

CHLOE
BAYLISS

*En
Pointe*



Teacher's Notes



SPARKING
IMAGINATION,
CONVERSATION
& CHANGE



Prepared by **Pantera Press**

ISBN: 9781925700756

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Learning Across the Curriculum

Learning Areas (Outcomes taken from State 4 syllabi. Can be taken from reciprocating Stage 3 outcomes if needed):

1. English
 - a. EN4-3B: uses and describes language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts.
 - a. EN4-7D: demonstrates understanding of how texts can express aspects of their broadening world and their relationships within it.
2. PDHPE
 - a. PD4-1: examines and evaluates strategies to manage current and future challenges.
 - a. PD4-2: examines and demonstrates the role help-seeking strategies and behaviours play in supporting themselves and others.

General Capabilities: Critical and Creative Thinking; Literacy; Personal and Social Capability.

Other: Difference and diversity.

Recommended for:

Students aged 14+



ABOUT THE BOOK

“Have you ever had an addiction? An obsession? Have you ever wanted something so much that you can’t imagine your life without it? For me, that’s dance.”

This is a story about never giving up on your dreams, no matter what life throws at you.

Chloe Bayliss was born to perform and thanks to a lot of hard work and determination, she’s on her way to becoming a ballerina. At sixteen, she gets accepted into an international dance school and everything she’s dreamed of is about to come true. But overnight a mystery illness takes Chloe from starring in *Swan Lake* to clinging to life in a hospital bed.

Never in her wildest dreams could she have imagined the hurdles she would face – but also how she would eventually triumph. Against all odds, she finds a whole new way to flourish, and despite the challenges she faces, Chloe never gives up on her dreams.

En Pointe is the real-life story of how an aspiring ballerina became an inspiring young actor after overcoming a life-threatening illness.

Miracles really can happen, even if they’re not the ones you asked for.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helpmann Award nominee and finalist in the prestigious 2016 Heath Ledger Scholarship, Chloe Bayliss is one of Australia’s finest emerging actresses. She has numerous credits across stage and screen, including her role in the TV Week Logie Award nominated drama *Doctor Doctor*.

Chloe has an extensive background in dance and choreography, having graduated from the National College of Dance with a Diploma of Dance and Performance. Her life as a dancer has taken her all over America and she now extends her knowledge to students and performers throughout Australia by running workshops, teaching and judging dance scholarships.

Chloe hopes to spark conversation around a number of matters she is passionate about, using her own story of overcoming hardship to inspire and bring awareness to others.





WRITING STYLE

Chloe's story is structured chronologically, as she retells the ups and downs of her amazing life as an aspiring ballerina. She writes in chapters that discuss the most important parts of her young life. These range from: intimate family moments; amazingly vivid recollections of her ballet dancing; astute self-reflections, all of which help bond the reader to her story. Each chapter begins with a title, offering a stimulating glimpse into what it will hold:

- **Chapter One:** The Budding Ballerina
- **Chapter Seven:** Emergency
- **Chapter Twelve:** Watermelon
- **Chapter Nineteen:** Return to the Stage

Bayliss takes the reader through her proudest moments, like being accepted into the Washington School of Ballet: *THE WASHINGTON BALLET SCHOOL! I can't believe it — the one place I fell in love with when I was there, and I've been dreaming of it every day since. They picked me! (p.62)*

Chloe spares no detail in recreating the feelings and emotions, nor does she shy away from these emotions while recounting the hardships she endured throughout her illness. Bayliss manages to make the reader feel safe through her story, always maintaining her great sense of hope.

THEMES

- Overcoming adversity
- Hardship and hope
- Friendship
- Identity and conformity
- Coming of age
- Courage and perseverance



DISCUSSION STARTERS

Before reading:

- What is the life of a professional athlete like?
- The title *En Pointe* refers to a ballet term and also compares to the colloquial phrase “on point”. What do these terms mean, and do you think there is a deliberate connection between the them and the title?

