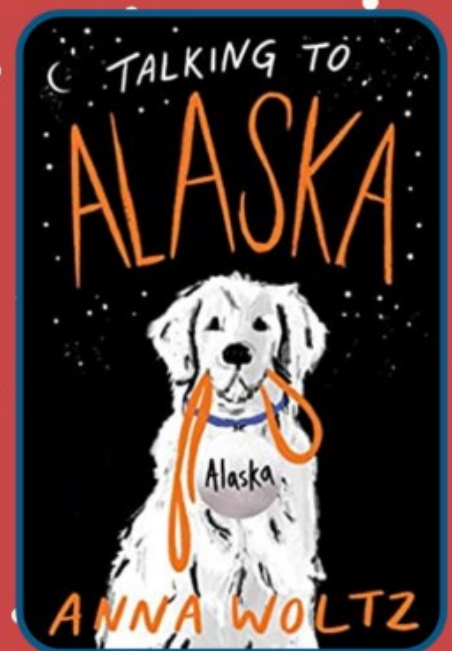
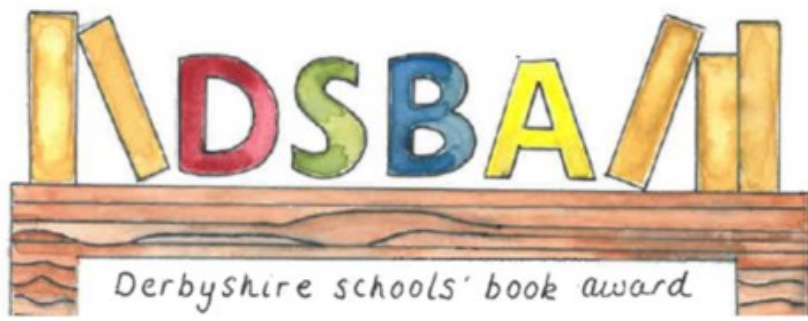


### Talking to Alaska Discussion Questions

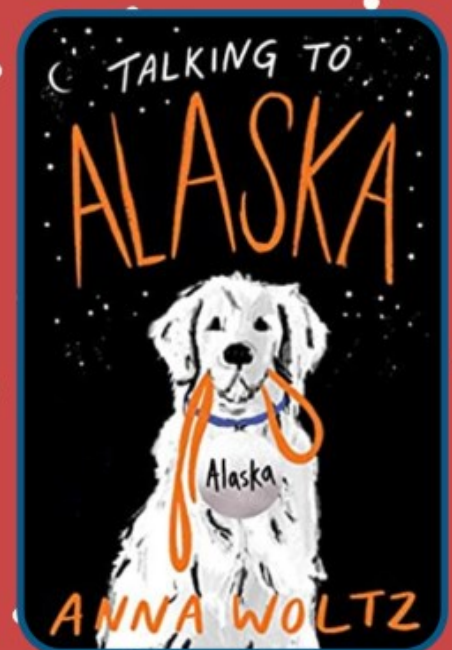
**After you have read Talking to Alaska you might want to discuss some of the following ideas with your friends or at your book club:**

- 1) What information did you already know about epilepsy and what new things have you learnt about it from reading Talking to Alaska?
- 2) Parker tells the reader that “eight percent of prisoners are women. Ninety-two percent are men.” Are you surprised by this statistic? Why do you think that this is the case?
- 3) Parker makes some suggestions for tackling the disproportionate amount of prisoners that are male: “Why don’t they give boys extra lessons at school. Why don’t they just ban men from going out after sunset?” Can you come up with any suggestions about how this issue could be improved?
- 4) Sven wants to do something amazing on his first day at his new school so that everyone knows who he is, before they know him for being the kid with epilepsy. Did you want to make a good impression on people on your first day at secondary school? What did you do to get noticed? Who made a good impression on you and why?
- 5) When Sven talks to Balaclava Girl he realises he can talk really openly to her about difficult things: “My psychologist is always whining that I don’t tell him anything. So next time I’ll tell him to put a balaclava over his head. And it might be a good idea to turn off the lights.” Why do you think these things help Sven to open up to Balaclava Girl?
- 6) This story strongly conveys a message that it is very important not to stroke/pet an assistance dog while they are working. Why do you think this is so important?
- 7) When the video of Sven’s seizure goes viral Parker says “As I delete the video, I know for certain that it won’t disappear ... (it) will always continue to exist.” Have you had any experiences of how social media can affect your life?

