

KS3

# DIVERSE

## short stories

Celebrating Black and Asian  
writers

TEACHING  
PACK





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## Introduction

The aim of this collection of six short stories is to foreground and celebrate the work of Black British and Asian British writers, and to introduce students to literary voices and characters they may not have encountered before. There is widespread concern about the lack of diversity in the English curriculum at GCSE; fewer than 1% of students answer an examined question at GCSE on a text by an author of colour, despite the fact that over 34% of students are Black, Asian or minority ethnic<sup>1</sup>. This teaching pack can be used to enrich curriculum delivery at KS3 to make it more representative and inclusive.

Through a variety of texts, this teaching pack also aims to introduce KS3 students to the short story form, while building their core reading, writing, oracy and analytical skills, and their understanding of literary devices, language techniques, form and structure. As a scheme of learning, it deliberately anticipates some of the most challenging skills students need to develop for KS4 study, including unseen fiction/prose analysis and creative/narrative writing skills. Ultimately, the hope is that students gain an understanding and appreciation of the short story form, and that the lessons encourage more reading for pleasure.

The teaching pack focuses on three pairs of stories written by authors of colour: experimental stories, redemptive stories and powerful short stories. You can teach the stories consecutively over a term or dip into the lessons to enrich an existing scheme, or you could use the lessons to introduce students to the comprehension and analysis skills needed for unpicking unseen fiction texts.

Alternatively, the stories could be paired thematically to encourage classroom discussion about a range of topics, from wellbeing and mental health, to loss, love, belonging, or race and identity. You may also wish to explore how narrative perspectives have changed by looking at the texts chronologically, starting with Langston Hughes' 1958 story, and ending with Jeffrey Boakye's 2022 story 'Into the Future'. This will help students understand and appreciate a range of cultural and social contexts and changing ideologies and attitudes.

Depending on your class, you may also wish to discuss *intersectionality*, a term students will probably not be aware of. It can be used to help them to understand how multiple forms of overlapping oppressions – shaped by sexism, racism, poverty, homophobia and other forms of discrimination and violence – affect our lives in nuanced and context-specific ways. Time permitting, the stories also lead themselves to wider classroom discussion about a range of highly relevant contextual issues in British society, such as hate crimes, racism and other forms of prejudice; poverty and social inequality; and the experience of migrants and refugees.

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<sup>1</sup> [litincolour.penguin.co.uk](https://litincolour.penguin.co.uk)

## Teaching pack overview

Aimed at year 7-9 students, this teaching pack provides an overview of the key features of short stories along with a range of comprehension tasks to build students' confidence with new texts, as well as word decoding activities to build students' vocabulary. There are also exciting stimulus ideas for creative writing tasks to develop their fiction writing skills. Alongside a detailed scheme of learning for a term, there are 12 complete lesson plans, which include:

- **Do now activities**
- **Starter activities**
- **Three or four main activities** with embedded formative assessment tasks, learning checks and reading comprehension questions.
- **Plenary activities**
- **Extension/homework tasks**

Each lesson is accompanied by a student-facing PowerPoint presentation, which works in tandem with the photocopiable teaching pack and classroom worksheets. Suggested answers, where appropriate, are included in both the PowerPoints and the teaching pack for marking in class.

The lessons include a range of differentiated activities, with stretch and challenge extension activities as well as more supportive ladder-up tasks, sentence starters and scaffolded resources. The pack culminates in a (GCSE-style) summative assessment task with a mark scheme.

You'll find a list of suggestions for other writers and short story collections you could share with students if you wish to encourage more diverse reading for pleasure on page 109.

## Equality, diversity & inclusion notes

This teaching pack includes stories by popular and award-winning British writers such as Alex Wheatle and Bali Rai, who write for young adults, as well as celebrated masters of the short story form such as Kit de Waal and Langston Hughes, the only American writer in the collection.

Please bear in mind that some of these stories might be challenging to teach because they raise a number of potentially sensitive or triggering issues. You may wish to introduce the stories with the caveat that they explore diverse, lived experiences and encourage students then to listen and learn in a sensitive, respectful manner. Kit de Waal and Langston Hughes' stories touch on poverty and deprivation, while Alex Wheatle's story references abuse and pain. If students read about his life, they will learn that he was sadly the victim of neglect and sexual and physical abuse in the UK's care system.

Dorothy Koomson's story ends in a twist, with the realisation that a parent has died. Bali Rai's story will need very sensitive handling in the classroom, given that it touches on racism and gang violence among teenagers, leading to a violent denouement with lasting consequences. It was written in response to the brutal, racist murder of Anthony Walker. The collection ends with Jeffrey Boakye's compelling and thought-provoking story, which imagines a future world without racism.



