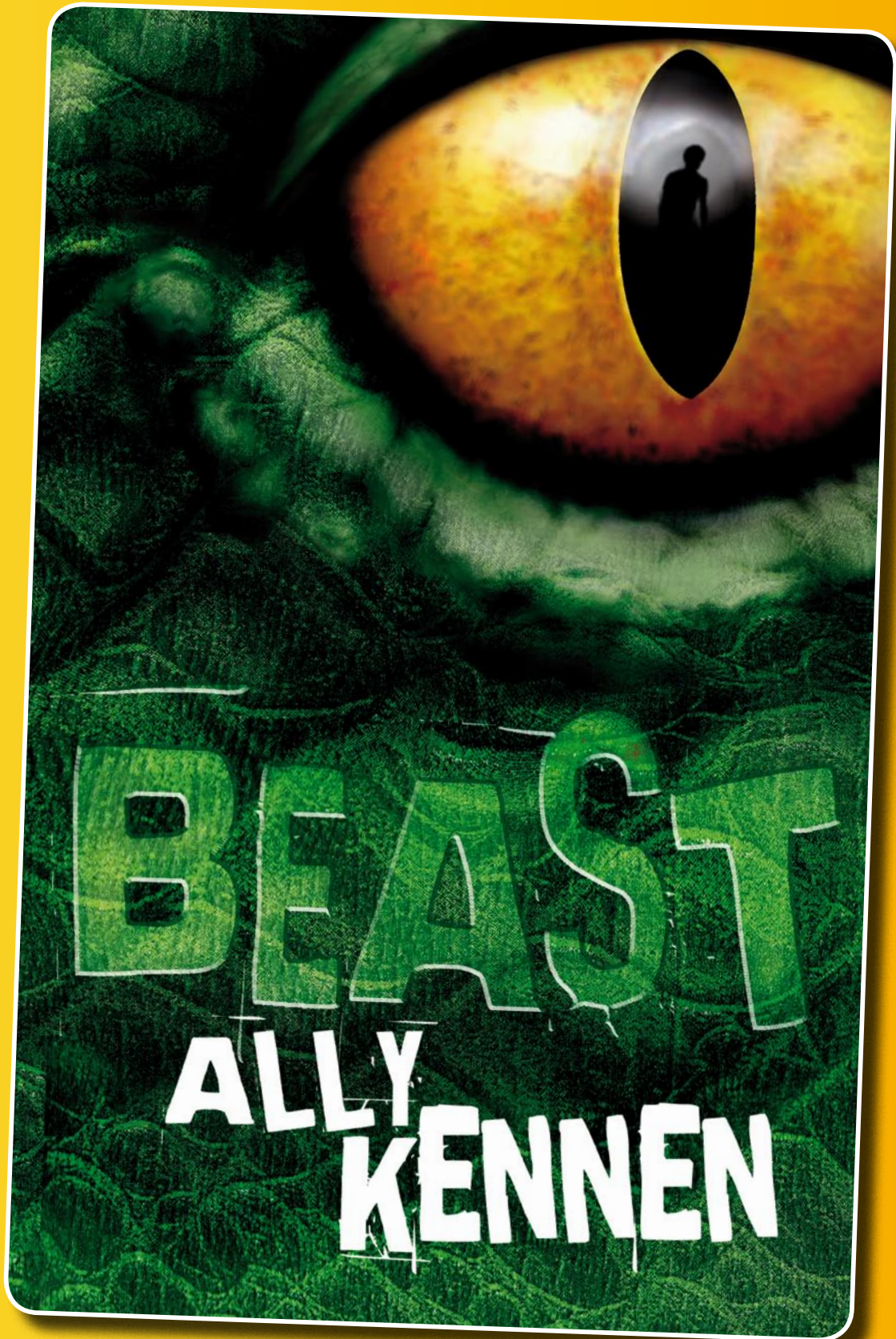


 SCHOLASTIC



**BEAST** Ally Kennen

9780439951043 PB Marion Lloyd Books

Getting children reading. Giving books to schools.

## BEAST Reading Notes

The following activities address the QCA Assessment Focuses for Reading. These are used to formulate and assess the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 NCTs. Many of the activities also address the Assessment Focuses for Writing, however, the AF code at the start of each task/activity specifically refers to reading.

A reminder of the Assessment Focuses for Reading:

- **AF1** – use a range of strategies, including accurate decoding of text, to read for meaning.
- **AF2** – understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text.
- **AF3** – deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from texts.
- **AF4** – identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts, including grammatical and presentational features at text level.
- **AF5** – explain and comment on writers' uses of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level.
- **AF6** – identify and comment on writers' purposes and viewpoints and the overall effect of the text on the reader.
- **AF7** – relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts and literary tradition.

Following, you will find a child/pupil friendly version of the Assessment Focuses.

### Assessment Focuses for Reading – or – how your work will be marked!

- **AF1** – You understand what the story is about and can explain the plot of the story in your writing or when you talk about the story.
- **AF2** – You can understand, describe, choose or find information, events or ideas from the story. In your writing or when you talk about the story you can use quotations and refer to the story.
- **AF3** – You can take events or ideas from the story and work out what they might mean or suggest how they will affect the characters and the storyline.
- **AF4** – You can identify and explain how the whole story and particular sections fit together. You can explain why the writer uses certain words, phrases or grammatical features to tell his story. You can explain why the pages are set out in a particular way.
- **AF5** – You can look at particular words, phrases and sentences and explain the writer's choices. You can explain and make suggestions about particular words, phrases and grammatical features.
- **AF6** – You can explain what the writer might want a reader to think about or learn from the story. You can describe how the story might affect you or other readers.
- **AF7** – You can compare this story to other similar stories. You understand how this story tells the reader about the world that we live in.



