

# Teaching Notes & Resources

Key Stage 2-3

Themes: Neurodiversity | Friendship |  
Self Belief | The Power of Poetry & Art

Purchase  
*Wider than the Sea*



SCAN ME

# Introduction

## About the Book

**The powerful tale of a girl who feels broken, and the dolphin who makes her whole. A story of friendship, hope and self-discovery, perfect for readers aged 9+.**

Ró finds school impossible. She knows people think she's shy – and stupid. But when she goes to the bay each afternoon to watch the dolphin leap through the water, she finds the strength to keep going. Then the dolphin disappears, and everything starts falling apart.

Can Ró overcome her fears to find him?

*I watch each rise and dip of wave  
know Sunny must be out there  
somewhere  
wonder if he's missing me.  
I remember that moment  
when I touched his skin  
and know that finding him  
is the only thing  
that can make  
the aching stop  
make me feel  
not broken.*



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# Contents

## Theme 1 – What Only I Can See

Objectives: Identify how the writer uses interesting form and structure to tell Ró's story; write a poem in which you experiment with form and structure.

## Theme 2 – *Holes*

Activities: Discuss the impact of epilepsy; pick out examples of supportive words and actions from the text.

Objectives: Begin to understand how epilepsy may affect those who live with it; discuss ways to help and support others.

## Theme 3 – Wider Than The Sea

Objectives: Understand that everyone's brains are unique and brilliant in different ways; design a stained-glass window to express yourself and your creativity.



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# Theme 1 - What Only I Can See

Read the below extract from pages 1-2 of *Wider than the Sea*

## WHAT ONLY I CAN SEE

I watch the **RAINDROPS**  
dapple the window  
as Mr K sits back  
feet crossed on his desk  
like he's at the flippin' beach.

The classroom's *warm* and stuffy  
stinks of  
boy-sweat  
and **DAMP** grass  
and someone's pasta pesto lunch.

Afternoon-quiet settled  
over all of us.

I stare at the window  
each blob of water *glistens*  
when the sun comes out.

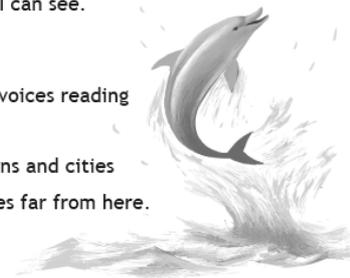


And in my head  
I start to connect the **RAINDROPS**  
like those join-the-dot pictures  
and slowly  
slowly  
something begins to appear.

Mr K glances round the room  
asks for volunteers  
the try-hard hands shoot up.

Carefully I slide my notebook out  
from beneath my *Small World* book  
and sketch the leaping *dolphin*  
made from the shimmering **DROPLETS**  
that only I can see.

Listen to the words  
different voices reading  
droning on and on  
fancy towns and cities  
places far from here.



## Discussion Questions

- What is meant by the form and structure of a text? Share the definitions below
- What do you notice about the form and structure of the extract? What is different or unusual about it?
- What is happening in the extract? How do you think Ró is feeling?
- Why do you think the writer tells Ró's story in this way? How does she convey what Ró is experiencing, thinking and feeling?
- How does Ró react when Mr K asks for volunteers? Why do you think the writer has chosen the title 'What Only I Can See' for this extract?

**Form:** the shape, outline, or configuration of anything  
**Structure:** the way in which [something] is made, built, or organised

**Source: Collins Dictionary**



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# Theme 1 - What Only I Can See

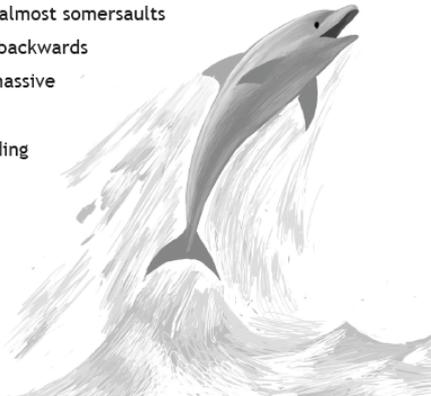
## Activity: Writing a Poem

In *Wider Than The Sea*, Ró's story is told through a series of powerful connected poems. In small groups, look over the three extracts below. Discuss and note down examples of interesting **form**, **structure**, and use of **illustrations**. Think carefully about how these examples influence your reading of the text.

Extracts from pages 8, 184 and 205 of *Wider than the Sea*

Again

closer now  
he shoots up  
out of the waves  
higher this time  
his body twists  
and turns  
like one **GIANT** muscle  
so much power  
he almost somersaults  
landing backwards  
with a massive  
slap  
then sliding  
down  
into  
the  
water.



