

The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle School Resources Pack

Includes:

Talking and Listening Activities

Creative Writing Projects

Cross-Curricular Activities



ABOUT THE SPELLBINDING SECRET OF AVERY BUCKLE

Part-girl, part-cat, Avery Buckle has always known she's a little different (after all, her tail is a bit of a giveaway). What Avery doesn't know is that she is the only one who can uncover a forgotten magical secret and bring back a great lost wizard.

Teaming up with shape-shifting best friend Low, and with help from her witch guardians, Avery is plunged into a haphazard world of shadowy monsters, bewitched libraries and flying bicycles.

Grab your enchanted tandem bike and hold on tight! Wildly inventive and packed with fantastical thrills, *The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle* is a warm and quirky whirlwind of an adventure, full of magical heart.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah is a District Nurse in Devon, England. She previously attended Edinburgh College of Art, working for a number of years as a freelance illustrator in the educational and charitable sectors. In 2018 she won the Kelpies Prize with her first novel, *The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle*.

Find out more about Hannah by visiting her website: www.hannah-foley.co.uk.





PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Judging A Book By Its Cover

Group discussion: Look at the title and the front cover artwork. Discuss the font used for the title and the colours used by the illustrator in the picture. Do these give you clues as to what kind of story this might be and where it might be set? What do you think this book is about?

Predictions

Working in pairs: Now you have discussed what you think the book might be about, work in pairs to write three sentences summarising your thoughts.

Write your prediction in the box below and you can come back to it at the end to see if you were right!

Book Prediction:

Genre and visual language

Genre is a word used to describe how different sorts of stories can be put into different categories. In adventure books the main character usually goes on a journey, facing danger and excitement along the way. In a science-fiction book the story is imaginative but based on science.

- Make a list of all the book genres you can think of.
- Write a definition for each genre.
- Looking at the front cover of this book, which genre do you think it fits into?



PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Judging A Book By Its Cover

- Look at the front covers of some of the books in your school library or classroom. Can you guess which genre they might fit into by the look of the front cover? Think about the style of the title font type and the way the characters might be drawn. What clues does the cover designer use to hint to you the kind of book this is?
- Discuss which genre is your favourite and why. Or do you like them all?!
- Using the template on the next page, design a book cover for your favourite book genre. Think about the colours you will use. Will you draw your characters in a realistic style or as cartoons? Decide what text will go on the front, the spine, and the back. Don't forget that the left will be on the back and the right will be on the front when it is folded around a book.

Front

Spine

Back



CHAPTER 1

Questions

 Read chapter 1 and answer the questions

- In what ways is Avery different to other children?
- Which words and phrases give you clues as to how Avery feels about being different?
- What do you think Avery is worried would happen if people found out about her tail?
- What is your initial opinion of Avery? Can you identify with her at all? Give reasons for your answer.
- How do the objects Avery received in the post make her feel? Who do you think sent them?
- Why do you think Avery asks so many questions about her parents?
- If you woke up one day and discovered that you were part-animal, which animal would you be? Discuss with a partner how it might change the way you behave and how you look.



AFTER-READING Questions

After reading the book, discuss these questions as a group or in pairs.

- Do you think Avery is right to believe that there are differences between people which are 'normal' and some which are not?
- In what ways are you different or the same as your friends? Is it a good thing to be different to the people around you? Can you think of circumstances when it might be hard to be different to the people around you?
- Mab says that the magical world exists in the in between places. Why do you think magic might be "thinning" in Scotland?
- What did Avery think of Mab and Cassandra when she first met them? How did these first impressions affect her beliefs about them later on in the story?
- How did you imagine faeries before you read this book? Has this changed?
- Can you identify any themes running through the story?
- Avery makes new friends with creatures who are very different to her. What is the basis for their friendship?
- What questions does Avery have about where she comes from?
- Does Avery get all the answers to her questions by the end of the book? Is having all your questions answered important for a happy ending?
- Where do you feel at home? Is it one place or lots of places? What is it about these places that makes you feel at home?
- How do you think Avery feels about being different by the end of the book?



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Faery Tales

🇬🇧 Scotland is famous for its legends and mythical creatures. One of the best known is the Loch Ness monster. People are still trying to find out if it exists today! Some of the characters in *The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle* are based on characters from Scottish folklore. Create a fact file for some of the mythical creatures in the book.

