



The Exploding Life of Scarlett Fife

and

The Wobbly Life of Scarlett Fife

By Maz Evans, author of *Who Let the Gods Out?* and illustrated by Chris Jevons

AGES 7+
NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

Explore Themes of: ✓Emotional literacy ✓Managing big feelings ✓Anger ✓Worry ✓Different-shaped families ✓Friendship ✓Mindfulness ✓Humour

Subject Checklist: ✓Literacy ✓PSHE ✓Science

The activities included here are suitable for classroom or library sessions.



LEARNING RESOURCES Prepared by SHAPES for Schools

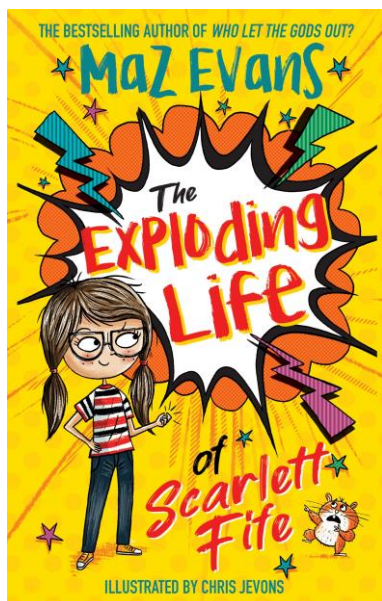


ABOUT THE BOOKS

From the best-selling Maz Evans comes a new series about Scarlett Fife: logical, mathematical – but when it comes to her feelings, completely out of control! Heartfelt, hilarious and perfect for fans of Roald Dahl's *Matilda*.

Scarlett Fife has BIG FEELINGS. And when she tries to squash them down, they come back up with shocking results! With the help of her friends and family, Scarlett must learn to manage her emotions. A sparkling, heart-warming series with laugh-out-loud action for every child who has ever experienced Big Feelings!

The Scarlett Fife books are beautifully illustrated throughout by the fantastic Chris Jevons.

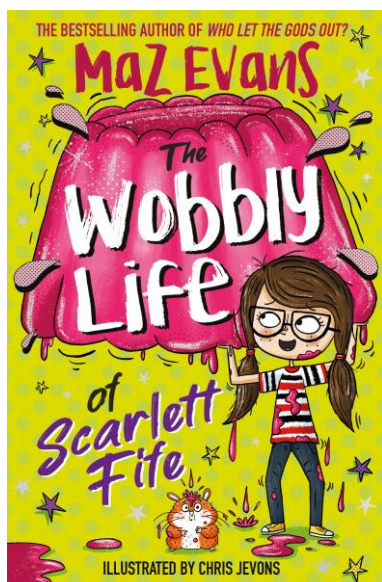


The Exploding Life of Scarlett Fife

Scarlett's in big trouble after a Big Feelings episode leads to a runaway hamster getting into the vicar's trousers at her aunty's engagement party. If she loses her temper one more time, she's going to miss out on her trip to Mega Awesome Sicky Fun World, the best theme park on the planet.

But feelings are like slime in a party bag. No matter how much someone tells you to keep it in, it'll always find its way out. And very soon, Scarlett notices that every time she pushes her feelings down, something explodes. Like ... really, properly explodes.

It might be her teacher's slimy green smoothie. A huge pot of purple paint. Or a massive pile of elephant poo at the zoo. And let's hope Scarlett doesn't lose her temper at Aunty's wedding – that wedding cake is huge ...



The Wobbly Life of Scarlett Fife

Scarlett knows she should be happy about all the big news that her family wants to share. But the worry is making her dizzy, and being dizzy is making her worried ...

