to the boxing. But I got more and more into it, and better and better at it, and Dad never turned up to watch me at George's any more...I just thought it was going to go on forever.

And of course, when it did happen, it wasn't just questions and getting suspicious and everything. He only bloody turned up right in the middle of class.

"Pick up your leg, Billy. Swing it! Swing two three, round two three, up two three. What do you call that? Let's have a bit of grace, Billy Elliot!"

I was swinging me leg round, slow circle, trying to make it as smooth as cream—and I looked up and there was me dad standing in the door.

Christ! I just froze in me tracks. I thought I was going to die. I thought he was going to rush out and kill me. Miss was still going on...

"Up two three, swing two three. Like a princess, Deborah. Beautiful necks! One two three...what's up with you?"

She said that when she saw me standing still. Then the music stopped and she turned round and saw Dad. He'd gone blood red.

"You! Out! Now!" he snapped. (p. 46-7)

1. Circle the emotions for Jackie. Underline the emotions for Billy:

anger	<i>angry</i>
shame	<i>ashamed</i>
frustration	<i>frustrated</i>
joy	<i>joyful</i>
pride	<i>proud</i>

What are the adjective forms of these nouns?

Can you add to the list to describe how Billy and Jackie are feeling?
(Fear/fearful, Embarrassment/embarrassed, hatred/hateful)

2. What do you think is going to happen now? What will Jackie do? What will Billy tell his father? Role-play the argument between father and son.

3. Decide if the following are said/thought by Jackie or Billy.

“What’s wrong with ballet? Look at me...Are you trying to wind me up?”
Jackie--1

“Normal?” *Jackie--2*

“You’re asking for a hiding!” *Jackie--3*

“As far as he was concerned I was just being stubborn, but I really didn’t understand why it was so bloody important that I shouldn’t...” *Billy--4*

“It’s not just poofs...Some ballet dancers are as fit as athletes. It’s hard work. What about Wayne Sleep?” *Billy--5*

“I hate you!” (Billy)--6

Put these pieces of speech into a logical order. Then, add to them to complete the dialogue? When you’ve finished, compare what you’ve written to pps. 48-51 in the book.

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Guided Reading Activities

2. Billy and Miss Make a Plan

Read the following passage and complete the gap fill using the phrases below.

Miss gave me a lift just round the corner from where I lived. She would've taken me all the way home but I didn't want to get caught in her car. She (1) **pulled up on** some waste ground near our house.

"Right then," she said. I didn't move, though. I just sat there for a bit....She turned the car off, sighed, and took herself a fag out.

"This'll sound strange, Billy," she said. "But I was thinking of (2) **auditioning for** the Royal Ballet School."

I thought, Jesus, she's keen on that dancing then. I thought—I know this is stupid but it was just after that talk with Debbie, like—I thought it must be having no sex was making her want to do something stupid like that.

"Aren't you a bit old, miss?" I asked her.

She snorted. "Not me, Billy. You. I'm the teacher. Christ!" She rolled her eyes. "They hold auditions in Newcastle," she said, and gave me a long look.

Ballet school? Me? But that'd be ... something else. I mean, it was a hobby, that's all. But if you went to a special school...

"Can you do it as a job, then, miss?"

"Course you can. If you're good enough."

"I'd never be good enough. I hardly know owt."

"Look." She (3) **twisted round** in her seat to face me and (4) **blew a spurt of smoke over** her shoulder. "Listen. They're not interested in how much ballet you know. They teach you that. That's why they're a ballet school. It's how you move, how you express yourself that's important."

"Express what?" I didn't know what she meant. It's just dancing, isn't it?

"I think you're good enough," she said. And that was the only time she ever told me I was any good. "It'd be an awful lot of work," she said.

"I'm banned," I reminded her.

"Aye, well. Maybe I should (5) **have a word with** him."