## About the short story writers



Kit de Waal



Alex Wheatle



Dorothy Koomson



Langston Hughes



Bali Rai



Jeffrey Boakye

**Kit de Waal** was born in Birmingham to working class parents, and has an Irish mother and a Caribbean father. She is best known for her short stories and flash fiction.

**Alex Wheatle MBE** is a celebrated writer of young adult (YA) fiction, and author of the popular Crongton series, as well as his award-winning *Small Axe* films.

**Dorothy Koomson** is from London and Leeds, and is a best-selling author of contemporary thrillers.

**Langston Hughes** (1902-67) was a celebrated American social activist, writer and poet, famous for his short stories.

**Bali Rai** is from Leicester. He is an award-winning YA and children's author, whose aim is that his writing should be enjoyed by readers everywhere, irrespective of class or culture.

**Jeffrey Boakye** is an author, broadcaster, educator and occasional journalist with a particular interest in issues surrounding education, race, masculinity and popular culture.

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© Justin David, Kit de Waal (2020), [commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=111520253](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=111520253)

© Southbank Centre - Female Friendship, Dorothy Koomson March 2014, [commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57941412](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57941412)

## Lesson 5: 'Promise Me' by Dorothy Koomson

Learning objectives, Knowledge/skills, Resource list	Activities	Suggested timings	Differentiation notes
<b>Learning objective:</b> Students will understand the impact of first-person narrative on a reader. Students will understand how verbs in dialogue and speech can be used to convey character and relationships.	<b>Do now: Exploring themes in the story</b> Students consider the meaning of the word 'redemptive' and use it in a sentence.	5-10 mins	Put students in higher/lower attainment pairings for this task if possible or provide dictionaries for support.
<b>Knowledge:</b> How to make predictions. How to infer. Understanding the effect of language on a reader. Considering the effect of first and third-person narrative forms.	<b>Starter: Reading comprehension</b> Students answer the questions on the opening extract of the story.	5-10 mins	Discuss answers briefly.
<b>Skills:</b> Reading (skimming, visualising texts, summarising, predicting, inferring) Analytical writing Understanding a writer's choices (language and form) Oracy	<b>Main activities: Characterisation, dialogue, and first person narration</b> <b>Activity 1:</b> Students discuss the relationship between the boy and the mother in the extract. <b>Activity 2:</b> Students look at three further extracts and consider dialogue and speech verbs. <b>Activity 3:</b> Students predict what will happen next in the story and consider the redemptive theme of the story. <b>Activity 4:</b> Students consider the use and effect of first-person narration (informal language, intimate, conversational style, foregrounding of narrator's thoughts and feelings etc.). Ask students to rewrite it using third-person narration.	30 mins	<b>Stretch and challenge:</b> Students explore the writer's use of language (dialogue, exclamatory sentences, adjectives etc.) to reveal character and relationship. <b>Ladder up:</b> Some students may need additional support with the rewriting task, including a sentence starter.
<b>Resources:</b> Story and classroom resources can be found on pages 42-48 of the teaching pack. Sticky notes.	<b>Plenary: First or third-person narration</b> Students reflect on the effect of narrative style following their writing experiment and answer the discursive questions.	5-10 mins	
<b>Homework</b>	a. Students read 'Promise Me' at home. b. Ask students to find another example of a story or chapter from a book that is written in the first person and complete the table on page 46 of the teaching pack.		

# Lesson 4

## Section 1: Experimental short stories

### ‘Dear Nobody’ by Alex Wheatle (2019)



Alex Wheatle

#### Do now: Reader response

Last lesson, we read Alex Wheatle’s powerful epistolary story, ‘Dear Nobody’.

Look at the story again on page 32.

How did you feel when you read the story? What emotions did the writer create in you as a reader?



#### Starter: Summarising

In pairs, summarise what you think the story (letter) is about in two or three succinct sentences.

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#### Stretch and challenge

If you read the article in *The Guardian* about Alex Wheatle’s early life for homework, can you think of anything relevant from his life that is also relevant in the story?

**Activity 1: Reading comprehension**

1. Look at the opening sentences of the story and at the words in bold. What is the effect of these words?

‘I hear your **wailing** every night. My heart senses your **pain**. My brain stores your memories. I have lived through your **agonies**.’

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2. What’s interesting about how Wheatle describes Hope?

‘So hold on to Hope. I know he is tiny and fragile. I know he’s sick. I know you cannot see him in the dark...’

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3. What metaphors does Wheatle use to describe how difficult it has been for ‘older self’ to save ‘Nobody’?