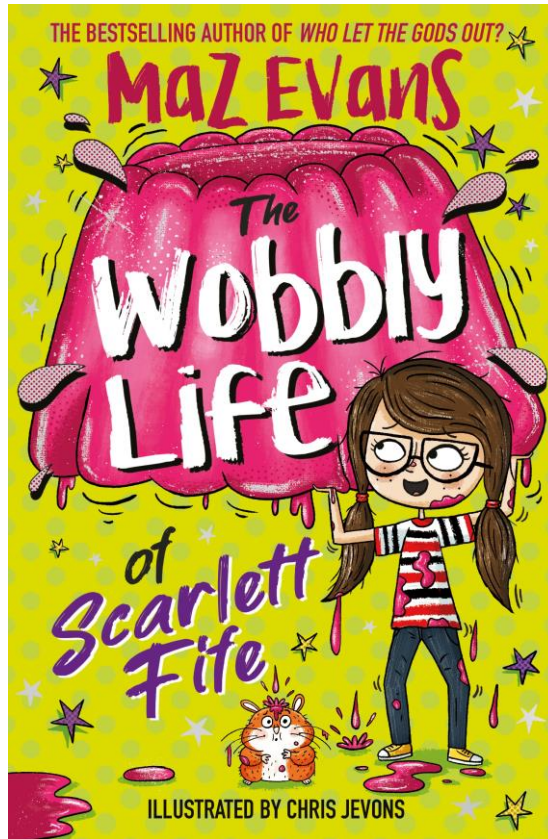
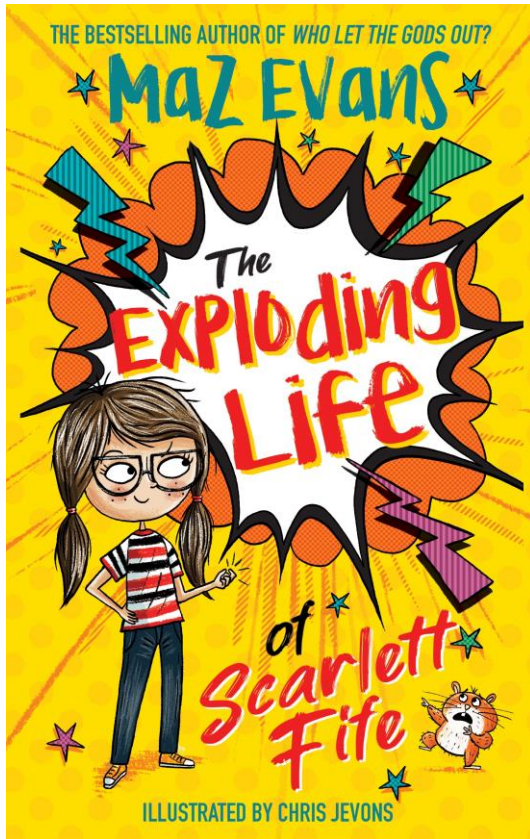
The thing about Big Feelings is that no matter how much someone tells you to keep them in, they always find their way out. And very soon, Scarlett notices that every time she pushes her worries down, they shake her world. Literally.

It might be a roast chicken her mum has just cooked, a huge vase full of pet ashes, or 2669 sugar cubes in a world record-breaking attempt. Can Scarlett find a way to manage her worry-wobbles?



INTRODUCING THE SERIES

Assess the book covers below:



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you like about the front covers of these two books?
2. What genre do you think this series fits within?
3. Can you make a prediction about what might happen in each book?
4. Listen as your teacher reads the blurb of each book. Can you match the blurb with the book covers?
5. Do the front covers remind you of any other books you've read?
6. Which of the books are you most excited to read?



THE EXPLODING LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE

Managing Anger

Objective: To have a strategy to help manage feelings of anger.

Activity: Make a model to represent anger using bicarbonate of soda and vinegar; practise Scarlett's birthday-cake breathing strategy.

EXTRACT 1 – pages 117-120 of *The Exploding Life of Scarlett Fife*

In this extract, Scarlett is asking Aunty Amara for advice for her 'friend' ...

'You're either angry or you're not. Once you're angry, you need to find a healthy way of getting it out. Otherwise it might come out in ways you don't want it to.'

A light bulb goes on over my head. It's that new street lamp that Mr Morgan at number 54 wrote to the council about – but I also realise something important. This must be it! Because I am trying to keep my anger in, it is making other things explode! That makes perfect sense. But if I let my anger out in the wrong way, I might not be able to go to Super Mega Awesome Sicky Fun World. So I need to find a way to let it out without getting into trouble.

It really is like slime in a party bag.

'So what's a healthy way to get anger out?' I ask. I'm worried this involves broccoli.

'Well, there are lots,' says Aunty Amara as we arrive at my house. 'Let's sit outside.'

'Sure,' I say, as we both sit on the swings in my front garden.

'So this friend of yours ...?'

'Lara,' I remind her. Aunty Amara really does have the worst memory.

'Lara. Where does she feel this anger?'

'In her tummy,' I say truthfully. 'She told me.'

Aunty Amara smiles. 'It sounds as if you're being a very good friend to Lara.'

'Zara,' I correct her.

'Of course.' Aunty Amara nods. 'So when ... Zara finds herself getting angry, one of the most important things to do is to breathe.'