“No!” I almost (6) jumped out of the seat. “Miss! Don’t.”
 “For god’s sake.” She (7) puffed away on her fag for a bit, then she said, “You know, I could teach you on your own if you want.”
 “I’ve got no money.”
 “I’m not (8) doing it for the money,” she snapped, as if I’d offended her.
 “But what about Dad?”
 “He doesn’t have to know, does he?”
 “What about me boxing and that?” I wasn’t asking her just about the boxing, like. I wasn’t even allowed to do that any more. It was about ... being one of the lads. You know. Being a boy. That sort of thing.
 “For f***’s sake, Billy. If you want to (9) piss around with your little mates, that’s fine by me. This is serious.”
 “All right, don’t lose your blob.”
 “Blob?” she said, and we both laughed.
 I thought about it a bit. It was a bit much, wasn’t it? (10) Doing things behind me dad’s back and that. Training to be a ballet dancer. But—wow! You know? That’d be summat, wouldn’t it?
 “So we could do it in private, like?”
 “Just you and me. No one else need know.” (pps. 56-58)

- a. Piss around with
- b. Pulled up on
- c. Auditioning for
- d. Jumped out of
- e. Doing it for
- f. Have a word with
- g. Puffed away on
- h. Twisted round
- i. Blew a spurt of smoke over
- j. Doing things behind

1. Billy confused at first about what Miss is suggesting because_____.
2. The ballet school is interested in how Billy _____.
3. There are two reasons Billy is reluctant to accept Miss’ offer. They are _____ and _____.
4. The relationship between Billy and Miss could be described as_____.

What should Billy do now? What are his choices? Discuss in groups.

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Guided Reading Activities

3. Climax and Conflict

In the following passages, the three characters, Billy, Tony, and Jackie, express their feelings about the different predicaments they are in.

Having decided to secretly practice to audition for the Royal Ballet School, Billy begins to have doubts as the day of the audition approaches.

Meanwhile, Jackie and Tony are still on strike, and the family is getting poorer. Jackie has no way to provide for his sons and is plagued with doubts about the family's future.

Tony has been involved in the riots, and has spent the night in jail for lighting the tail of a policeman's horse on fire.

A. Billy

"Well...the dance was the one thing that was going right for me. I wasn't doing well at school, either. I mean, not bad, but not all that good, you know? But the dance was going well and I felt good about that.

On the other hand, the audition was getting closer and I felt really bad about that. It was scary, you know? Trying for something like that. If it worked, if I passed, what then? I'd have to tell me dad and he'd go mental. And even if he let me, then what? Leave home? Go to live all the way in London on me own? No way! It was bonkers. What was it going to cost? Christ!

But I had me dad right fooled. I was doing ballet every night and he never had a clue. He thought I was out playing with Michael. I had it all arranged. Michael'd come and call for me, or I'd go round to his, and we'd go out together as if we were just hanging around together. He'd even come into the Social with me, but then he'd sneak out the back way and go off to do whatever it was he did with himself on his own—dressing up or whatever, I expect, the big pansy." (pp. 76-77)

B. Tony

"If I'd a been a big union man they'd have put me away inside, out of the way. But I was just a working man with no work so they fined us instead. One hundred quid. They know we've no money. Just before f***ing Christmas and all. Happy New Year, you bastards! Thanks a bunch. Where were we going to find that sort of money?

Dad was furious with me, I could tell, but I wasn't in any mood for it and he had the sense to keep his mouth shut. The fact is, I was f***ed. There's no other word for it. There was a little bit of me kept wanting to giggle because of the memory of that horse with its arse up in flames—just a little bit—but the rest of me was just f***ed. They'd done me over good and proper. I was pissed off for getting caught, I was pissed off for being beaten to buggery by the police. I'd spent a night on a concrete floor in the cells, getting woken up every half an hour for a 'safety check', and I'd been charged a hundred quid for doing it. I was depressed, if you want another word. I felt about half an inch tall. I felt like a piece of dirty little shite. (pp. 91)

C. Jackie

"I practically ran down that road. I felt like crying but I'd had enough of that. I was thinking, I've got to do something about this. I was screwing up my face to hold the tears back.