In the 'Background' space, research Scottish stories in which this mythical creature is found. Where has the author used her imagination to change the creatures from the old stories for her characters?

Fact file

Name	
Type of creature	
Appearance	
Personality	
Background	

Name	
Type of creature	
Appearance	
Personality	
Background	



Name	
Type of creature	
Appearance	
Personality	
Background	

Name	
Type of creature	
Appearance	
Personality	
Background	

Name	
Type of creature	
Appearance	
Personality	
Background	



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Riddles

 Bean Nighe is a famous character from Scottish myths. In *The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle*, Bean Nighe speaks in riddles. A riddle is a statement or question with a hidden meaning that forms a puzzle to be solved. Try writing a riddle of your own.

1. First, choose something (an object or animal are good to start with). This is going to be the answer to your riddle.
2. Think of clues that will lead someone to guess your answer. Imagine you are that thing and think how you might describe yourself.

It can be useful to use the same sentence structure Bean Nighe uses, starting with 'I'. In her riddle about the cat she says "I have fur, but I'm not a coat."

Start with the first part of clue (the bit before you write "but"). You could use some of the sentence starters below.

I look like...
I sound like...
You find me...
I have...
I am...
I feel...

3. Use your imagination and a thesaurus to think of creative descriptions. The writer, Ursula Le Guin calls this making your writing "gorgeous". How can you make your writing gorgeous by using interesting synonyms, and finding words that are fun to say?
4. Now apply the same strategies to the second part of the sentence (the bit after the "but").
5. Once you've written your riddles, try them out on each other.

Remember:

- Don't give the answer away by using the exact word in your riddle.
- Try not to use more than 5 or 6 lines, because riddles are usually easy to remember.
- It doesn't have to rhyme, but it can if you like.



Here are some examples of riddles to give you some ideas:

As I walked along the path I saw something with four fingers and one thumb but it was not flesh, fish, bone or fowl.

Answer: A glove!

This riddle is from Ancient Sumer and is believed to be one of the oldest in the world...

There is a house. One enters it blind and comes out seeing. What is it?

Answer: A school!

Gollum asks this riddle in *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien...

What has roots as nobody sees.
Is taller than trees,
Up, up it goes,
And yet never grows?

Answer: A mountain!



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Developing Characters

🐾 Avery Buckle is part-cat and her best friend Low, is part-owl.

What animal would you chose to be if you were part-animal. Write a piece of creative writing describing yourself.

Think about how you move. Do you behave differently? Where you do sleep? What do you like to eat? Have you got any special abilities?

Opposing Viewpoints

🐾 In chapter 12 Low doesn't want to follow the sunstone. Fill in the table with the arguments for and against following the sunstone, from Low and Avery's points of view. Who has the better arguments? Explain your choice.

For	Against



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Persuasive writing

🛡️ Luckily Acton believed Avery when she told him his history in chapter 25. Imagine that he didn't believe her. Write a letter to Acton persuading him of the truth.

Think about:

Purpose: what does this writing aim to do?

Audience: Who is the text written for?

Language: What types of words and phrases will you use?

Layout: How will you present what you have written?

Dramatic language

🛡️ Read the scene where Mab is chasing Avery and her friends through the library in chapter 26. Take note of some of the energetic verbs, adjectives and phrases the author uses to build tension and excitement.

Imagine you are being chased through a city by monster robots! Create an action scene of your own using the starter sentence below as your inspiration. Remember to use powerful verbs and dramatic imagery to build tension.

I could hear them from where I hid. The monster robots were coming...



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES Art and Design

🏠 Cunningfoot End is the witches' house. Mab says that it has doors that come out all over the world, from Paris to New York.

Samuel Von Hoogstraten is a famous Dutch artist who lived in the 17th century. He created this painting of doors for a grand mansion called Dyrham House near Bath in England. It is a type of painting called a Trompe L'Oeil, which is French for "deceive the eye." The painting was designed to fit into a doorway to make it look as though there is another room on the other side, when really there is just a wall.

Aaron Becker is a modern day illustrator who created a series of wordless picture books about a girl who travels to a magical world through a door she draws on her bedroom wall. You can watch the trailer for the first book here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxUs41jB4Ts>

Imagine you have a house with doors that open out in funny or strange locations.

