ONYEKA

AND THE ACADEMY OF THE SUN

Written by Tọlá Okogwu

Teacher guide and activity outlines

National Literacy Trust

Change your story

In partnership with

Enterprise Mobility™

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A letter to teachers and pupils

Dear readers,

Reading is great fun. It can make you laugh, feel excited and help you learn. So all of us at Enterprise Mobility and the National Literacy Trust have teamed up to share this book with you, which we hope you enjoy as much as we have. This has been made possible by Enterprise Mobility's ROAD Forward initiative, which is working to help improve social and racial equity around the world.

National Literacy Trust and Enterprise Mobility

Our partnership

The National Literacy Trust and car rental and mobility provider Enterprise Mobility have worked in partnership for three years, gifting approximately 75,000 books to children across the UK. The partnership reaches children in communities where literacy levels are below the national average, promoting a diverse range of books and authors, so that all children feel represented in the stories they read.

This year, we are gifting 25,000 copies of *Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun*, written by Tọla Okogwu.

The partnership is part of Enterprise Mobility's ROAD Forward initiative focusing on early childhood development, youth health and wellness, and career and university preparation. It also supports the National Literacy Trust's commitment to authors from diverse backgrounds and ensuring that all children feel inspired to read.

1 in 10 children eligible for free school meals do not own a book. This partnership is key to making sure that all children have access to exciting, diverse books to spark a love of reading, improve their literacy skills and help them to achieve better grades at school.

Overview of resources

In this resource pack, you will find a series of five 30-minute reading for pleasure activities, which aim to help pupils aged 9 to 11 years (year 5/6 or p6/7) enjoy and engage with *Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun* by Tọlá Okogwu. The resources aim to foster a love of reading whilst developing pupils' experiences of diverse authors and characters. The activities explore some of the core themes, events, and characters in chapters one to three and can be found here.

Each of the five activities will begin with an exciting video by presenters Gyasi Sheppy and Sarah Lewis Obuba.

About Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun

Onyeka has a lot of hair – the kind that makes strangers stop in the street. When she makes the important discovery that she can control her hair with her mind, she's whisked off to the Academy of the Sun, a school in Nigeria where Solari – children with superpowers – are trained.

But Onyeka and her new friends at the Academy soon must put their powers to the test as they find themselves caught up in an epic battle...one that puts the future of all Solari at risk.

Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun is a thrilling superhero adventure perfect for Marvel and DC fans written by Tọlá Okogwu, a British-Nigerian author.

What resources are included?

In this teacher guide, you'll find five session outlines (each activity lasting around 30 minutes). Each session includes:

- A short film to introduce pupils to the theme of the activity and to stimulate discussion
- Discussion questions
- Outline of the pupil activity
- Short plenary

For each activity, you'll also find corresponding activity sheets, which can be found in the pupil activity pack.

You can find the videos here: **literacytrust.org.uk/resources/onyeka**

Aims

The sessions aim to:

- Foster positive attitudes towards reading
- Encourage exploration of emotions, skills of empathy and the importance of celebrating difference
- Initiate book talk and discussion

How to use the resources

The session plans and activities respond to the first three chapters of *Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun*. In sessions one to three, you'll need to start by reading each corresponding chapter as a class. Sessions four and five offer pupils the chance to reflect on their overall thoughts about all three chapters. If you don't have a copy of the book, you'll be able to read chapters one to three here.

You might choose to deliver the five sessions over the course of one week, delivering one each morning to kick-start your pupils' day with reading for pleasure! Alternatively, you may read the book and deliver the activities as part your weekly class Bookclub time (as referenced in the DFE Reading Framework 2023) as a way to recommend and discover a new text with your pupils.

Each session begins with a short video which then leads into the class discussion. Pupils will then take part in a follow up activity to further explore the theme of the session. Unless stated as a paired activity, pupils can complete the activities independently or in pairs.

National Curriculum coverage

In addition to the main aims, the activities address the following curriculum areas for pupils aged 9-11 years:

Reading for pleasure and comprehension

(From the English Programmes of Study (KS2) within the National Curriculum for England)

- Discussing understanding of a text, participating in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others' ideas, and challenging views courteously
- Develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information

PSHE Association's Programme of Study (KS2):

- To learn about respecting the differences and similarities between people and recognising what they have in common with others e.g. physically, in personality or background

Reading Framework 2023 (DfE) guidance for KS2 pupils highlights that:

- Children should read, listen to and talk about contemporary and classic writing by a broad and diverse range of authors, where the depth of ideas and language allows for rich discussion and study

- All pupils should encounter characters, situations and viewpoints that mirror their own lives, so they understand that they matter. Books, however, should also give them a window into the lives of others

The following session outlines are for Chapter One to Three of the book Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun written by Tọlá Okogwu and published by Simon and Schuster.

Share your work with us @literacy_trust #EnterpriseOnyeka

Activity one: All about Onyeka!

Activity one film:

Begin the session by watching a video featuring Tọlá herself, talking about why she wrote the book. This is the followed by our brilliant presenters Gyasi and Sarah who introduce the themes of the book and talk through some of the emotions explored throughout the first chapter.