It's been hard for everyone these past months, but I think most people would agree that the strike couldn't have come at a worse time for me. My wife dead. Two lads to bring up on my own. Tony running wild. The wife's mother living with us, half off her head. And Billy. Well, no one really talks to me about Billy. They just look at me and smile. What can you say about our Billy? He's all half-cock and up in the air and –and, well, he's our Billy, that's all.

But there was something else to say about our Billy that I hadn't realized, and it was this. He was bloody good at something.

Now. All right. I don't know anything about dancing or ballet or owt like that, but I've seen it on the telly and I'm just saying that was as good as any of them. Right? And you see, I'd never thought about it. I never thought it was a runner. The Royal Ballet School! I thought it was just that middle-class lass pissing around finding more ways of spending money I hadn't got. But. What if? And then, well...why not? If he can do it. If he really has some talent. What then?

My head was spinning. There was nothing I could do about it even if he was Rudolf bloody Nureyev. But see, now. That's not good enough. I mean, if he was good enough to be a ballet dancer, and if he wanted to be a ballet dancer, then I had to be good enough to find some way of making it happen for him. I'm his dad. That's what it's about. Right?" (pp. 105-6)

Write T (Tony), J (Jackie), and B (Billy) after the questions below. Be prepared to explain your answers with evidence from the text.

Which character feels responsible for the others in his family? ___J___

Which character expresses resentment? ___T___

Which character cares about how the others in his family feel? ___B___

Which character expresses mixed feelings about his actions? ___T___

Which character is the angriest? ___T___ The happiest? ___B___ The saddest?
___J___

Which character makes a decision based on what he imagines someone else would do? ___J___

Which character is most likely to change at this point? ___J___

A. Language work: Conditionals

Remember that...

- We use the first conditional to talk about future situations that are likely to happen.
- We use the second conditional to talk about hypothetical situations.
- We use the third conditional to talk about situations which happened in the past and how the outcome could've been different.

Complete the following *If clauses*, basing your answers on the texts. Use *will, should, would, might, could, etc.*

- a. If Billy is as good at ballet as his teacher thinks he is, *_then he will get accepted into the Royal Ballet School.*
- b. If Tony hadn't lit the horse's tail on fire, *_he wouldn't have spent the night in jail* _____
- c. Tony wouldn't be so angry if *_he wasn't out of wok.* _____
- d. If Billy wanted to be a boxer, Jackie _____ *would've let him* _____
- e. If Billy's mother were alive, she _____ *would've wanted Billy to do ballet.* _____

Now write four more of your own.

1. If _____
2. If _____
3. If _____
4. If _____

B. Listen and identify the speaker

If he was good enough to be a ballet dancer, then I had to be good enough to find some way to make it happen for him.

If I'd been a big union man they'd have put me away inside, out of the way.

If I passed, I'd have to tell me dad and he'd go mental.

Change the verbs in these conditional sentences to make them express a real possibility.

Read pps. 105-106 to see what Jackie decides to do.

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Guided Reading Activities

4. The Audition

The following sentences are about the thoughts and reactions of Billy and Jackie when they travel to London for the audition. With a partner work out whose point of view is being described, and in what context? Write the number in the correct place on the chart.

1. He said something about it feeling like flying.
2. It was more like a whole country than a town.
3. All the time the houses got bigger and higher.
4. Fifty quid. It was enough. It was plenty.
5. All those other kids, they had every advantage you could think of--rich parents, good homes, first-class schools.
6. Like a mansion or a palace
7. The changing rooms...were full of these posh gits.
8. Once I get going I forget what's going on and I sort of disappear.
9. It was just pure torture.
10. The steps...were about the width of our street.
11. They all peered at me and looked at my legs and my arms and my back.
12. I felt a little tingle go down my spine. He'd impressed me anyhow.

Context	Billy	Jackie
The coach trip to London	2,3	4
The school and the people there	6,7,10	5
The audition	9,11	12
The dancing	8	1

Now read pages pp. 130-143 to check your answers.