In order to go through your door, you will first need to draw it. What kind of door is it? Grand and ornate like Samuel Von Hoogstraten's or simple and plain like Aaron Becker's.

Where does your door lead? A magical world like Aaron Becker's or the linen cupboard in a Paris Hotel, like the witches? Draw the place on the other side of your door.





CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Music

👂 Hannah Foley, author of *The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle*, often uses theme tunes to help her imagine her characters when she is writing.

Follow the links below to listen to the music she used to help her. Close your eyes and imagine how the character moves and what expressions are on their face as you listen.

For Avery she listened to Gershwin's Second Prelude. You can hear it here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMom1VCQWDA>

For Low she listened to Shodtakovich's Polka. You can hear it here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFuycmJl3xo>

For Acton she listened to Minor Swing by Hot Club of France. You can hear it here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=it_JlVlR8JQ

For Cassandra she listened to The Spider and the Fly by Benjamin Britten. You can hear it here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc-NJw_sbCw

For Mab she listened to Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto Number 2. You can hear it here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJpJ8REjvqo>

Could you imagine Avery leaping along walls and rooftops using her cat abilities as you listened to the music by Gershwin? Or Mab arching her eyebrows at Avery when you listened to Rachmaninoff?

Use some of the music below to help you imagine your own characters. Close your eyes and imagine how they might walk or talk- very fast and lightly, or slow and wearily? How would your character eat a bowl of jelly - neatly and timidly, or sloshing it everywhere?

ZeZ Confrey - Kitten on the Keys: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2lHWPhRnXc>

Leroy Anderson - The Typewriter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2LJ1i7222c>

Beethoven - Rage Over A Lost Penny: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zk9ASyG6jag>

Aaron Copland - The Cat and the Mouse: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyD1J8ZKsCw>



