

**“A deeply affecting and life -
affirming read”** The Bookseller

Using this book in your classroom

Quick summary

Sam McQueen is eleven years old, and he has leukaemia. There are lots of things he's interested in, from airships and ghosts to breaking world records. He's also interested in death, because he's probably going to die soon. He confronts all these different subjects with honesty and humour, and his world-view is one that will stay with the reader long after the end of the book.

This novel is cleverly woven together from Sam's lists and the stories he tells about what happens to him. We learn about Sam's family, his quietly subversive teacher Mrs Willis, and his larger-than-life friend Felix. The book deals with the issue of terminal illness and death in a totally open, honest and believable way. It's genuinely moving without being mawkish or sentimental.

Story themes

This book has lots to tell us about people's differing attitudes to **death** and **illness**. It also movingly celebrates **love** and **friendship**.

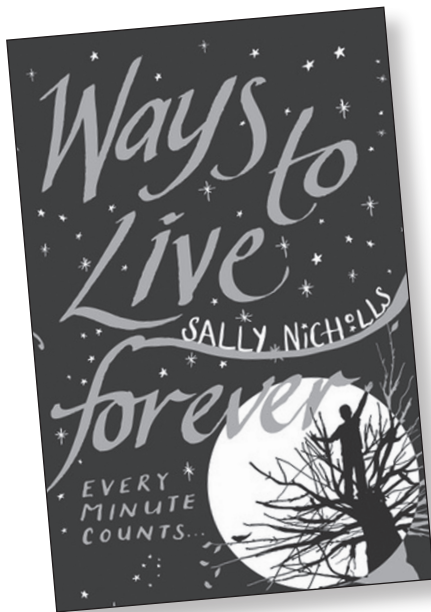
The story session

1. Introducing the story

- Before using this story with a class, it is useful to be aware of whether any of the children have experience of terminal illness within their families, so that you can treat the subject with appropriate sensitivity.
- Tell the children that Sam, the boy in this story, has leukaemia. Do children know what leukaemia is? Explain if necessary that it is a form of cancer.

2. Reading the story

- Read the first three sections – 'List No. 1', 'A Book About Us', and 'Why I Like Facts'.
- Pause, and discuss what we know about Sam from reading these sections. What kind of person do the children think he is? How do they feel about what is happening to him?
- Read the fourth section, 'Ella'. What extra information about Sam and his family can children find out from this section?



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Case	Read On Age 8+
Author	Sally Nicholls
Publisher	Marion Lloyd Books

3. Follow-up

- Having read the first four sections, what do children think of the book so far? Do they like the character of Sam? Do they want to read on in order to find out what might happen to him next?
- Encourage children to write a list of important facts about themselves, or a paragraph about their families in a similar style to Sam's.

Did You Know?

- This is Sally Nicholls's first book.
- She wrote it while she was doing an MA course on Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University.
- Sally Nicholls decided she wanted to be a writer when she was five, and she has never changed her mind.