'I don't think she stops breathing,' I say. 'I think I would have noticed that.'

'But this is a special kind of breathing,' Aunty Amara explains. 'Breathing is like ... a remote control for our bodies and brains. It can tell them what to do. When you are angry, breathing tells our brains to calm our bodies down. Tell your friend to try this ...'

She holds up all ten of her fingers.

'Imagine these are birthday candles,' says Aunty Amara. 'Now try to blow each one out as slowly as you can.'





I try it. I'm not feeling the bubbly angry **BIG FEELINGS** right now. But by the time I finish blowing out my own fingers, I do have Big Giggles. So does Aunty Amara.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do things keep exploding around Scarlett?
- Can you think of a time when you have felt angry?
- How does your body feel when you are angry?
- Why does Aunty Amara say breathing is 'like a remote control for our bodies and brains'?



THE EXPLODING LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE

Make a Model to Represent Anger

You might like to do this activity together as a class to help visualise Scarlett's feelings

You will need:

- Two small plastic bottles or plastic cups
- Bicarbonate of soda
- White vinegar
- Food colouring or poster paint in a variety of colours
- Warm water
- Washing-up liquid
- A tray
- A jug
- A funnel (optional)

Instructions:

- Place one of your bottles in the tray.
- Put 3–4 teaspoons of bicarbonate of soda into the bottle using a funnel if necessary.
- Pour in warm water up to about 2 cm and add a squirt of washing-up liquid.
- Which colour do you think best represents anger? Add a few drops of this colour food colouring or paint to the bottle.
- Pour some white vinegar into your jug.
- Now, think about some of the things that have made Scarlett feel angry. How did she feel in her body? Imagine Scarlett trying very hard to keep her anger in so that she can go to Super Mega Awesome Sicky Fun World ...
- As you imagine this, take your jug of vinegar and slowly pour it into the bottle. Watch as the bubbles rise up and over the top of the bottle.

Once you've done this think about the questions below, discuss your answers with a friend or class partner.

What happens if Scarlett tries to keep her anger inside?

Can you think of a time when you've felt angry?

Do you ever feel like your anger might explode?

How does Scarlett feel after her anger has exploded?



- Now, empty the tray. Take the second bottle and place it in the tray.
- Add 3–4 teaspoons of bicarbonate of soda, approximately 2 cm of warm water, a squirt of washing-up liquid and a few drops of paint.
- This time, fill your jug with a solution that is mostly cold water with a small amount of vinegar.
- Now, think about some of the things that made Scarlett feel angry. This time, instead of imagining Scarlett trying to hold her anger in, imagine her breathing it out using Aunty Amara's birthday cake breathing exercise. Hold up all ten of your fingers, imagine they are birthday candles and blow each one out as slowly as you can.
- Now, slowly pour the water/vinegar solution from your jug into the bottle. Notice how only a few bubbles rise up and they do not overflow.

Once you've done this think about the questions below, discuss your answers with a friend or class partner.

What is different this time?

How might Aunty Amara's breathing exercise help Scarlett?

Do you think Auntie Amara's breathing exercise might help you?

When might you use it?

Now, read to the end of the chapter. Aunty Amara talks about the emotions behind anger and explains ...

'The most important thing to understand is that, no matter how you try to manage it, you will get angry sometimes. And that's perfectly healthy and normal. We all get angry.' (Page 122)

As you read the rest of the book, write down any more good advice about anger that Aunty Amara or any of the other characters in the book give Scarlett.





THE EXPLODING LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE

What Emotions Lie Behind Anger?

Objective: To understand that anger can cover up other emotions.

Activity: Make a booklet to show the different emotions that lie behind Scarlett's anger.

EXTRACT 2 – pages 132-135 of *The Exploding Life of Scarlett Fife*

In this extract, Maisie has just told Scarlett that she is having a play date with somebody else ...

'Who?' I ask, blowing so hard a bit of spit comes out.

Maisie puts down her pencil and tries to hold my hand.

'It's Polly,' she says quietly. 'My foster mum met Rita when one of my foster sisters got a pen lid stuck up her nose and they got talking – it was nothing to do with me ...'

The bubbly anger is bubbling super hard. Rita laughs again. As if she's laughing at me.

'But ... we've got sausage and mash,' I say, now blowing so much that my fingers are getting really wet and spitty. 'And Dad's cooking, so it's not going to be Mum's Squashage and Bash ...'

'Polly's got sausage and mash too,' Maisie says quietly.