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

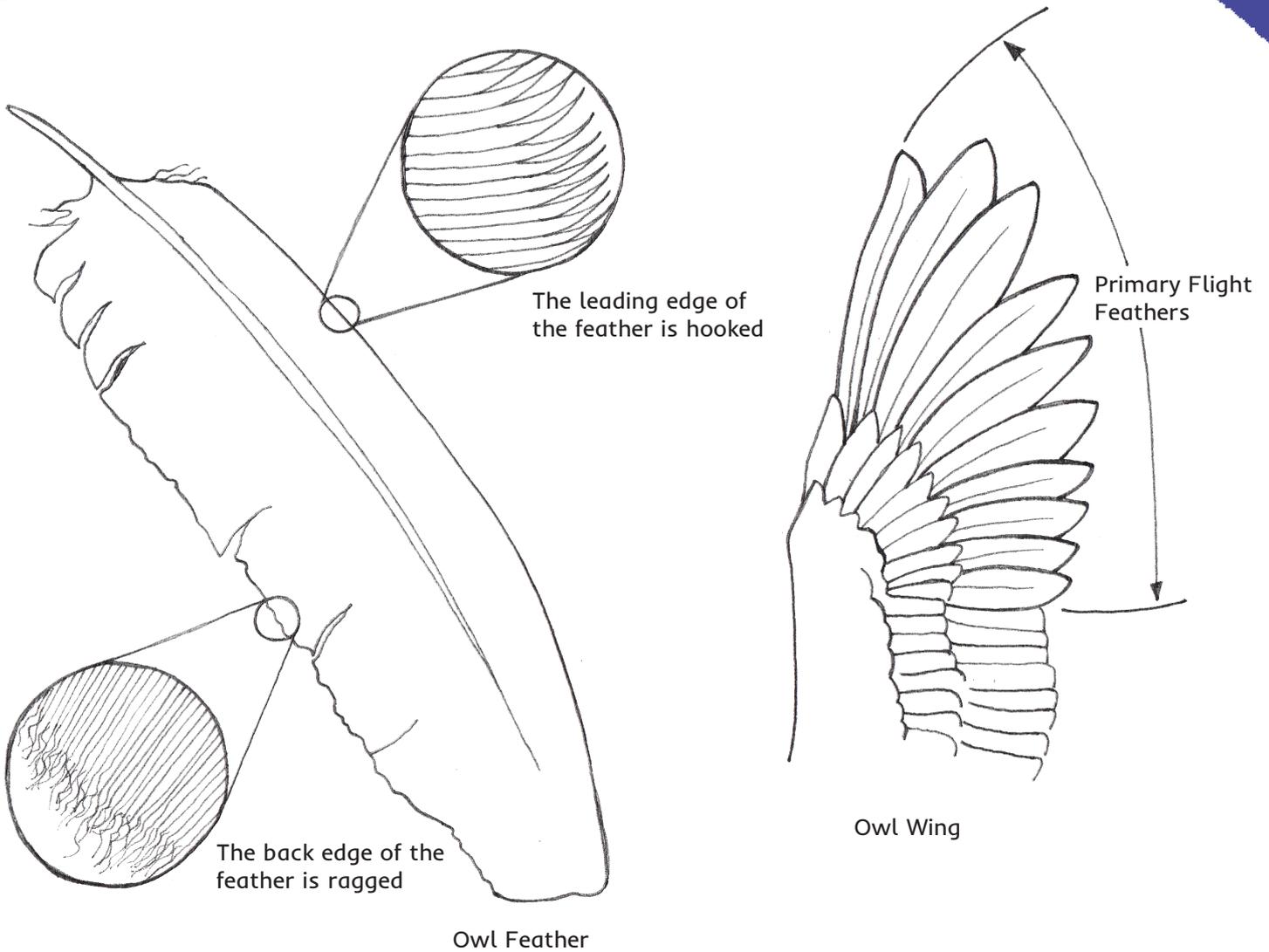
Science

Owl Feathers

Low is a Hoolet, which means he is part-owl and part-boy. In *The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle*, Low is still getting to grips with his flying abilities. He has a nasty accident showing off to some faery children.

Owl feathers are very special, they have adapted to help owls fly very quietly. How do they do this? Let's have a look...

- First of all owl feathers are very soft. Imagine the difference in sound when you walk over dry, brittle grass compared to soft, swishy grass, and you'll understand the difference soft feathers make.
- Velvety down feathers on the wings and legs of an owl trap air, trapping sound at the same time.
- Take a look at the diagram on the next page. The flight feathers (called the primary wing feathers) have a row of tiny hooks that help to break up the air as it hits the leading edge of the wing, making it less noisy.
- The back edge of the wing feather is tattered, muffling the sound of any air as it passes off the wing.
- Compared with other birds, owl feathers are not particularly waterproof. Owls generally avoid hunting in rain as wet feathers increase noise and reduce efficiency.
- Owls have broad wings which help them to float through the air without too much flapping. Think of a flock of pigeons. All that flapping is very noisy!



Flying very quietly enables owls to hear the tiny sounds made by mice and other small mammals, and creep up on them undetected.

See if you can move as quietly as an owl. What ways do you have to move so that you don't make any noise?

In a group, play a game of Owl and Mouse. Choose one person to wear a blindfold. They are the mouse. See how close the others can get before the mouse hears them!



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science

Refraction

In *The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle*, a piece of glass called a sunstone leads Avery to a hidden castle. The idea for the sunstone came from stories about the Vikings and a real piece of rock called Icelandic Spar (also known as Optical Calcite).

Scientists believe that the Vikings used the sun to navigate when they travelled long distances across the ocean in their boats. But what did they do on a cloudy day when they couldn't see the sun? Scientists think that the Vikings used Icelandic Spar to help them locate the sun even on a cloudy day. The Vikings called the Icelandic Spar, Sun Stones.

Think about some of the things you already know about light and complete the sentences below, using the spare words to help you...

energy straight bends fast wavelengths

Light is an _____ beam, that moves in _____ .

Light travels _____ .

Light travels in _____ lines.

When light hits an object it _____ .

What happens when light comes into contact with a material that is transparent or translucent? Test this out by shining a light through a block of glass.

If you don't have access to glass, you can watch the author of *The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle*, Hannah Foley, trying out this experiment for herself on her YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BFH7twvCeg>

What did you see? Was it what you expected?

The light bends as it goes through the glass. This is called REFRACTION.



Not only this, but the glass slows the light down as it enters the glass. The amount the light is slowed down and bent is different depending on the substance. For example, a diamond slows light down a lot, and then it bends the light in different directions, making it 'bounce' around the diamond. This is what makes a diamond so sparkly!

