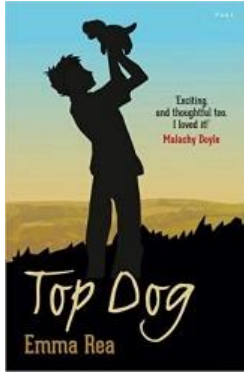




Top Dog Emma Rea

Shortlisted for the
Read Aloud Category 2016

Guided Reading notes



With the whole of the summer holidays stretching out before him, Dylan has plans – big plans. Along with his little brother and his best friends, he wants to build a bike track in the fields and woodlands surrounding their homes. However, the arrival of a new boy – a townie – to their village in rural Wales sparks tension and results in conflict as Dylan struggles to keep his plans on track. Dylan sees the newcomer, Floyd, as arrogant and takes an instant dislike to him. Dylan's brother and friends, however, like Floyd; they are in awe of his big house and cool toys, quickly earning their friendship and respect. Ultimately, Dylan is left isolated from the group as they welcome Floyd into their fold, something Dylan refuses to accept. Seeing his plans for a perfect summer crumble, Dylan seeks refuge in his grandfather's barns where he is kept company by a litter of puppies. Here as Dylan dwells on his anger and the injustice of his situation, he begins to learn more about his grandfather and he takes a

real shine to one of the puppies. His relationship with the puppy eventually becomes pivotal to Dylan's story. To fill his time, Dylan comes up with a new plan- one to make his friends jealous and to show Floyd that he (Dylan) is just as good as him. To succeed with his plan, Dylan needs money and busies himself in the weeks ahead becoming a little entrepreneur, raising the funds he needs.

As the relationship between Dylan and his brother and friends continues to deteriorate, Dylan becomes increasingly frustrated. In anger and pride, he says things and acts in ways that are completely out of character, only pushing his friends and family further away and cementing the rift between them. Eventually, Dylan is forced to ask himself some tough questions. Did he judge Floyd unfairly? Is he to blame for the breakdown of his friendships? Or could it be that Floyd is hiding something and is not who he says he is?

Chapter	Possible questions:	Possible writing opportunities:
One:	<p>What does the opening paragraph of page 5 suggest about Dylan? <i>Like a Fanta spurting out of a shaken bottle...</i> Explain how this simile is effective here.</p> <p>Why hasn't Dylan noticed the other boy?</p> <p>Find a word on page 6 which indicates that the new boy is not friendly.</p> <p>How long have Matt and Dylan been friends?</p> <p>Why are his friends confused by Dylan's 'best idea'?</p> <p><i>A silence hung in the air.</i> Why has the author chosen to add this sentence here?</p> <p>What is Dylan's relationship with his brother like? Use evidence from the text to support your ideas.</p>	Write the 'meeting' between Dylan and the new boy from the new boy's point of view.
Two:	<p>Look at the first two paragraphs on page 11. What impression do you get of Dad's workshop?</p> <p>What impressions do you get of the different boys in this section? (pgs 11-14)</p> <p>Why has the author used the word 'artificial' on page 13?</p> <p>What news does Dylan's mum share with the boys at tea time?</p> <p>Which word on page 15 is similar in meaning to 'distinct'?</p> <p>What reasons does Dylan give for not wanting to meet the new boy?</p> <p>Which phrase suggests that Dylan is uneasy about the new boy's arrival?</p>	
Three:	<p>What does the word 'cocooned' suggest about how Dylan is feeling at this point?</p> <p><i>Dylan reckoned...</i> What does this paragraph tell the reader about Dylan's personality?</p> <p>Why do you think the boy reacts as he does when he sees Dylan and Tommo?</p> <p>Floyd says Tommo can keep a transformer. Do you think he does this to be kind? Explain your ideas.</p>	Write a diary entry in role as Dylan, exploring how he feels about the events in this chapter.