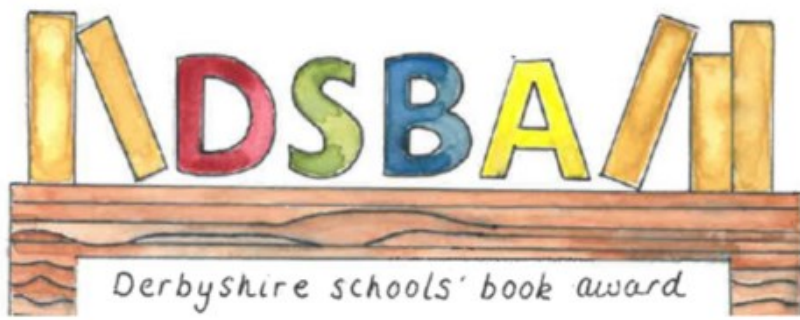




- 8) Parker comes up with a plan to help Sven feel less embarrassed about the video that is circulating of his seizure. The whole class send embarrassing videos of themselves to a group chat that Sven is part of. How does this help Sven to feel part of the class again?
- 9) In this instance what starts off negative (Sven's sense of shame at knowing people have seen this video) ultimately leads to a positive (all his classmates come together to overcome his embarrassment in an act of solidarity). What do you think - does social media have a positive or a negative affect on the lives of young people today?
- 10) Friendship and rivalry are central themes throughout this story. In what ways are Sven and Parker good friends to each other? How do they overcome their differences?







**Empathy** - The ability to experience and understand other people's emotions and perspectives.

#EmpathyDay

READ. CONNECT. ACT.

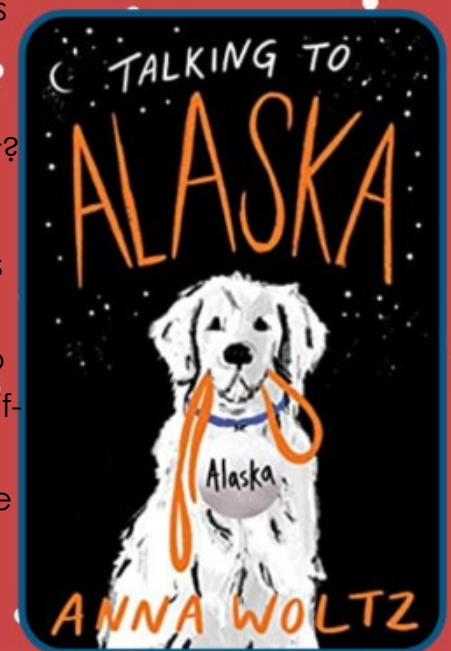
empathylab.uk

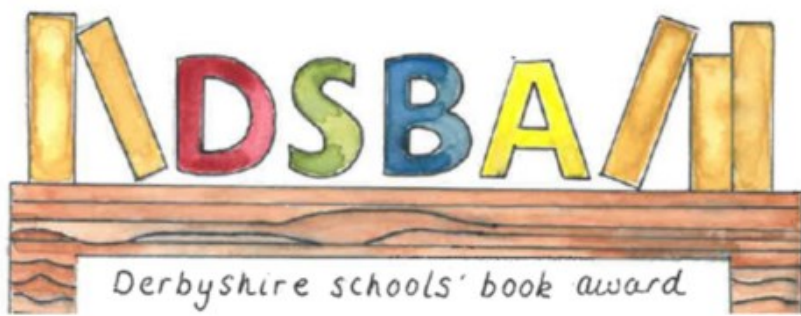


## Empathy Activities

**Some ideas to think about or discuss with your friends at book club...  
put yourself in someone else's shoes:**

1. Sven says that, before he got Alaska, he had to have a camera in his bedroom so his parents could monitor him at all times. Safety for Sven takes priority over his right to privacy. Try to imagine how it would feel if your parents had to monitor your every move to keep you safe. How would you feel about this?
2. When Parker learns that Alaska is now Sven's assistance dog, she decides to go and steal her back. What do you think about her decision? Can stealing ever be justified in exceptional circumstances? Can you empathise with Parker and why she decided to do this? How might it affect Sven if she was successful in stealing Alaska?
3. Sven tells Parker how he feels about his life with epilepsy: "imagine walking around on Mars for the rest of your life. And having to explain how you work to every Martian you meet: how you breathe, how your nose runs, how you pee, how you puke—and every time they go 'ooh' and 'ah' and look at you as if you're the alien." Can you relate to this from any experiences in your own life? Does this justify how Sven treats Parker at school? Do you ever feel like you are living on Mars and people do not understand how you work?
4. Sven and Parker decide to settle the question of who is Alaska's true owner by letting Alaska choose who to go. When Alaska chooses to go to Sven, how do you think Parker felt? Why is Sven so elated and surprised that Alaska chose him over Parker? How important is this to Sven going forward?
5. Choose a quotation from *Talking to Alaska* that really resonates with you. This could be because it perfectly expresses a feeling that you have experienced yourself, or maybe it helped you to understand something about how it feels for someone who is different to you. Create a poster of your chosen quotation and illustrate it with images that relate to the story. If you have space at the bottom of your poster write a sentence or two to explain why you chose that quotation and what it means to you.