Scientists use the knowledge of how much a substance slows down light to create a Refractive Index. The Refractive Index gives a number value to a material and this number tells us how refractive that material is. Sparkly diamonds have a high number on the Refractive Index.

Now we can test the Icelandic Spar in the same way as the glass. Again, if you don't have access to Icelandic Spar, you can watch Hannah's You Tube video. First, write down what you think will happen to the light. Will it refract in the same way as the glass? The Spar certainly looks a lot like glass so maybe it will. What do you think?

What happened? Are you surprised?

Icelandic Spar is BIREFRINGENT. This means it is double refracting. Place the Icelandic Spar on top of a piece of paper with a drawing on it. Do you see two images? Try rotating the Icelandic Spar. What happens now?

The amount the Icelandic Spar refracts is direction dependent. It is this property that helped the Vikings find the sun on cloudy days.

Further learning...

Research more about the Refractive Index. What formula do scientists use to calculate the Refractive Index of a material?

Make a list of transparent or translucent materials, and place them in order of high or low on the Refractive Index.

Look up your answers and see if you were right!

Icelandic Spar is used by modern day astrophysicists to detect weak light coming from planets outside our solar system, called Exoplanets. Explore the NASA Exoplanet page to find out more: <https://exoplanets.nasa.gov>



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science

Conservation

In *The Spellbinding Secret of Avery Buckle*, Avery is a mythical creature called a Cat Fae. Avery's identity is based on a Scottish legend about a magical faery cat called the Cat Sith. While the Cat Sith are just a story, Scotland does have its own very special type of cat, called the Scottish Wildcat.

Draw a picture of a Scottish Wildcat. Research about the wildcats and label your drawing with information about them. Consider habitat, diet, lifespan, size and threats.

Scottish Wildcats have a big problem. They are endangered. Find out about current projects aimed at helping the Wildcats. Is the work making a difference?

Is there anything you, or your class, could do to help? Discuss the possibilities.

Here are some useful websites you could look at:

<http://www.scottishwildcataction.org>

<https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/scottish-wildcat-action/>

<https://www.rzss.org.uk/conservation/our-projects/project-search/zoo-based/scottish-wildcat-action/>



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

History

Railways Research Challenge

In chapter 9, Avery and Low escape from the Badoch into a disused railway tunnel. There are disused railway tunnels all over Britain but the Scotland Street tunnel has a particularly interesting history.

In partners, research the Scotland Street tunnel and create a leaflet about its history. Here are some questions you and your partner might like to use as prompts:

- The physical appearance of the tunnel
- How and when the tunnel was built
- Why the tunnel was no longer used for trains
- What the tunnel has been used for since
- Any interesting stories relating to the tunnel

GEOGRAPHY

Exploring Maps

In chapter 7, Avery and Low walk to the Canonmills area of Edinburgh and learn about its history from an old guidebook. The guidebook describes a loch, but all they can find is a park and a petrol station. It turns out the loch has been drained into an underground cavern for magical purposes.

There really did used to be a loch in the Canonmills area of Edinburgh. It was drained in 1865. Use the National Library of Scotland's map database to explore the maps of the Canonmills area as time passed: <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/#zoom=12&lat=55.9676&lon=-3.2052&layers=102&b=1&z=1&point=55.9631,-3.1998>

- What do you notice about the maps as time passes?
- Notice the words written on some of the buildings. What were they used for? How does this change over time?
- Place names often give clues as to the history of an area. What do some of the place names in these maps tell you about the activities that went on there?
- What was the park used for in the past? Research some of these uses.
- Does it surprise you to learn what existed in the Canonmills area in the past? Did you notice the zoo?

Now use the map database to explore how the area where you live has changed over time.



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Health and Wellbeing

🐾 Avery feels she is very different to the other children in her school, and she feels she has to hide her differences.

In pairs fill in Avery's Thought Bubbles sheet on the next page. Imagine what Avery is thinking and write those thoughts in the bubbles. Why is Avery worried about her differences? How does she think the other children would treat her if they found out about her tail?

Using the Class Thought Bubbles sheet on the page after next, imagine what the other children might think if they found out about Avery's abilities.