Billy Elliot

Melvin Burgess

Guided Reading Activities

5. The Two Letters

Part 1

There are two important letters which Billy receives in the novel.

Who are they from? _____ *mum* _____ and _____ *school* _____

The following passage describes the day the letter from the Royal Ballet School arrives at the Elliot's house.

His nan got hold of it first. She's only got about half her wits, but she had them all lined up and ready for use that morning.

'Post!' she yelled, and she came rushing in with this beautiful-looking letter. Thick, creamy envelope. She handed it over. I knew as soon as I felt the paper.

'This is it,' I said.

'Open it now,' said Tony.

'Don't be stupid. It's Billy's letter.'... Billy was at school and I was dying to have a look myself, but we'd just have to wait. I put the letter propped on the table between the toast rack and the sugar bowl.

And there it stayed. All bloody day, staring at us. Of course none of us could leave it alone. I kept picking it up. Nan picked it up, Tony did. Next door came round and had a feel to see how thick the paper was. Mrs Johnson on the other side. Susan from up the road. George popped round to have a look. It was getting a bit grubby by then, so his nan decided to keep it clean by hiding it in her pinny and I nearly went mad when I found it was gone. Of course she'd forgotten what she'd done with it and it was half an hour before she found it in there. It was a right mess by that time. She used to keep biscuits and bits of bread and butter and stuff in that pocket.

'Just bloody leave it alone! It looks like it's been used to butter the toast,' I told her.

When Billy came back from school at four, we were all three waiting for him. I'd booted the neighbors out. This was a family thing. When—I mean if—he hadn't made it this year, he wasn't going to want half the road hanging over him and patting his shoulder telling him not to worry and that.

The door went. As soon as we heard it we were all like kids, rushing around finding somewhere to sit so we were all in our places looking cool when he came in. The door opened. There he was. I looked up at him. I looked down at the letter. I looked back at him. He was still staring at it.

He walked over and picked it up. No one said a word. It was awful. He walked around the table. I could see Tony nodding at him: Go on, open it then. Billy licked his lips. He walked round the table to his nan's room. He pushed the sliding door open and gave us a quick glance, sort of saying sorry. I don't blame him, but I could've killed him. He went inside and closed the door.

And then nothing. Nothing. On and on, nothing. We could hear the paper being opened. We could hear the letter coming out. There was a long pause while he read it. He knew whether or not he'd got in. We didn't.

Nothing. More nothing.

'F*** this,' muttered Tony. He jumped and went to the door, and I only just managed to push in front of him. Billy was sitting in the chair by her bed. He looked up. He was crying. I thought, Oh, Billy.

'Well?'

'I got in,' he said in a tiny little voice.

'EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEESSSS!' You could have heard the roar from me and Tony halfway up the street. I snatched the letter off him and read it... We jumped and shouted.

p.143-146

1.
 - a. How many times is the letter picked up or touched before it reaches Billy's hands?
10
 - b. Make a list.
Nan, Jackie, Nan, Tony, next door neighbor, Mrs. Johnson, Susan, George, Nan, Jackie

2. Circle the correct choice(s):
 - a. The envelope was yellow/white/brown.
 - b. Nan hid/stole the letter.
 - c. Before closing the door to his room, Billy looked at his family apologetically/angrily/absent-mindedly.
 - d. Billy's family was excited/anxious while they waited for him to open the letter.
 - e. Billy was crying out of sorrow/joy/relief.

3.
 - a. A letter of acceptance is written in formal/informal language.
 - b. The following phrases could be from the acceptance letter to Billy. Match the formal to their informal equivalents, and then reconstruct the letter.

