

# A Dog Called Homeless

## by Sarah Lean



### Resources

#### Warm up Activities/ Discussion Points:

These can be adapted for large and small groups and for pairs. If working in a larger group – the children could talk to the person next to them rather than try to hold a large group discussion. A few children could then feed back to the larger group.

1. “My name is CALLY LOUISE FISHER and I haven’t spoken for thirty-one days”.  
Introduce yourself and say one thing about yourself.
2. Discuss the different types of families there are, not just a family with a mum, dad, and children. Can you tell me about the different people in your family and what they are like?
3. Think about one special person in your life. Why is that person special?  
How do you feel when you think about them?
4. Can you think of a funny story about someone in your family?
5. Cally recalls her mum’s sayings throughout the book – “Singing is like knitting: it ties everything together, especially people.” “Be careful what you wish for.” “Play us a tune or sing us a song, but for heaven’s sake stop going on.”  
Can you recall any sayings your mum or special person has?

6. a) "Why don't you speak?"

Can you think of reasons why Cally isn't speaking?

b) "The only thing I could think was that if I spoke, if I called, that it would be the end, that Mum would go away forever."

Are there any times when you prefer not to speak? Why is that?

7. "I decided the big silver-grey dog's name was going to be Homeless."

Cally decides to call the Irish Wolfhound Homeless. If you were Cally and had found Homeless, would you give him a different name and if so what would it be and why?

8. "And for a minute I thought if Dad wished things were different that meant he'd talk about mum and remember her, and make it feel like she was here."

Why do you think Cally's father chose not to talk about Cally's mother after she had died?

9. "I think whatever reason you have for not communicating must be very, very important to you." (Dr Colborn p 233)

If someone you knew wasn't speaking or communicating in words, are there other ways you think you would be able to tell how they were feeling?





# Activities for Year Groups and whole Key Stage



# Memory boxes

“And I was ready to say, OK, Dad, can we get the photos out and talk about Christmases and birthdays and holidays together and get your guitar and try and sing Mum’s songs so it wasn’t like she’d never been here at all?”

Cally remembers her mum through her mum’s sayings, stories and photographs from the past, drawings, by talking to Mum in her head, and by visualising her in a red raincoat and green waxy hat.

Question – Based on Cally’s memories, what do you think her mum was like?

External things also prompt memories of her mum – the smell of pancakes, the song “If there’s a star”, her mums box of red mixing bowls.

## Activity 1:

Show the children a mystery box with prepared artefacts and keepsakes in for a made up person.

Who do the children think the keepsakes belong to?

What do they tell the children about the person who is being remembered?

## Activity 2:

If the children were creating their own memory box about themselves and their life so far, what would they put in it and why?



# Deaf-blind Alphabet

“Cally and Me, one who feels and one who sees”

## Activity 1:

Choose two children from the group. Blindfold one of the children. Ask the other to lead them around the room. How did the person who was blindfolded feel?

## Activity 2:

Cally and Sam communicate using the deaf-blind alphabet. Can you write your name, or put together a sentence using the deaf blind alphabet? Practice on the person next to you.



# Activities for Pairs / Individuals

## Dog's Names

"Do you think he should have a new name?" (Luke)