The bubbles start to burst in my tummy.

'So you like her sausage and mash better than mine?' I say quite loudly.

'No ... I don't know ... I haven't tried her sausage and mash,' says Maisie, looking as if she wants to cry. 'And I'm sure it's not better. Just ... different. Scarlett, you're still my best forever friend – this means nothing – cross my heart, never lie, stick a sausage in my eye ...'

'Don't you talk to me about sausages!' I hiss at her, throwing my pencil back in the pot. It's too late. The bubbles are looking for any way out. Ms Pitt-Bull is glancing over at us, so I have to keep them in or I'll be sent to The Cloud and can kiss goodbye to the Guts-a-Churno coaster.

I am so angry. Angry at my mum for forgetting yet another Important Thing, angry at Maisie for having sausage and mash at someone else's house and angry with Polly for getting everything I want. Another huge laugh goes up between Dad and Rita. And there is my own dad, laughing away with Polly's mum. I am ready to burst.

I look at the big paint pot sitting between Rita and Dad. I try to breathe through the anger, but it is already too late. I watch as big bubbles start to form on the surface of the paint. As the bubbles grow in my tummy, the pot froths and spits like a pan of boiled eggs until the paint starts to spit out of the pot.

'Scarlett,' Maisie whispers. 'Scarlett, you have to calm down. Everyone will see ...'





But the sound of Maisie's voice just makes me angrier. I shut my eyes and squeeze the anger down before it can come out of my mouth because I'm so full up of angry I just feel as if it's all going to ...

SPLOOOOOOOOOSSSSHHHH!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why does Scarlett feel angry?
- How do you think Maisie feels during this conversation? Can you find evidence in the text to support your answer?
- Highlight the words that Scarlett and Maisie speak using a different colour for each character. Now, act out their conversation with a partner. Can you show how your character feels through your tone of voice, facial expressions and body language?
- Do you think Scarlett is being fair to Maisie?
- Have you ever felt how Scarlett feels?





THE EXPLODING LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE

Anger Poster

Aunty Amara explained that, 'Anger can be the costume that other feelings are wearing'. Anger can be a big, explosive emotion that everybody can see and hear. But often there are other feelings behind anger. What other feelings might be behind Scarlett's anger in extract 2?

Make a poster or booklet to show the different feelings behind Scarlett's anger using the template on the next page.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Decorate or colour in the picture of Scarlett.
- Have another read of extract 2 and think about the different emotions that Scarlett might be feeling. Perhaps she's feeling **upset** that she isn't having a play date with Maisie? Maybe she feels **worried** that Maisie won't want to be friends with her anymore? (You might like to use a thesaurus to help you find words to describe the different emotions.) Write all the different emotions you think Scarlett is feeling around her on your poster or inside your booklet
- What thoughts might be going through Scarlett's mind? Write down thoughts Scarlett might be having too.
- How does your poster or booklet help you to understand Scarlett and her anger?

Why do you think it is helpful to understand the emotions behind anger? Discuss with your class. Can you think of a time you've felt angry? Were there any other emotions behind your anger?

Finally, imagine that Scarlett has just heard that her play date with Maisie isn't happening. What might you say to Scarlett at this point to help her understand her emotions? What advice would you give her? With a partner, role-play a conversation in which one of you is Scarlett and the other is a helpful friend.



THE EXPLODING LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE
My Anger Poster



THE WOBBLY LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE

The Worry Wobbles

Objectives: To think about how worry feels and identify where in the body it may be felt.
Activities: Use colour and shape to show what worry feels like in the body.

EXTRACT 3 – pages 18-21 of *The Wobbly Life of Scarlett Fife*

‘Wait a minute,’ I say. ‘So ... Auntie Rosa and Auntie Amara are moving to America? But that’s ... that’s ages away. And Mum’s doing what ... ?’

Mum looks at me with a big, teary smile. Jakub comes up behind her and rubs her tummy.

‘Scarlett.’ Jakub smiles at me. ‘You’re going to be a big sister.’

The Big Wobbly Feeling grows bigger in my tummy. This is all very worrying. A baby? But ... that changes our polygon. With a baby, we’re ... we’re going to be a ... pentagon. I don’t want to be a pentagon. I want to be a square. I like my square. Why is everyone trying to change my family’s shape?

My Worry Wobbles are getting stronger. But everyone’s looking at me like they want me to be really happy. I don’t want to make my family sad. But my aunties all the way across the ocean in New York? And a pentagon baby ... ?