‘Yes, I’m coming back for you Nobody. It’s been a long road, full of wrong signs and deep holes – the odd mountain too.’

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4. Towards the end of the story, Wheatle uses an extended metaphor of sleep:

‘Most of the time you were both asleep ... But then you both woke’.

What is the effect of this on the reader?

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## Activity 2: Exploring the writer’s craft

‘Dear Nobody’ is written in an unusual, experimental way for a short story. Let’s consider some of the techniques Alex Wheatle uses to make his writing so powerful and affecting.

You will work in groups on one of the tasks below.

### Group 1: Emotive language

Look at some of the emotive language that the writer uses (words that evoke an emotional response).

Create a vocabulary map of these words. Can you group any of the words together? What is the effect Wheatle creates with these words?

Group 1:

Group 2:

Group 3:

Group 4:

Group 5:

Group 6:

### Group 2: Pronouns

Wheatle uses the **first person pronoun** ‘I’ and **second person pronoun** ‘you’ throughout the story, while emotions are personified as **third person pronouns** ‘s/he’.

Find examples of each and comment on their effect on the reader.

#### First person pronoun ‘I’

Example:

Effect on the reader:

#### Second person pronoun ‘you’

Example:

Effect on the reader:

#### Third person pronouns ‘he/she’

Example:

Effect on the reader:

### Group 3: Sentence style and length

Wheatle uses a **conversational style** and **deliberately short** and **elliptical sentences** in the story. *Elliptical* is when words are missing (to make it more concise or conversational).

Find examples of each and comment on their effect on the reader.

#### Conversational style

Example:

Effect on the reader:

#### Deliberately short

Example:

Effect on the reader:

#### Elliptical sentences

Example:

Effect on the reader:

### Activity 3: Writing analytically

We’ve learnt that Alex Wheatle uses a variety of techniques in the story to give it such power and impact, including:

- personification
- pronouns
- short and elliptical sentences
- emotive language.

Choose your favourite technique and a quotation to illustrate it.

Technique: .....

Quote:

Why did you find this technique so effective in the story?

Write an analytical sentence. You may wish to use PEE, PEEL, PETER or any other writing framework you find helpful.

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### Extension: Why is this story experimental?

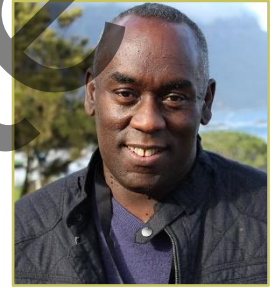
Discuss why you think the writer chose to use an epistolary form for this story.

### Plenary: Give me five!

Choose five new words, five images or five literary or language techniques to summarise today’s lesson.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.

# Lesson 4



Alex Wheatle

‘Dear Nobody’ by Alex Wheatle (2019)

*Do now:* Reader response

Last lesson, we read Alex Wheatle’s powerful epistolary story, ‘Dear Nobody’.

Look at the story again.

How did you feel when you read the story? What emotions did the writer create in you as a reader?

# Lesson 4 'Dear Nobody' by Alex Wheatle (2019)



## Starter: Summarising

In pairs, summarise what you think the story (letter) is about in two or three succinct sentences.

## Stretch and challenge:



If you read the article in *The Guardian* about Alex Wheatle's early life for homework, can you think of anything relevant from his life that is also relevant in the story?



# Lesson 4 ‘Dear Nobody’ by Alex Wheatle (2019)

## Activity 1: Reading comprehension

1. Look at the opening sentences of the story and at the words in bold. What is the effect of these words?

‘I hear your **wailing** every night. My heart senses your **pain**. My brain stores your memories. I have lived through your **agonies**.’

2. What’s interesting about how Wheatle describes Hope?

‘So hold on to Hope. I know he is tiny and fragile. I know he’s sick. I know you cannot see him in the dark...’

3. What metaphors does Wheatle use to describe how difficult it has been for ‘older self’ to save ‘Nobody’?

‘Yes, I’m coming back for you Nobody. It’s been a long road, full of wrong signs and deep holes – the odd mountain too.’

4. Towards the end of the story, Wheatle uses an extended metaphor of sleep: ‘Most of the time you were both asleep... But then you both woke’.

What is the effect of this on the reader?

# Answers

## Activity 1: Reading comprehension

1. The words in bold have connotations of pain and suffering. This is a very dramatic opening, which immediately draws the reader in.
2. Hope is personified and Wheatle uses words associated with illness and vulnerability like 'fragile', 'sick' and 'tiny' to suggest that hope is something to be protected.
3. Wheatle uses the metaphors of a road and a mountain to suggest that it is a difficult journey.
4. The extended metaphor of sleep and awakening suggests to the reader that 'Nobody' will be saved.