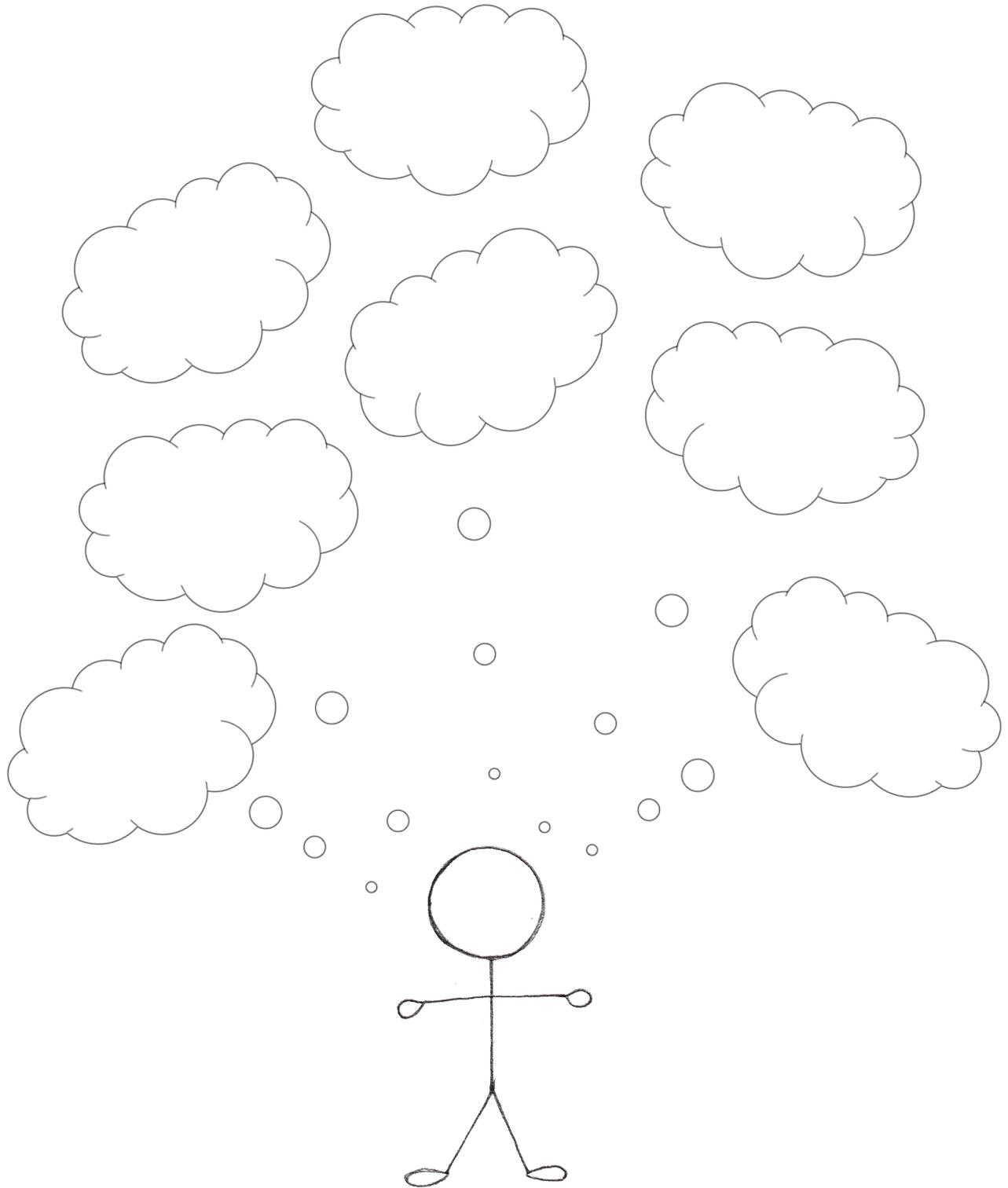
Some of the children might think Avery is weird, but some of the other children might like the idea of being able to see in the dark, or leap like a cat. Discuss what your thoughts would be if Avery was in your class.

Consider how some of the thoughts you have written down in the Class Thought Bubble sheet might make Avery feel if she heard them. Would she be happy or sad? Would she feel accepted or ashamed?