I force out a smile as the Worry Wobbles work their way up my body. Maybe the smile will let them out.

A strange movement catches the corner of my eye. It’s Mum’s roast chicken. It’s starting to wobble, like it’s trying to belly dance (*a bit like my dad did last week in his kitchen and Rita laughed so hard she choked on a salt and vinegar crisp*).

‘Are you OK, Scarlett?’ Mum asks, looking like she’s going to cry again.

I think about what to say. I’m not feeling OK at all. But I don’t want to upset Mum. I look over at Granny. What would she say?

‘I’m absolutely tickety-boo,’ I answer, trying to keep the smile on my face as I watch the belly-dancing chicken. I think about the new baby and losing Auntie Rosa and Auntie Amara and how much I really need to Pass Wind right now and the Worry Wobbles get bigger and the chicken is belly-dancing all along the kitchen counter now, any minute now it’s going to go ...

PLLLLLLLLLLOPPPPPPPPPP!

The wobbly chicken wobbles off the side and on to the kitchen floor, making a noise like it just Passed Wind and did a Number Two all at the same time.

My Worry Wobbles stop as I stand there in shock, looking at the splatted chicken all over the floor.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In what ways is Scarlett’s life going to change?
- How does Scarlett feel about these changes?
- Why doesn’t Scarlett tell her mum how she feels?
- How do you think Mum would react if Scarlett told her how she feels?
- What happens to Mum’s roast chicken? Why do you think this happens?



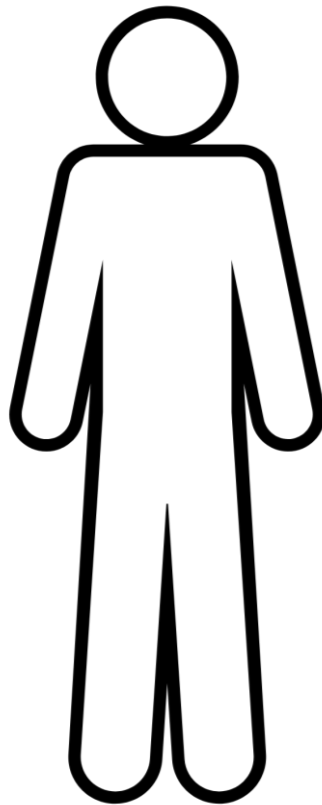
THE WOBBLY LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE

What Does Worry Feel Like?

Everybody feels worried sometimes. Can you think of a time when you've felt worried?

Often, we can feel worry in our body. For example, our shoulders might feel tight, our hands might feel shaky, we might feel breathless, our tummy might feel wobbly and we might even have a bit of a headache.

Can you draw what worry feels like in the outline below? Use different colours and shapes to show how worry can feel in different parts of the body. Finish by explaining your picture to a partner.



It's normal to feel worried sometimes. There are things we can do to help manage worry so that it doesn't feel overwhelming. For example, when we have a worry, it often helps to talk about it.

Who do you think Scarlett might talk to about her worries?

Who can you talk to when you feel worried?



THE WOBBLY LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE

Managing Worry

Objective: To have some strategies that may help manage worry.

Activities: Practise a grounding technique to help deal with worry; write an information text about worry.

EXTRACT 4 – pages 89-90 of *The Wobbly Life of Scarlett Fife*

In this extract, Granny is asking Aunty Amara for some advice about worry ...

‘Amara, I wonder if I might trouble you for some advice,’ says Granny a bit too loudly. ‘I’m finding myself worrying about a few things. I wonder if you might have some techniques that could help me.’

Granny starts winking. Her eyes must be as itchy as her nose. Maybe she has hay fever, like William D (*who sneezed so hard when they cut the football pitch grass last summer, by the way, that he got bogeys in Emma R’s French braids*).

‘Oh, I see ... Nancy,’ smiles Aunty Amara. ‘Is anything in particular worrying ... you?’

‘I just feel as if a lot of things are changing,’ says Granny, really loudly now. ‘And it’s making me worried and I don’t like it.’

‘Understood,’ nods Aunty Amara. ‘Well, firstly we must remember that worry, like all emotions, is a helpful thing. It tells us if something is slightly off, keeps us safe and makes us think about the consequences of our actions. These are all good things.’

I nod. Then I stop as I realise that this isn’t supposed to be anything to do with me.