1. Dear Mr. Billy Elliot (h)	a. We are delighted to inform you that your application to the Royal Ballet School of London has been successful.
2. You must realize how lucky you are to be so good at dancing (g)	b. In addition, this offer of admission is contingent upon your continued success.
3. You won't have time to think about much else besides dancing. (c)	c. Please bear in mind that as a student at our school you will be expected to demonstrate a firm and single-minded commitment to the rigorous study and practice of ballet.
4. and furthermore that is not solely through this that one can strive to become an accomplished ballet dancer (e)	d. Finally, best wishes and congratulations!
5. You'll also need to keep your marks up or you won't be allowed to stay (b)	e. It's not enough to just be good at dancing—you have to work very hard at it too.
6. Well, that's all for now! Good luck! (d)	f. There's a spot starting next month.
7. Great news! We're going to let you come to the ballet school. (a)	g. It is essential that each candidate fully understands the privilege in possessing the unusual talent for the art of dance,
8. You have been admitted to the school for the upcoming term beginning next month. (f)	h. Hi Billy
9. Your friend, John (j)	i. Don't forget to look over the important information about paying, etc.
10. Please review carefully the enclosed materials that pertain to required deposits, deadlines, and other critical information. (i)	j. Sincerely, Mr. John Reed, Director

Billy Elliot

Melvin Burgess

Context Work

1. Friendship

“Look at me. I’d run a mile **to get out of** a fight, it’s a waste of time. But people are always **picking on** me anyhow. If there was something I could **give up** that would stop people picking on me, I’d do it. But there’s not. You can’t **give up** being just yourself. My dad always says that I’m different and I should be proud of it, but round here being different isn’t such a good thing at all. It’s a bloody problem. In infants I was always getting picked on. In primary I was always getting picked on. We’re going to be starting high school soon and I’m going to be picked on there and all, I bet you.

But Billy’s always been a good friend to me. He never minded me being different. I don’t know why, I always thought he wasn’t at all different himself, he always seemed to be exactly the same as everyone else except that he stood up for me instead of picking on me. I always thought he could have **got on with** any of them, except that he **stood up for** me instead of picking on me. I always thought he could have got on with any of them, except for some reason he’d **ended up with** me, like a sort of accident. Like he’d **made friends with** me before he realized how weird I was and then just **stuck with** me. It always used to worry me that one day he’d realize I was all wrong and **drop me**, but he never did. And then he **took up** ballet and after that he was just as weird as I was, and I stopped worrying about it.” (Michael, p. 63)

Find the phrasal verbs in the text which mean the same as:

1. escape: _____ *get out of*
2. tease; mock: _____ *pick on*
3. stop: _____ *give up*
4. have smooth relations with someone: _____ *get on with*
5. defend: _____ *stand up for*
6. _____: *end up with*
7. start a friendship with: _____ *make friends with*
8. _____: *stick with (someone)*
9. stop seeing or being friends with (someone): _____ *drop*
10. begin something new: _____ *take up*

Discuss: Would you like to have a friend like Michael?

Are you a good friend?

Use the phrasal verbs to complete the questionnaire. Then take the quiz to find out how good a friend you are!

1. Lately some of your classmates have been saying bad things about your friend behind her back. You:
 - a. **stand up for** your friend
 - b. join in
 - c. say nothing at all

2. When you meet a new friend do you:
 - a. Introduce him to your old ones?
 - b. **Drop** your old **ones**, telling them you have found a new friend?
 - c. Tell your new friend he's not as important as your old ones?

3. How well do you **get on with** people whose opinions about music, clothes, free time activities, etc. are different from yours?
 - a. Not well at all. My friends have to agree with me about everything.
 - b. I seek out people who are different from me because I like to have a reason to argue with them.
 - c. I expect my friends to share some of my opinions and differ on others. Everyone is entitled to her own views.