	<p>How does Floyd know that Dylan is interested in the rollerblades? What impression does the reader get of Floyd in this chapter? Give examples from the text.</p>	
Four:	<p>Dylan and Tommo's reactions to Floyd are very different. Why do you think this is? <i>There was a dangerous silence for a heartbeat...</i> How do these words convey a sense of tension? Why is Dylan so surprised that Matt doesn't agree with him? How does everything go 'wrong'? Do you think Dylan was right to act as he did?</p>	
Five:	<p>Why don't mum and dad like Dylan being at his Grandfather's too much? How does Gramp's shed differ to dad's? Explain how Dylan sees people. Which of his descriptions do you think is best? How does he see Floyd? How many puppies did Bella have? What 'advice' does Gramp give Dylan?</p>	<p>Find out about how to look after puppies and write a guide for others.</p>
Six:	<p>Which bike does Dylan want? How much money will he need to earn to be able to buy it? Why do you think Tommo kept coming first in the course Floyd had set up? How do you think Dylan's mum feels about him wanting to earn that much money? How can you tell? What problems can Dylan's mum see with his car washing idea?</p>	
Seven:	<p>Find a word similar in meaning to 'destroying' on page 39. What impression does the reader get of Tommo from the way he speaks? Why does Dylan wish he had had time to think before answering Tommo on page 39? <i>Perhaps he would let Floyd tag along.</i> What do the words 'tag along' imply about how Dylan sees Floyd's role in the group? Why has the author chosen to conclude this chapter with a series of questions? In this chapter, Dylan talks to the puppy and frees the sheep. How does the author show that he loves animals through these encounters?</p>	
Eight:	<p>Read the opening paragraph carefully. How has the author built a sense of Dylan's anger through her word and punctuation choices? Why are the boys so surprised by Dylan's reaction? <i>'...and that was it.'</i> What do these words suggest? What new plan does Dylan come up with?</p>	<p>Write in role as Dylan, exploring his feelings about the events of this chapter.</p>
Nine:	<p>Find one word in the opening paragraph that suggests that Dylan's mum is in a hurry. Which words tell us that Dylan enjoys market day? What makes him choose the spot near the cheese stall to set out his figures? What was 'like magic'? Which words show that Dylan is not pleased to see Floyd? Look at the paragraph which begins <i>"Yeah, just a load of rubbish."</i> Why does Dylan say this? What does this and his later reaction tell us about his character?</p>	
Ten:	<p><i>I think it means we have to try, Dylan.</i> Do you agree with mum's statement? Explain your reasoning. Why doesn't Dylan want to see Old Gwenni at this moment? <i>She had milky tea with three sugars running through her veins...</i> What impression do you get of Old Gwenni from this description? Which word on page 60 is similar in meaning to 'intentional'? <i>It was Floyd.</i> Both Floyd and Dylan have shown anger in this chapter. In what ways has this been different and what does that tell us about their personalities? Why doesn't Dylan make it up with Tommo?</p>	
Eleven:	<p>Why does Gramp laugh when Dylan tells him that he's working hard? Name three things Dylan has to do when washing a car? <i>Each day as Dylan toiled away...</i> What does 'toiled' mean in this sentence?</p>	