‘I recommended some breathing techniques to Jakub that might help you too, Sc— Nancy,’ Aunty Amara continues. ‘And often, just taking a minute to use our senses and ground ourselves in the moment can help, by listing five things we can see, four things we can touch, three things we can hear, two things we can smell and one thing we can taste. That can stop your mind from spiralling into worries that aren’t in that moment.’

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is Granny really asking for advice for herself?
- In what ways can worry be helpful?
- Can you remember the breathing technique that Aunty Amara recommended to Jakub? (You can turn back to page 69 to find out.) Try this technique yourself. How does it feel?
- Have you ever felt like your mind is ‘spiralling’ into worries?
- What do you think Aunty Amara means when she says ‘ground ourselves in the moment’?



THE WOBBLY LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE

Try a Grounding Technique

Take a moment to try the grounding exercise Aunty Amara recommends. You can use the template below to help you. See if you can list five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste. You can write or draw each thing in one of the boxes or say them quietly to yourself or to a partner.



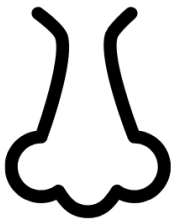
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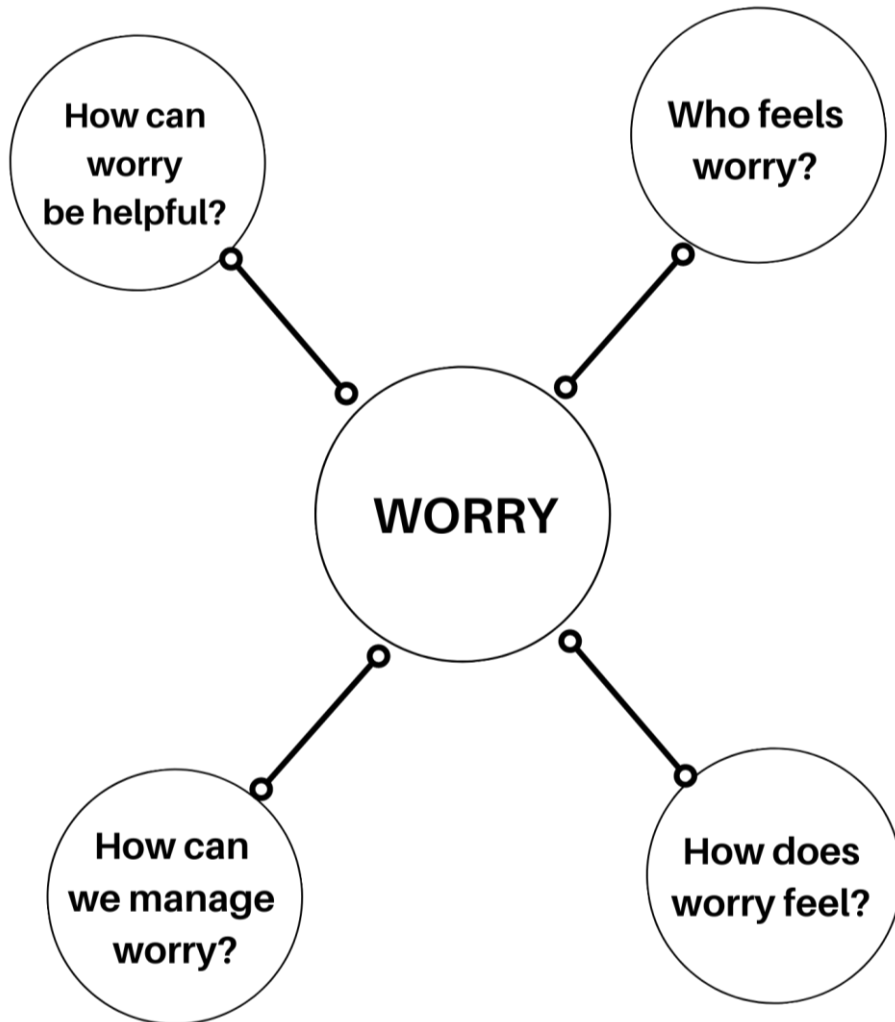
Do you think this technique might be helpful for you? When do you think you might use it?



THE WOBBLY LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE

Teach Others About Worry

Write a leaflet to help other children understand worry! What have you learnt about worry so far? Write notes using the mind map below.



Continue adding to your mind map as you read the rest of the book. You can add extra branches to the mind-map if you think of more information you would like to share. When you have finished, think about how to present your leaflet. You might like to use the different branches of your mind-map as subheadings. What illustrations will you include?