While reading:

- How does Chloe talk about her passion for dance? Is there an activity that you feel the same way about?
- How would you feel leaving home at 14? How might Chloe have been feeling?
- Why is it so hard to share personal stories? Do intimacy and vulnerability play a part?
- What is an addiction/obsession? Chloe talks about feeling this way with dance.
- Can competition help or hinder an individual? What does it do for Chloe?
- Chloe discusses a sense of freedom when performing on stage. Have you ever felt like this, and if so, was it performing on stage or elsewhere?
- Chloe friends and family are her biggest supports. Where do you get support from, and why is it important?
- Has doubt ever stopped you?
- Chloe gives specific names for the chapters in *En Pointe*, each relating to a particular event. Why do you think she has chosen these specific times in her life? Pick four chapters and explain why they are important.
- At her peak, Chloe trains 20 hours per week. What toll might this training have on your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing?
- Chloe feels much guilt about the time, money and effort her dancing costs. Do you think Chloe feels pressure to perform well due to all of this? How does she express her gratitude to her family?
- How does Chloe balance a teenage life with her sport schedule? What sacrifices does she make?
- Katy is Chloe’s best friend at school, and Demi at dance. They are so different to each other, and to Chloe. Why do you think friendships like this work well?
- When Chloe dances at the Hot House party she feels a new sense of freedom, saying that there was “No voice in my head shouting corrections”. Why might dancing in this particular situation offer Chloe a different type of freedom?
- Chloe’s maths teacher, Mr Carney, tells her he thinks Chloe’s plans to dance professionally are a “stupid idea”. Why do you think he feels this way? How would this make you feel if someone responded like this when you told them about your dream or desire?
- Chloe notes all the little things that make up her “beautiful” family life, like the small interactions with her parents and siblings. Why do you think she remembers these so vividly and discusses them in her book?
- In order to succeed, do you think it is important to have clear goals?



- Miss Carmen inspires Chloe, even though they have a push-pull relationship. Do you have a person who inspires you? What do they do to make you feel this way?
- When Chloe goes to the Washington Dance School she instantly feels as if she belongs. Have you ever come across a place where you feel that same sense of belonging?
- What do you think the Washington School of Ballet symbolises for Chloe?
- When Chloe is given her first diagnosis of TTP/HUS, how do you think she feels?
- In the hospital, Chloe describes the experience as filled with fear. When have you experienced fear? How did you get through that emotion?
- Think about your daily routine. What would you miss if it was suddenly changed?
- Why does Chloe constantly think about dancing when she is in the hospital?
- Who are Chloe's support people? Why are they important?
- When Chloe gets out of hospital and is allowed home, how do you think she feels?
- What does Jake represent to Chloe throughout the story? How does his role change?
- Chloe wants to achieve her diploma. How does intrinsic and extrinsic motivation work? What is your motivation to achieve a goal?
- How do Chloe's experiences help her to become a better dancer?



DISCUSSION STARTERS

Activities:

- Before reading the book, complete a Know/Want/Learn chart. Complete the chart and discuss once the book has been read.
- Brainstorm issues/themes/ideas that the book explores
- While reading, highlight quotes that are significant to you. Connect to a theme and explore literary devices.
- Research addiction. Research how addiction can be seen in professional athletes, discussing the difference between 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' addiction.
- Create a campaign for social change on an issue dealt with in the book: TTP/HUS, Lupus, mental health etc.
- Write a biographical sketch about Chloe and present it to the class.
- Write a series of letters from another character's point of view at various stages during the book. What might their perspective on the issue be? Are they facing similar issues? What might their struggles be during this time?
- Research TTP/HUS or Lupus. Put together an information package design to educate other students.
- Investigate kidney dialysis. How does it work?
- While the novel itself does not explore themes of depression and anxiety, Chloe briefly discusses these issues. Create a poster exploring what mental health is and why it is important.
- Many of the book's themes work in a dichotomy. Can you have one without the other?
- Pick two complementary themes and try to blend and establish a single theme that encompasses both.
- Create an advertising campaign for the Red Cross Blood Service. Research their work and include all key details.

Exam Questions:

- "In *En Pointe* overcoming adversity is the pilot theme." To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- How does motivation guide the protagonist throughout her story?
- "Growth can only come through struggle and success." Discuss this statement.
- How is sacrifice explored throughout the book?



FURTHER READING

Activities:

- *Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family and Fighting to get back on the Board* by Bethany Hamilton
- *No Barriers* by Erik Weihenmayer
- *Outcasts United* by Warren St John
- *Fearless* by Jennifer Calvert
- *Breakaway: Beyond the Goal* by Alex Morgan
- *Rise Up: Ordinary Girls and Boys with Extraordinary Stories* by Amanda Li
- *Reach for the Skai* by Skai Jackson
- *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio
- *I Had Such Friends* by Meg Gatland-Veness
- *Songs of a War Boy* by Deng Thaik Adut
- *If I Tell You* by Alicia Tuckerman
- *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai
- *Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter* by Adeline Yen Mah