4. What is the best way to **make friends with** people in a new setting?
 - a. Tell lots of jokes and sing songs loudly to try and attract attention
 - b. Start a conversation with someone who seems nice by asking him or her questions about him/herself
 - c. Tell everybody all about yourself and how well you can do things

5. Some of your classmates **pick on** you during lunch and recess hours at school. They laugh at you and call you names. You:
 - a. Tell the teacher
 - b. Ignore them and hope the problem goes away
 - c. Approach the leader and tell her firmly that you are not intimidated

6. Some of your friends are thinking of joining a sports club but you have never tried the sport. They want you to join too. You:
 - a. Tell them your parents won't let you.
 - b. **Take up** the sport because you have been wanting to try something new anyway
 - c. Try to convince your friends to join a different sports club where you already belong

7. Your best friend always tries **to get out of** doing his homework by asking you for all the answers. Not only are you getting tired of doing all the work, your friend is also failing some of his classes. You:
 - a. Don't do anything. It's your friend's problem if he fails all his classes.
 - b. Explain to your friend that you think he should do his own homework so his marks will improve.
 - c. Tell the teacher about the problem, and ask the teacher to talk to your friend.

Use the remaining three phrasal verbs to complete the descriptions below. Then use the chart to work out how you score as a friend!

- 1--a-2, b-0, c-1
- 2—a-2, b-0, c-0
- 3—a-0, b-1, c-2
- 4—a-1, b-2, c-0
- 5—a-1, b-1, c-2
- 6—a-0, b-1, c-1
- 7—a-0, b-2, c-1

1-5: You are not the greatest of friends. If you're not careful and don't change your ways, you will **end up with** no friends at all! Try to think a bit more about how you like to be treated, and treat others that way. You'll see—you will be happier, and so will your friends!

5-10: Most of the time you are a reliable friend, however sometimes you have a problem with being honest. Be careful or your friends will **give up on** you if they think they can't trust you. Don't be afraid to say what you think but remember to take your friend's feelings into consideration as well!

11-14: You are a true friend, the friend everyone should like to have. Your sensitivity and integrity will make your closest of friends **stick with** you until the end. Keep doing what you do, and don't change anything!

Billy Elliot

Melvin Burgess

Context Work

2. The Miners' Strike

Look at the following footage from a BBC report about the 1984 Miner's Strike.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUapdl7_KCg

What do you see? Circle the words.

Road blocks	the pit	horseback	motorbikes	bricks
little wooden shed	long sticks	gangs	picket lines	firewood
marbles				

Now read Billy's account of the strike. What similarities/differences do you note between his description and the BBC newscast?

The whole bloody town was under siege. You'd have thought we were trying to attack the Houses of Parliament rather than just be out on strike. The police were everywhere.

When it started off they were just down by the pit. They were OK at first, they used to chat with the miners, everything was fairly friendly. But then miners from other place were coming to picket our pit, and that's when they started. There were road blocks and all sorts. They were everywhere. Gangs of them wandering around all over the place. On horseback. In cars. On motorbikes. All over town.

It wasn't getting them anywhere, though, we were running rings around them. The miners always found a way to get to the pit no matter how hard the police tried to stop them. They hid on the school buses and lorries taking goods to the shops. We had people from all over, not just miners, coming in to fight for the mines. Young people, old people, all sorts, all gathered round the pit chanting, "Here we go, here we go, here we go" and "Maggie Maggie Maggie—out out out!" Tony reckoned we were going to bring the government down, but we had no money left at all. People were chopping down anything you could burn just to keep warm. We pulled our little wooden shed in the yard to bits for firewood. We were—well, I never went hungry but I was getting really sick of sliced bread and marge. I'd have died for a bacon buttie. There was nothing to spare, no treats, no money for anything. They were trying to starve us out, see. And frighten us and all, with the police. It was scary.

It was the ones on horseback that scared me the most. They were so big, and the policemen had these long sticks to hit people with. You know? Galloping up behind one of the miners and whack! Right across their backs or round the head. There was blood and everything. I've seen it. You'd never ask a policeman the time again if you'd seen them do what I have." (Billy, pp. 70-1)

Similarities: road blocks, gangs of policemen, on motorbikes, policemen are in full riot gear, tense atmosphere in both due to the opposing sides—miners vs police

Differences: the pit, the policemen aren't on horseback in the video, and their sticks aren't visible,