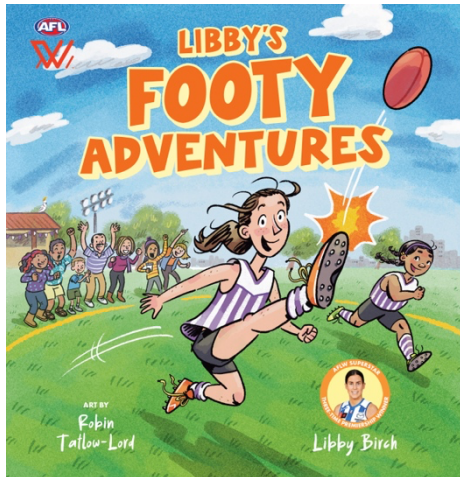


Teacher's Notes



LIBBY'S FOOTY ADVENTURES

Written by Libby Birch

Illustrated by Robin Tatlow-Lord

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

These notes may be reproduced for use within schools free of charge, but not offered in any part for commercial sale.

Copyright © Hardie Grant Children's Publishing 2025.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

primary-aged readers (ages 2-8, grades prep - 3)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English, Health and Physical Education
- General capabilities:
 - AC9HP2M03
 - AC9HP2M05
 - AC9HP4M04
 - AC9E2LE03
 - AC9E3LE03

THEMES

- AFL
- Women in sport
- Courage
- Confidence
- Trying new things
- Teamwork
- Health and sport

SYNOPSIS

Libby loves sport, especially team sports, but when she hears that two of the players from the AFLW are coming to her school's footy colours day, she feels nervous. Libby isn't very good at footy. Her kicks are wobbly and it's impossible to bounce such an oddly shaped ball! Libby stays up all night worrying about what could go wrong.

But the day before the players arrive, Libby shares her fears with her friends, and of course they're right there to help. Mia gives Libby heaps of tips to help build her confidence *and* loans her a team jumper and her extra-special footy boots. By the time Libby meets the players, she's as excited to have a go as everyone else.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Libby Birch is an Australian Rules Footballer who has played for several teams across the AFLW. Libby's remarkable journey resulted in her being named in multiple all-Australian teams and being the first Victorian Player to reach 50 and 75 games respectively in AFLW history. Off the field, Libby is a qualified physiotherapist working in disability and hospital wards. She is also an emerging football media talent, with experience co-hosting, providing expert commentary, football analysis, boundary riding and writing as a print columnist. Since the 2023 AFL (men's) season, Libby has held a prominent role within the 3AW Football Team as a Boundary Rider and in Expert Comments.

Robin Tatlow-Lord is an illustrator, writer and cartoonist living in Tarntanya (Adelaide, Australia). Her illustrations are vivid and expressive, conveying the wonder, imagination and 'big feelings' of childhood from frustration and worry to joy and surprise. In 2021 she was shortlisted for the CBCA Award for New Illustrator for her first picture book, *Go Away, Worry Monster!* Robin uses colour pencils, watercolour, ink, collage and an iPad. She has various picture book and graphic novel projects in the works, and when she isn't drawing she plays roller derby, runs kids' art workshops ... and chases around after her boisterous, book-loving toddler!

THEMES

Women in Sport – AFLW

All kids should find ways to move their bodies that feel good, but one of the themes of this book is specifically women and girls in sport. This is important, because for a long time, girls weren't encouraged (or even allowed!) to play a lot of sports, and there are still a lot of stereotypes about who is or isn't good at certain sports in film, TV and stories.

Libby's Footy Adventures is the first picture book by an AFLW player. Although women have been playing football since the creation of Australian Rules, they weren't recognised by early AFL clubs. A report from 2010 recommended the development of a professional national women's football league, which turned into the AFLW. The first AFLW premiership game was between the Collingwood Magpies and the Carlton Blues in 2017. You can read more about the origins of AFLW here (<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/first-afl-womens-game>).