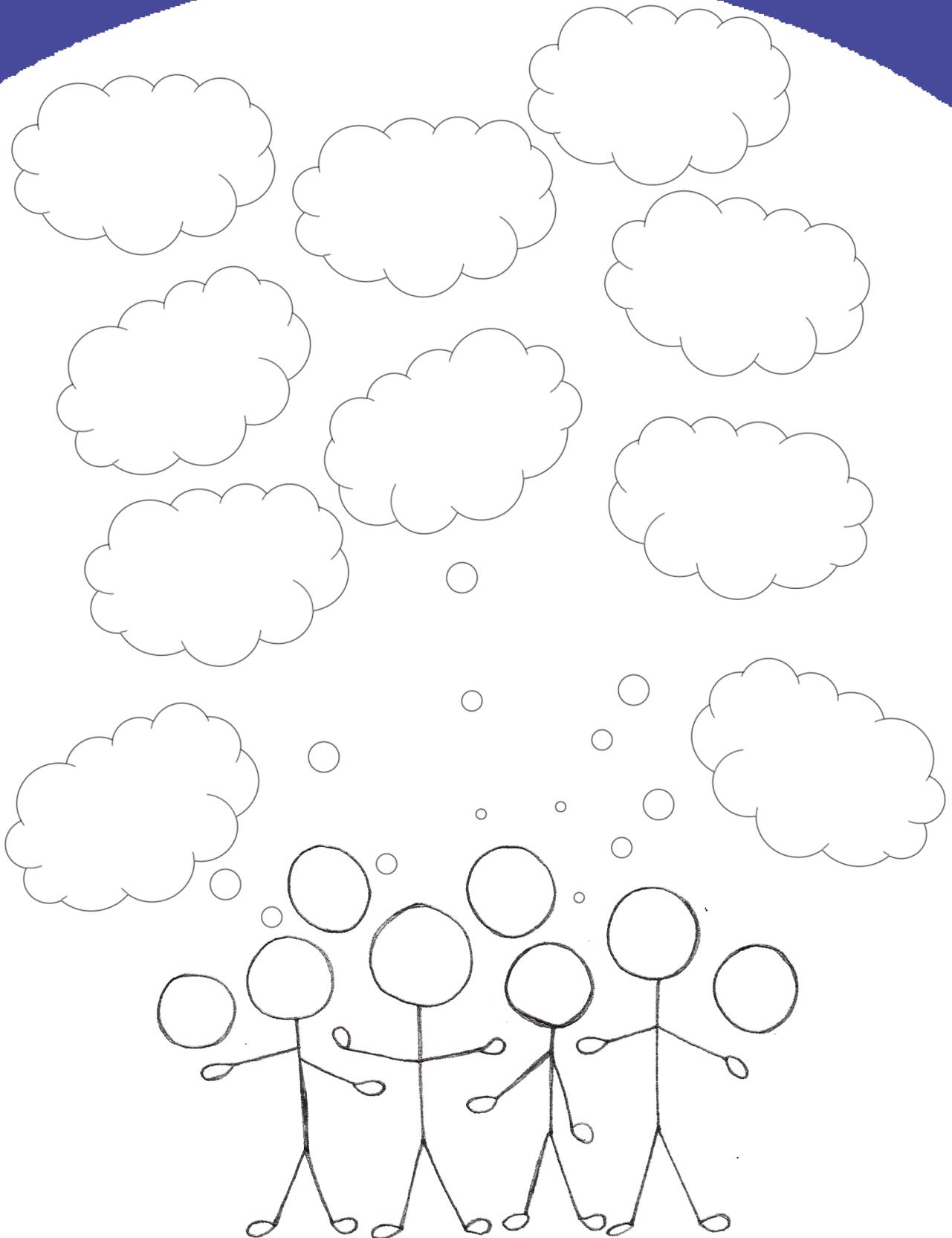
We can think of Avery's differences as an example of the ways that we are all different to each other. Everyone is unique in their own way. Discuss with your partner some of the ways that you are different to your classmates. Do you have any special talents or abilities? Do you look different? Do you have different likes/dislikes? Do you have any particular needs?

Consider how you would like other people to treat you based on your differences.

It might not work out too well for Avery if she tried to be best friends with someone with an allergy to fur! We don't have to be friends with everyone but we can be friendly whether we are similar or different. With your partner discuss how you can make someone who is different to you feel welcome and accepted. Things to consider are facial expressions, what we say, our body language, our behaviour.



Avery's Thought Bubbles



The Classes' Thought Bubbles