Activity one aim:

To explore strategies for coping with strong emotions.

Discussion questions:

You will need to read chapter one before completing this activity.

- What are your first thoughts of Onyeka?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you didn't belong? How did it make you feel, and what did you do about it?
- Compare and contrast Onyeka and Cheyenne's attitudes towards fitting in. Why do you think they are different? Have their backgrounds and experiences shaped their perspectives?
- How does Cheyenne help Onyeka to accept her differences?
- How does Onyeka's mother's protectiveness influence her decisions and actions? Why do you think her mother acts this way?
- What do you think are some of the challenges individuals face when trying to fit in in a social setting? And what implications does fitting in have to them and those around them?
- Can you think of a time where you have felt confident? Why did you feel confident?

Pupil activities:

Pupils complete a range of activities which include exploring strategies for managing strong emotions, inspired by the Fibonacci method found in chapter one.

1a– Fibonacci numbers

1b – Discussion

Plenary:

After completing the activities, invite pupils to share their thoughts on the Fibonacci numbers, When would they use these? Do they know of any other strategies to help manage strong emotions? It could be counting to 5 when they are angry.

Activity two: embracing our differences

Activity two film:

Begin the session by watching video two where Sarah and Gyasi explore themes of self-confidence, self-belief and how important it is to embrace one's differences.

Activity two aim:

To explore what makes me unique, inspired by the character of Onyeka.

Discussion questions:

You will need to read chapter two before completing this activity.

- How might this part of the story be different if it were told from Cheyenne's perspective?
- Describe the main characters in the story. What traits do they possess, and how do their actions drive the plot?
- Onyeka decides to jump into the water to save Cheyenne despite not being able to swim. What does this reveal about her character and her values?
- Onyeka's hair creates a magic shield underwater and saves them both. How might Onyeka's feelings towards her hair change? What did her hair represent before the incident and now after?
- Can you relate to any of the characters' experiences or emotions? Why/why not?
- Why is it important to be unique? Why should you embrace your differences?

Pupil activities:

Pupils complete an activity exploring Onyeka's differences before reflecting on their own differences, and why it is important to embrace their own uniqueness.

2a – Onyeka's differences

2b – I am unique

Plenary:

After completing the activities, invite pupils to discuss how they are similar or different to one of the characters in the book (Onyeka, Cheyenne or Tope)?

Activity three: hair emotions

Activity three film:

Begin the session by watching video three where Sarah and Gyasi explore what makes Onyeka unique, her feelings and other emotions towards her hair, alongside the moment her hair transformed.

Activity three aim:

To explore Onyeka's feelings and actions at the end of Chapter three.

Discussion questions:

You will need to read chapter three before completing this activity.

- Explore the strained relationship between Onyeka and her mother. How does their conversation at the end of chapter three shed light on their communication barriers and underlying emotions?
- What do Onyeka's questions about her dad, her hair, and Nigeria suggest about her?
- Onyeka reflects throughout the chapter on her living situation, her room, and the absence of pictures on the walls. How do these observations make her feel and why?
- Can you relate to any of the characters' experiences or emotions? Why/ why not?
- If your difference showed itself as a superpower, what would it be?
- How does the author use language to create vivid images in your mind?

Pupil activities:

Pupils complete a range of activities which includes the dramatisation of Onyeka's hair transformation, alongside a creative activity exploring hair and emotions.

3a – Act it out (encourage pupils to all do this at the same time)

3b – Hair emotions

Plenary:

After completing the activities, invite pupils to discuss their predictions for what may happen next in the story. What does the story look like for each character? What evidence has informed their findings?

Activity four: chapter reflections

Activity four film:

Begin the session by watching video four where Sarah and Gyasi explore Onyeka and Tope's background and how this is explored throughout the chapters. The presenters reflect on their likes and dislikes of the book, alongside any burning questions they are left with at the end of chapter three.

Activity four aim:

To reflect on thoughts and feelings in the story so far.

Discussion questions:

You will need to read chapters one to three before completing this activity.

- How do you think Onyeka's perception of herself and her hair influence the choices she makes?
- Why do you think Onyeka feels uncomfortable embracing her own uniqueness? Do you think others feel this way in society?
- Reflect on how Onyeka's actions across the chapters contribute to her growth as a character. What lessons might she have learned from this experience, and how could it shape her decisions moving forward?
- The story features characters from diverse backgrounds. why do you think it's important to read stories that include characters from different cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds?
- What makes you different to others? How does this impact your thoughts and behaviour?

Pupil activities:

Pupils complete a book response activity exploring their likes and dislikes of chapters one to three, alongside reflecting on any personal connection they had to the story and questions they have after reading the first chapters.

4a – Chapter reflections

Plenary:

After completing the activities, invite pupils to discuss their reflections in pairs, in small groups and then open the discussion to the whole class. Are pupils likes, dislikes, reflections and questions similar or different?

Activity five: advice column

Activity five film:

Begin the session by watching video five where Sarah and Gyasi explore the characters of Onyeka and Cheyenne and what advice they would give if they could sit down with them both in real life.