	<p>What does Gramp tell Dylan a crowbar is for? How have the puppies changed? What impression do you get of Dylan when he is with the puppies? Find a word on page 65 similar in meaning to 'sturdy'.</p>	
Twelve:	<p>Name three things you are told about the piano tuner? Which group of words on page 66 is similar in meaning to 'reconsider'? What do the words 'blissfully isolated' suggest? Where does Dylan think the other boys have been? Why is Dylan so determined that Floyd will be the one to move this time? At the end of the chapter, Dylan is 'seething with anger'. Is he angry with Floyd, the other or himself? Explain your thinking.</p>	
Thirteen:	<p>What does 'perpetual' mean? How does Dylan make his mother laugh? Why is the word <i>his</i> in italics on page 73? How can you tell that Matt doesn't really know what to say in this situation? <i>All the laughter and colour drained from her face...</i> What does this tell us about how Dylan's mum is feeling?</p>	<p>Do you think Dylan is overreacting to this situation or is he right to feel this way? Explain.</p>
Fourteen:	<p>What evidence is there that Gramp likes dogs on page 76? <i>He's like the wrong piece in a jigsaw...</i> Do you think this is a good way of explaining how Dylan feels about Floyd? Does Gramp agree with Dylan? What is the meaning of 'glowered' on page 78? Why do you think Dylan feels 'sillier than he'd ever done in his life before'?</p>	
Fifteen:	<p>What do you think Dylan will find in Floyd's house? Which word on page 80 is similar in meaning to 'accessory'? Why does the door being locked surprise him? From the photograph, how has Floyd changed? What surprises Dylan about Floyd's room? What does the list Dylan sees suggest? <i>...a pair of yellow gloves ... seemed to beckon him...</i> Why has the author chosen to use the word 'beckon' in this sentence?</p>	
Sixteen:	<p><i>Gramp ... 'never found his groove'.</i> What do these words suggest about Gramp and how other people see him? What evidence is there that Gramp doesn't behave as other people would like/expect him to? Why doesn't Gramp have the money for the puppies' injections? Why can't they keep Megs? What stops Dylan from speaking to Tommo?</p>	<p>Megs is a pedigree sheep dog. Find out about this breed.</p>
Seventeen:	<p>How does Dylan know that Matt has said something to his mum about their friendship? Who do you think the 'she' is that Dylan's mum says she can't ask to the house? Why? Why does Gramp say they can't let the woman choose a puppy? What does he mean? Why does Dylan call Boadicea the 'top dog'? What does this mean? What impression do you get of the woman who came to buy a puppy? How does Gramp signal to Dylan? How are Gramp's words on page 92 particularly pertinent to Dylan's situation? How are Polly and the piano tuner well suited?</p>	<p>Is it right to breed animals and sell them when there are so many in shelters that need re-homing?</p>
Eighteen:	<p>Which word on page 94 is similar in meaning to 'flourishing'? Why has the author chosen this word here? What is the reason for Floyd's different hairstyles? <i>A pang of guilt slithered through Dylan's mind...</i> Why has the author chosen to use these words? Who do you think is right at this point in the story- Dylan or Tommo? Give evidence from the story to support your ideas.</p>	<p>Write in role as Tommo, exploring his feelings towards his brother at this point.</p>
Nineteen:	<p>What keeps distracting Dylan from his vision? Why is Gramp looking so upset?</p>	

	Why did mum think she was doing the right thing?	
Twenty:	Which word suggests that Dylan is not really feeling anything at the moment? Dylan now describes his mum as ' <i>still, in essence, a strawberry- but a very squashed one</i> '. How is this effective? How can we tell Tommo is worried about Megs? <i>I've got everything...</i> How do these words mean very different things to each of the boys? What do we learn about Floyd in this chapter? What 'clues' has Dylan read all wrong? <i>As if you'd give anyone a second chance...</i> Do you think Floyd is right to say this to Dylan? What has Dylan done to make him think this?	Write in role as Floyd, exploring how he has been feeling this summer about Dylan and the situation with his father and brother.
Twenty-one:	What does 'immobile' mean in this sentence? Why are the mothers being so polite to one another? Why doesn't Tommo's voice sound quite right? How does Floyd react when he sees Dylan? In what ways does the atmosphere change now Dylan has arrived? Which words tell us Dylan is not comfortable in this situation?	
Twenty-two:	What has happened to Megs? What does 'pining' mean? What does the word 'bolted' suggest about how Megs moved? <i>Floyd's face went scarlet as he said this...</i> What does this suggest about how Floyd is feeling? What are the boys thinking when they reach the water? Why does Dylan look to Floyd before moving to get Megs? Which word tells suggests that Dylan moves slowly along the trunk? Give two reasons Dylan thinks that Floyd deserves Megs.	Re-write the rescue scene as if it were a newspaper article.
Twenty-three:	Name three things the boys have been doing. How has Dylan changed by the end of the story? Why does he choose not to go over the fallen tree?	Write three words which you think best describe this story. Write a review of the story, making sure you say who you think would enjoy it and why.
Questions about the whole story	What do you think the title of the story means? Why do you think the author chose it? The old oak tree appears several times in the story. Why do you think Emma Rea chose to add this? The weather changes at certain parts of the story. How does it reflect what is happening in the narrative? Can you think of examples of this being used in other books/ films? What do you think will happen with the boys next?	