## A reading guide based around QCA's Assessment Focuses for Reading.

### Pre-reading activity:

- Look at the cover of *Beast*. What are your reactions to this dramatic image? Feel the texture of the cover. Does it give you any clues about what might happen in the story?
- Work in a pair and play the word association game with the word *Beast* – play for about 1 minute. Write down all the words that you come up with. Look back at this list as you read the story – how do the words you've come up with fit the ideas in the story?

**AF2** – You can understand, describe, choose or find information, events or ideas from the story. In your writing or when you talk about the story you can use quotations and refer to the story.

- Read chapters 1 to 4. The opening to this story is very dramatic – make a list of all the dramatic events that happen. What is the effect of the first person narrative (Stephen telling the story)? What do you think of Stephen so far? Make a spider diagram putting Stephen in the middle. Add your thoughts and feelings about him so far to the end of each spider leg.
- Page 2 – *"I buy one pig a month. I can't afford any more than that. I've no idea whether this is enough, but it keeps him alive. He's still growing and this is a worry."* Who is he? Copy out this quotation and circle, underline, highlight the words and phrases which most intrigue you and make you want to find out who HE is.

**AF3** – You can take events or ideas from the story and work out what they might mean or suggest how they will affect the characters and the storyline.

- Read chapters 5 to 8. The role of parents and family life are very important in the story. Make a list of all the characters that fulfil a parental role. Think carefully about who you include in the list, would you include Stephen himself? Beside each 'parental' character

name write 2 sentences about how successful and/or unsuccessful this person is as a parent.

- Page 64 – *"Remember that pet you bought me for my birthday when I was a kid? ... Dad, I've still got it."* Copy out this quotation. Explain why Stephen has kept and looked after the "pet". Have you got any more thoughts on what the "pet" might be? Why do you think that Stephen's Dad agrees to look after Malackie at the end of chapter 7?

**AF4** – You can identify and explain how the whole story and particular sections fit together. You can explain why the writer uses certain words, phrases or grammatical features to tell his story. You can explain why the pages are set out in a particular way.

- Read chapters 9 to 13. From the first time the party is mentioned in Chapter 9 there is a terrible sense that things will go wrong. How does the writer build up this sense of tension? Make a timeline for chapters 9 to 13 and plot on it key words and phrases which hint at the danger to come. For example, *"get me some cider and fags"* page 87, *"candles"* page 89, *"There's a load of shouting..."* page 92 etc.
- Despite his bad reputation and history of poor behaviour, Stephen is probably the most responsible character in these chapters. Why do you think he says (on page 117), *"I get so restless sometimes. I'll do anything to escape. I feel like this now."* When he addresses us, the readers, on page 119 he says, *"My friend ..."* Why does the writer use these words?

**AF5** – You can look at particular words, phrases and sentences and explain the writer's choices. You can explain and make suggestions about particular words, phrases and grammatical features.

- Read chapters 14 to 17. Re-read pages 130 to 132, the end of chapter 14. The writer creates an incredible sense of tension here as Stephen's dad tries to goad the beast. Find 5 words, phrases or sentences from this part of the chapter which conjure up the impending sense of doom which Stephen feels. Make

sure you include and comment on, "BANG. BANG. BANG." Why is this repeated so many times?

- At the start of chapter 15 we finally discover the truth about Stephen's "pet". Are you surprised by this revelation? When did you work out what the "pet" was?

**AF6** – You can explain what the writer might want a reader to think about or learn from the story. You can describe how the story might affect you or other readers.

- Read chapters 18 to 22. When Stephen is feeling nervous or vulnerable he often mentions his brother. In chapter 18, on page 165, Stephen thinks, "I wish Selby was here. He'd know what to do. I'd love to call him up and tell him to come and help." Why do you think Stephen thinks so highly of Selby? Consider what you know about Selby through Stephen's recollections. Would he be useful in this situation? Where do you think Selby is?
- Carol comes to Stephen's rescue twice in this section and Eric demonstrates his willingness to forgive Stephen and to help him. Explain why you think Stephen finds it so hard to believe that these two are NOT going to betray him. Trust and betrayal are very important themes in the novel – find 5 quotations from this section which demonstrate that the author wants the reader to think about these ideas.

**AF7** – You can compare this story to other similar stories. You understand how this story tells the reader about the world that we live in.

- Read chapter 23 to the end. How satisfying do you find the end of the story? Re-read the epilogue – what do you think Stephen has learnt from the experiences he tells us about in the novel? What moral or message do you think Ally Kennen wants us to take away from the story?

- How would you classify *Beast*? Compare the story to others that you have read. Does it fit into one genre or several? Make a list of other similar stories that you have read and beside each make brief notes on the similarities and differences of each story when compared to *Beast*.

### And finally ...

**AF1** – You understand what the story is about and can explain the plot of the story in your writing or when you talk about the story.

- Think again about the title. Who is the beast in the story? Is the crocodile the only beast? Make a list of all the ways the word 'beast' fits the characters and events in the story.
- The author seems to be very interested in the issues surrounding growing up and nurturing. Find 5 examples from the story which show us what Ally Kennen might be trying to tell readers about these themes.
- In chapter 1 Stephen tells the reader about an act of arson he committed when he was 12 – his past crime means that he is the main suspect for the two fires that occur in the story. Do you think this is fair? How far would you agree with the following statement: *It is possible to shake off a bad reputation.*
- The blurb says, "Some secrets are too big to keep ..." Do you think this is true? How important are secrets and lies in the story?