Activity five aim:

To use knowledge of the story so far to offer advice to the characters..

Discussion questions:

You will need to read chapters one to three before completing this activity.

- What do you think the author wants you to learn or understand from this story?
- Are there any important messages or lessons the characters learn? How might those lessons apply to your own life?
- Have you ever experienced something similar to what a character is going through? How did you feel, and what did you do?
- Why is it important to consider other people's perspectives and feelings, both fictional and in real life?
- Why do you think Tola has chosen to write about Nigerian characters, who have moved from Nigeria to London? Why is it important to learn about other backgrounds and cultures?

Pupil activities:

Pupils complete a writing activity where they take the role of giving advice to the characters inspired by thoughts and actions throughout chapters one to three.

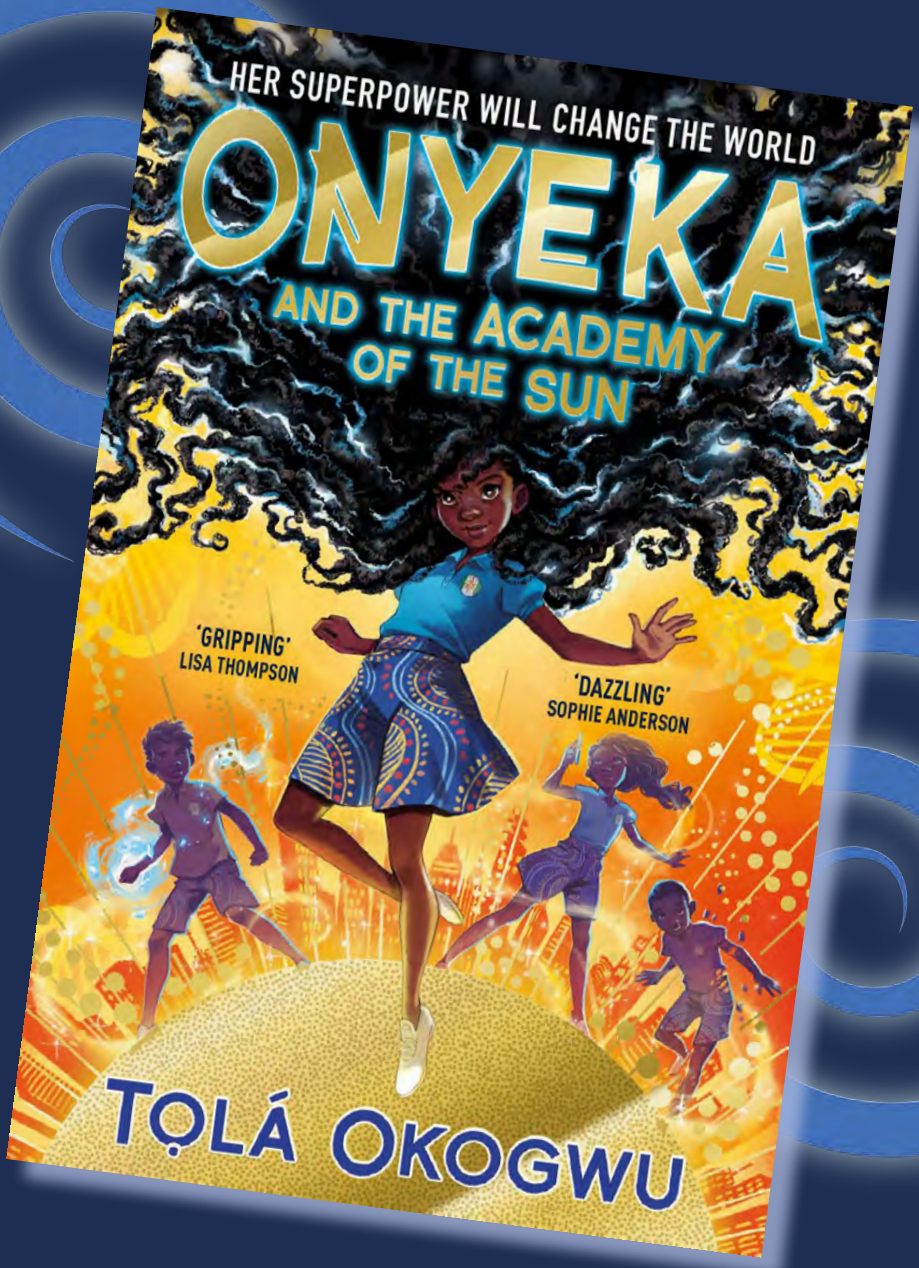
5a – Advice column

Plenary:

After completing the session, invite pupils to discuss, research and share other stories like *Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun* written by Ṭọlá Okogwu. Pupils may want to consider reading other superhero books such as *The Boy With Wings* written by Sir Lenny Henry, or *The Marvellers* written by Dhonielle Clayton to continue their reading journey.

Your class have now completed all the activities for

Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun written by Ṭọlá Okogwu



We hope your pupils enjoy reading the rest of the story, as much as we did here at The National Literacy Trust and Enterprise Mobility.

Happy reading!

Share your work with us

@literacy_trust and #EnterpriseOnyeka

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