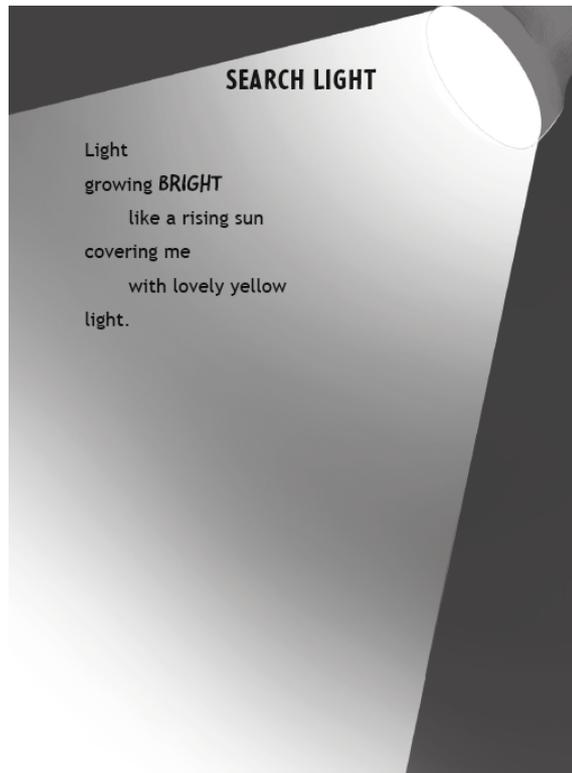
## ESCAPE

Running but don't know where I'm going  
running to leave them all behind  
running to stop the hurting  
running to escape myself  
running to become  
anyone  
but  
me.



## SEARCH LIGHT

Light  
growing **BRIGHT**  
like a rising sun  
covering me  
with lovely yellow  
light.



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# Theme 2 - Holes

Read pages 15-16 of *Wider than the Sea*

Unbertheat of the Teexansun to ereisaqlace  
that is so far tom ewer where aqlace  
where monowants

The letters

too tightly packed

all fighting with each other.

'Let's get cracking'

Mr K says

tells us to open our books

and read the first ten pages

to ourselves

while he writes questions

on the board.

I find the first page

and now a load of words

**DANGING**

and *spinning*

and **WIGGLING**

every single one

15

laughing

laughing

laughing

at me.

I want to tell this Sachar fella

I already hate his **STUPID** silly book

would

**LOVE**

to

take

it

outside

and

dig

**dig**

a

big

fat

**HOLE**

and bury it

forever.

16

## Discussion Questions

- What happens to the letters and words on the page when Ró starts reading?
- How does the writer structure the text to convey Ró's difficulty reading? Give examples.
- What is dyslexia? Is it the same for everyone? Explain why/why not.
- How do you think Ró is feeling at this point in the story? Give examples from the text to support your ideas.
- How could Mr K help Ró so that she doesn't 'hate' reading? Who else could support Ró at school and at home?

**Dyslexia** is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points. Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.

Source: British Dyslexia Association



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# Theme 2 - Holes

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The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) acknowledges the visual and auditory processing difficulties that some individuals with dyslexia can experience, and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process. Some also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.

**Source: British Dyslexia Association**



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# Theme 3 - Wider than the Sea

Read pages 149-150 of *Wider than the Sea*

## WIDER THAN THE SEA

When Ms C asks me  
to stay behind  
I already know  
what it's about.

'This homework'  
she says  
my English copy open  
on the homework page  
'You struggled with the writing?'

I look at the muddled  
**messy**  
marks I've made.  
Before  
I'd want to rub them out  
make them disappear  
feel embarrassed by my work  
but now  
I tell myself

149

I  
don't  
care.  
I shrug  
not wanting to answer her  
not wanting to let her see  
one inch  
inside of me.

'You know, Ró  
you have this **LIGHT**  
this golden **LIGHT**  
inside of you.'  
She's staring now  
her eyes fixed on mine.  
'I've seen your sketches  
that **beautiful** painting of the dolphin.  
Inside here—'  
she taps my head  
'is vast and **wonderful** and **amazing**.  
It's . . . it's higher than the stars  
it's wider than . . .'

150

she looks around  
out towards the Atlantic  
'**IT'S WIDER THAN THE SEA.**  
This thing with words  
is tiny  
a little blip in your big blue ocean.  
We can overcome it.  
YOU can overcome it.  
But here's the thing, Ró  
how your brain works  
also makes you you.  
Gives you all this **amazing** talent  
lets you see the world  
in such a **unique** way.'



151

## Discussion Questions

- Why does Ms C ask Ró to stay behind? How does Ró respond?
- What do you think Ró means by 'not wanting to let her see one inch inside of me'? Give reasons for your ideas.
- Which metaphor does Ms C use to reassure Ró? What does it mean?
- How are Ms C and Mr K different? List examples from the extracts and the rest of the story.
- What does the author mean by 'wider than the sea'? How does art enable Ró to express her ideas and believe in herself?



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# Theme 3 - Wider than the Sea

## Activity: Your Golden Light

An important idea running throughout the story is that people's brains are different, and everyone experiences and interacts with the world in different ways – this is called **neurodiversity**.