# Lesson 4 'Dear Nobody' by Alex Wheatle (2019)

## Activity 2: Analysing the writer's craft

'Dear Nobody' is written in an unusual, experimental way for a short story. Let's consider some of the techniques Alex Wheatle uses to make his writing so powerful and affecting.

You will work in groups on one of the tasks below.

### Group 1: Emotive language

Group 1:	Group 2:
Group 3:	Group 4:
Group 5:	Group 6:

### Group 2: Pronouns

<b>First person pronoun 'I'</b> Example:  Effect on the reader:	<b>Second person pronoun 'you'</b> Example:  Effect on the reader:
<b>Third person pronouns 'he/she'</b> Example:  Effect on the reader:	

### Group 3: Sentence style and length

<b>Conversational style</b> Example:  Effect on the reader:	<b>Deliberately short</b> Example:  Effect on the reader:
<b>Elliptical sentences</b> Example:  Effect on the reader:	

# Lesson 4 'Dear Nobody' by Alex Wheatle (2019)

## Activity 2: Analysing the writer's craft

### Group 1: Emotive language

Look at some of the emotive language that the writer uses (words that evoke an emotional response).

Create a vocabulary map of these words. Can you group any of the words together? What is the effect Wheatle creates with these words?

Group 1:	Group 2:
Group 3:	Group 4:
Group 5:	Group 6:

# Lesson 4 'Dear Nobody' by Alex Wheatle (2019)

## Activity 2: Analysing the writer's craft

### Group 2: Pronouns

Wheatle uses the **first person pronoun 'I'** and **second person pronoun 'you'** throughout the story, while emotions are personified as **third person pronouns 'he/she'**.

Find examples of each and comment on their effect on the reader.

First person pronoun 'I'

Example:

Effect on the reader:

Second person pronoun 'you'

Example:

Effect on the reader:

Third person pronouns 'he/she'

Example:

Effect on the reader:



# Lesson 4 'Dear Nobody' by Alex Wheatle (2019)

## Activity 2: Analysing the writer's craft

### Group 3:

### Sentence style and length

Wheatle uses a **conversational style** and **deliberately short and elliptical sentences** in the story. *Elliptical* is when words are missing (to make it more concise or conversational).

Find examples of each and comment on their effect on the reader.

#### Conversational style

Example:

Effect on the reader:

#### Deliberately short

Example:

Effect on the reader:

#### Elliptical sentences

Example:

Effect on the reader:

# Possible answers

## Group 1: Emotive language

### Group 1: memory

- memories
- past

### Group 2: suffering

- pain
- agonies
- wounds

### Group 3: darkness

- night
- dark
- blind

### Group 4: loneliness

- alone
- abandoned
- empty
- humiliation

### Group 5: illness

- sick
- recovery
- fragile
- nurse him

### Group 6: trauma

- screaming
- wailing
- wounds

# Answers

## Group 2: Pronouns

By repeatedly using 'I' and 'you' throughout the story, the writer creates the impression of that the letter-writer/narrator/'older self' is directly and intimately addressing his or her younger, neglected self, 'Nobody'. The use of 's/he' pronouns for emotions suggests that there is more of a distance.

# Answers

## Group 3:

### Sentence style and length

**Conversational style:** In the story, Alex Wheatle uses a conversational style to create a feeling of intimacy with the fictional reader of the letter, 'Nobody', by using the informal language of speech: 'Yes, I'm coming for you, Nobody'. This also draws the reader into the story.

**Deliberately short:** Alex Wheatle also uses deliberately short sentences for impact and drama at the beginning of the story: 'My heart senses your pain. My brain stores your memories'.

**Elliptical sentences:** The writer uses incomplete and elliptical sentences to add to the conversational, intimate style of his epistolary story: 'But he is there. Nurture him, nurse him. One day he might grow big.'

# Lesson 4 'Dear Nobody' by Alex Wheatle (2019)

## Activity 3: Writing analytically

We've learnt that Alex Wheatle uses a variety of techniques in the story to give it such power and impact, including:

- personification
- short and elliptical sentences
- pronouns
- emotive language.

Choose your favourite technique and a quotation to illustrate it.

Why did you find this technique so effective in the story?

Write an analytical sentence. You may wish to use PEE, PEEL, PETER or any other writing framework you find helpful.



# Lesson 4 'Dear Nobody' by Alex Wheatle (2019)

*Extension:* Why is this story experimental?

Discuss why you think the writer chose to use an epistolary form for this story.

*Plenary:* Give me five!

Choose five new words, five images or five literary or language techniques to summarise today's lesson.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
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