More and more kids are interested in taking part in Auskick too – in 2024 there was a 25% increase in the number of girls participating in Auskick sessions.

WRITING STYLE

Although *Libby's Footy Adventures* is a fictional book, a lot of details in it are true. But readers don't just want straight facts in a fiction book, they want them to be woven through the story. Here are some of the techniques that the author and illustrator of this book have used to present their facts in interesting ways:

- Real people as characters – Georgie Prespakis and Courtney Hodder are real people, but in the book they become characters involved in the fictional story
- Dialogue – rather than interrupting the story with fact-boxes, many of the facts are brought into the book through dialogue. Can you find an example?



- Metaphor – metaphors help us to convey information through images. In the book, Courtney uses the metaphor of scooping ice-cream off a pancake to help the students practise their handballs
- Illustrated lists – Georgie breaks the technique of bouncing a football into five easy steps, and each step is illustrated to show Libby attempting it herself!

COMPREHENSION

- What are Libby's favourite sports? What does she love about them?
- Read the author bio (above) aloud. What does Libby the character have in common with Libby the author?
- What does AFLW stand for?
- Why does Libby feel nervous when she hears that some AFLW players are coming to visit the school?
- Who helps Libby to prepare for footy colours day? What are some of the tips that help to build Libby's confidence in footy?
- What are some of the ways that the characters in the book work as a team? In your own words, what does it mean to be part of a team?
- What do Georgie and Courtney say that footy is all about?
- What risks does Libby take during the match? Do they pay off?
- How does Libby feel at the end of the book? What do you think she's happiest about?

WRITING EXERCISE

Use one of the creative techniques listed above (characters, dialogue, metaphor, illustration) to share instructions for an activity that you love to do with the rest of the class.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

The illustrations in the book are a realistic cartoon style – explore them closely to discover all the accurate little details that might seem familiar from your own school or sports team. You might notice the Aboriginal flag at one end of the oval, or the scores on the board beneath the oval's big lights.

But football is all about the action, so explore the illustrations to discover how Robin Tatlow-Lord has shown movement in the pictures. Think about the ways that different colours or lines are used to capture movement, or the way she uses different shapes to draw bodies in motion.

Try it yourself – see if you can use some of these techniques to draw a person jumping, running or kicking.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES



- Mia helps Libby to dress up for footy colours day. Who is your favourite team? Draw a picture of yourself dressed in your idea outfit for footy colours day. (If you don't have a favourite team, you can find a list of the AFLW teams here: <https://www.afl.com.au/aflw/teams/players>)
- Georgie Prespakis, Courtney Hodder and Libby Birch are all actual AFLW players. Using this website (<https://www.afl.com.au/aflw/teams/players>), choose an AFLW player and create a profile of them to share with the rest of the class. In your profile, include the following:
 - Name, age, club
 - Number of matches played
 - Professional highlights (awards, season highlights etc)
 - A personal fact/anecdote (only use what you can find in the public domain)
 - A picture or illustration of the player
- Libby learns that it takes courage, confidence and friendship to feel good about trying something new. Think about a time that you've tried something new. How did you feel? Write about your experience, trying to bring it to life in a story as the author has done here.
- Georgie and Courtney tell the students that footy is 'about teamwork, having fun and trying your best'. Moving your body in ways that feel good is an important part of staying healthy. If possible, arrange to take part in an Auskick session (<https://play.afl/play/auskick>), or otherwise organise an alternative fun, physical team activity for your class to take part in. After the session, write about how it felt. Were you nervous? What did you learn? What wins did you have?

RELATED READING

Gymnastica Fantastica!

By Briony Stewart

Little Ash (series)

By Ash Barty, Jasmin McGaughey and Jade Goodwin

We Are Matildas

By Shelley Ware and Serena Ceddes

The Heartbeat of the Land

By Cathy Freeman, Coral Vass and Tannya Harricks

Backyard Footy

By Carl Merrison and Samantha Campbell