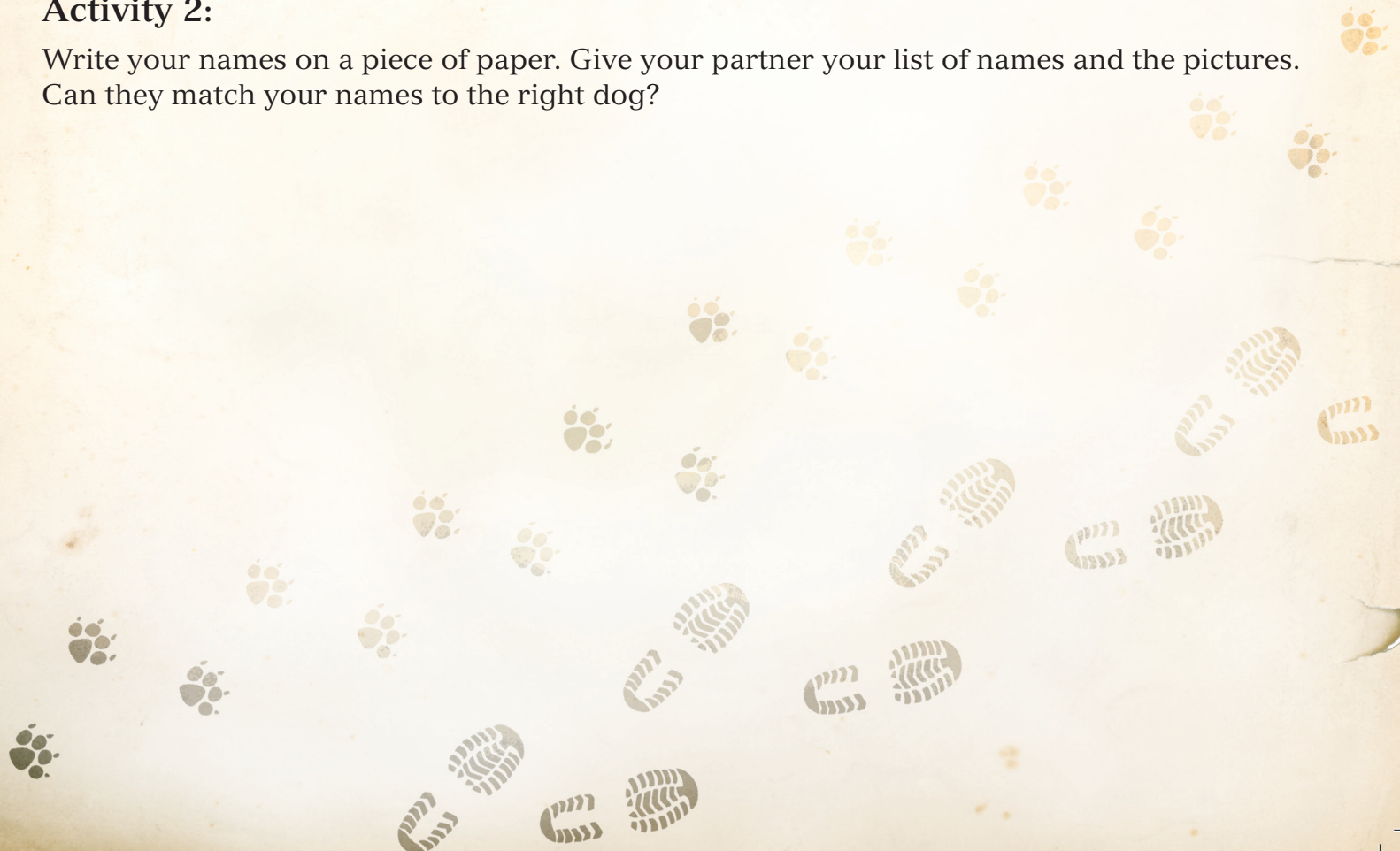


### Activity 1:

Can you give each dog a new name?

### Activity 2:

Write your names on a piece of paper. Give your partner your list of names and the pictures. Can they match your names to the right dog?



# All About Dogs

“You know what mum? This dog reminds me of you” (Cally)

They say that dogs are like their owner.

Wolfhounds are described as loyal friends and protectors.

## Activity 1:

Think of your special person.

What dog reminds you of them? Are they curly haired like a poodle?

Are they small and tough like a terrier?

Write down who your person is, what reminds you of them and why?

## Activity 2:

Now work with a partner. Can you match each other to a type of dog and tell each other why they remind you of that dog?

# Pancakes

“I woke up in the morning in my old bed in a new room. I could smell pancakes. Mum used to make pancakes mean; it’s raining and it’s going to rain all day so let’s stay in and eat goodies and watch telly. Or: it’s a special day, like your birthday.”

The smell of pancakes is a comforting smell for Cally. It reminds her of her mother and it reminds her of home.

## Activity 1:

What food provides you with comfort and memories of home?

“The builders made the outside, mum made the inside.”

## Activity 2:

What is it about your home that makes it more than just a building? Is it your belongings? Is it the familiarity of your home? Is it colours or smells? Is it pets or people? Think about the different rooms in your house. What is it that makes your house a home?





# Cally's Dad

“He was just like a raggedy old bear still sleeping from hibernating over winter. “

Cally's dad is struggling to come to terms with the death of Cally's mother. He is coping with raising two children, working and providing an income and facing difficult decisions as well as grieving for the loss of his wife.

## **Activity:**

Thinking about your own father or a special male person in your life. Can you describe them as an animal like Cally describes her father as a raggedy bear? It could be that your father is chatty like a monkey, or sleepy like a sloth.

Write down your animal and include an explanation of why you have chosen that animal.

# Cally's Mum

“I drew a picture of Homeless with mum in her raincoat and hat and left an empty bubble for her to say something.”

## **Activity:**

If Cally's mum could speak to Cally, what would she say?

Can you draw the picture of Cally and Homeless and write what you think she would say in the speech bubble?

# Cally's Shed

“Jed turned round and round slowly, looking up and down at the pictures I had drawn and the photographs pinned on the shed walls. There were photos of Homeless, of me and Luke as babies, in our school uniforms with brushed hair and gappy teeth, family holidays, birthdays and Christmas mornings, Mum and Dad on their wedding day. Hundreds of smiling faces. All the best days of our lives together.”

## Activity 1:

We keep photographs as memories of people, places, events and occasions. Can you draw a picture of one of your memories?

“We looked at the photograph and he talked about Wells Cathedral, about the worn stone steps going up to the Chapter House, how soft the stones seemed, how they led up through the archways, leading further and further until you came to a wide open space, where people talked, made decisions about how things should be. Then he smiled. And he didn't say anything about her. But we could see her on the steps, looking over her shoulder, seeing nobody was about, singing 'Stairway to Heaven' to us.”

## Activity 2:

Can you describe a happy family memory or recount a funny family story?



# Quiz

Now you have read the book, can you answer the following questions?



1. What year group is Cally in at school?
2. How many days did Cally not speak for?
3. What is the name of Cally's ex best friend?
4. Who does Luke want to beat on the racing car game?
5. What item belonging to Mrs Brooks does Homeless take?
6. What is Sam wearing the first time Cally meets him?
7. What is the name of the lake that Cally rescues Sam from?
8. Where does Jed get a job?
9. What does Cally want to give Mrs Cooper that used to belong to her mum?
10. What is Cally's middle name?
11. What is Cally's mum called?
12. What colour does Cally paint her bedroom?



Answers:  
1. Year 6 2. 31 days 3. Mia Johnson 4. The Sting 5. Her sunglasses 6. Goggles 7. Swan Lake  
8. At The Music Shop 9. Her cooking equipment 10. Louise 11. Louise 12. Forget me not blue