Each person has a brain that is unique to them; no two brains are quite the same. Some people's brains simply work in a different way. For at least 20% of the UK's adult population, these differences mean they are not seen as 'neurotypical' and may be diagnosed with neurological conditions such as autism spectrum condition (ASC), dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Neurodiversity is the concept that brain differences are natural variations – not deficits, disorders or impairments.

**Source: The Brain Charity**



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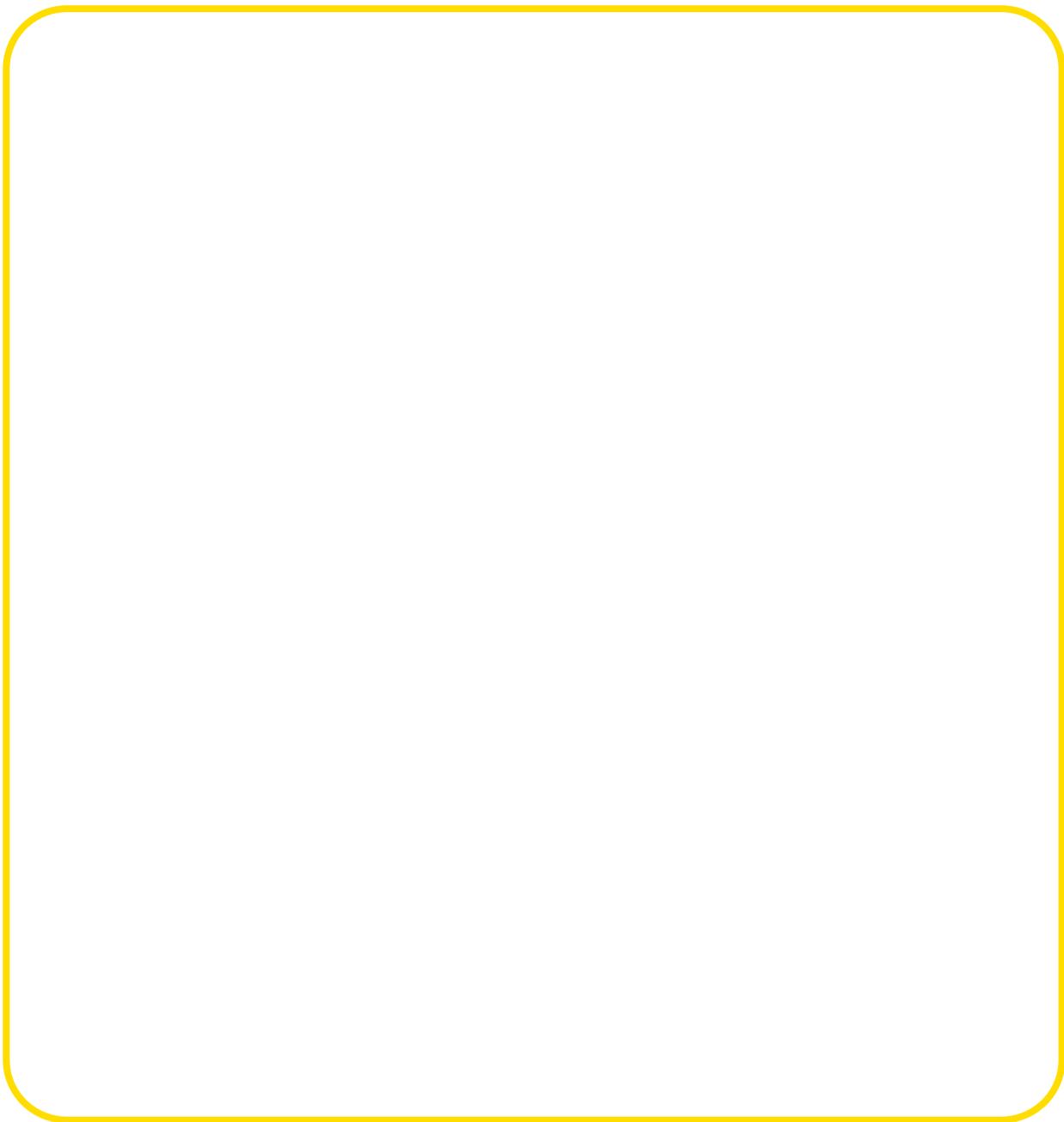


# Theme 3 - Wider than the Sea

## Activity: Your Golden Light

Even though Ró finds reading and writing difficult, she has other strengths. This is shown in her manga comic illustrations of 'Girl Awesome' and her winning stained-glass window design of Sunny.

Design your own stained-glass window to express 'the golden light inside of you'. This could be a self-portrait, a picture of someone or something special to you, a place, or anything else that allows you to express yourself and your creativity. Put this picture up somewhere at home to remind you to be proud of who you are.



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