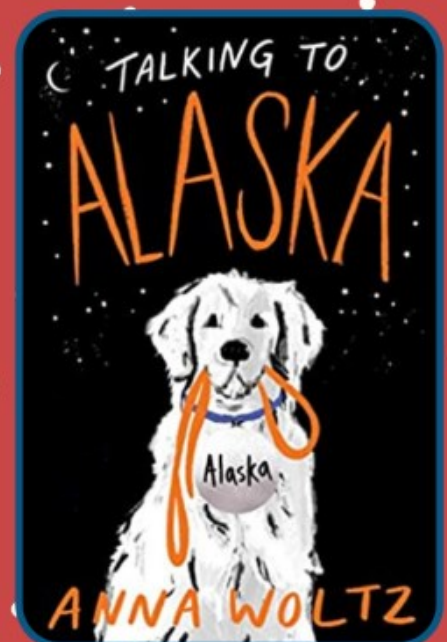


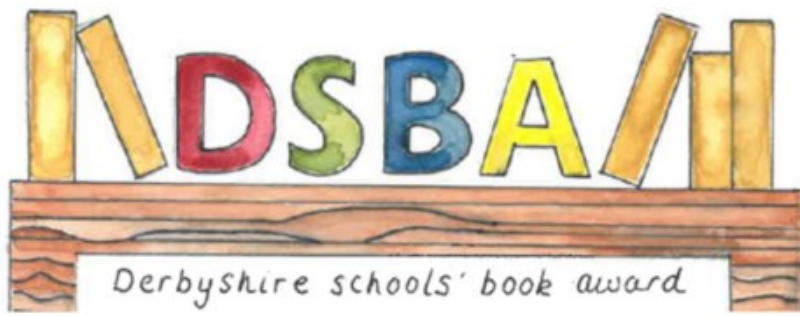
## Talking to Alaska Quick Quiz

### How well can you remember the story?

1. What does Mr Gomes have tattooed on his arm?
2. What song does Parker bark to her class on her first day at school?
3. What two activities did Sven have to give up because of developing epilepsy?
4. Before Sven got Alaska as his assistance dog, how did he almost die?
5. What derogatory name does Sven call Alaska at the start of the book?
6. How many brothers does Parker have?
7. What two nicknames does Parker have for Sven based on her two very different experiences of his personality?
8. How does Sven work out that Balaclava Girl is Parker?
9. What two things does Sven decide to do after the video of his seizure at school goes viral?
10. What does Parker remember about the shoes of the armed robber that shot her father?
11. What is exceptional about Alaska's capabilities as an assistance dog?

**(Answers on the last page)**

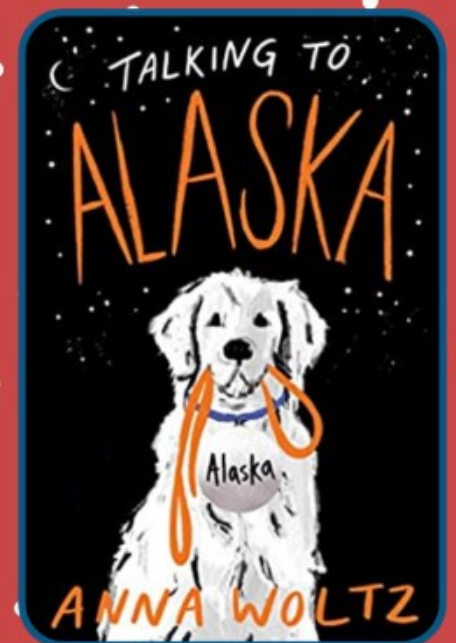




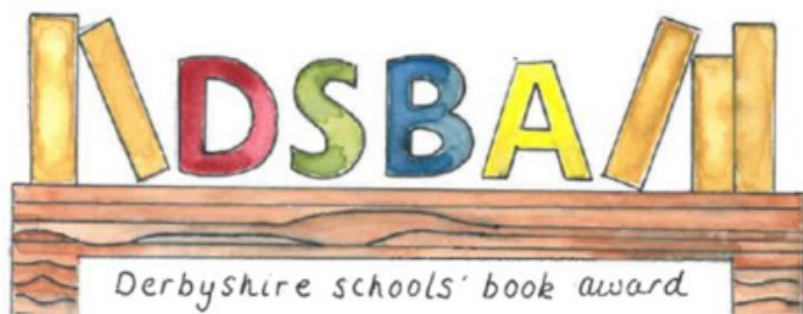
## Talking to Alaska Keyword Scramble

Can you unscramble the ten words below to make words that are connected to Talking to Alaska? Think about the themes of the novel, the characters names, the events that take place etc. (answers on the next page).

1. ESSTICAN DGO.
2. PLSEPEIY.
3. AKAALS.
4. DREMA RYBBOER.
5. RISFDNE.
6. LAAAACVLB RILG.
7. VSNE.
8. RISLVA.
9. ILGNBULY.
10. DBILSAIYIT.







### **Talking to Alaska Quick Quiz Answers :**

1. A Dragon.
2. Jingle Bells.
3. Swimming and cycling.
4. He walked into the road just as he was having a seizure and got hit by a car.
5. The beast.
6. Three.
7. Big old bulldozer (at school) & funny little hedgehog (when she sneaks in to see Alaska at night).
8. He googles the armed robbery she told him about and sees her surname on the family shop sign.
9. He decides to leave the school and he decides to stay safe in bed.
10. They are black trainers with red flames on the side of the soles.
11. Alaska can predict when Sven is about to have a seizure, and warn him.

### **Talking to Alaska Keyword Scramble Answers**

1. ESSSTICAAN DGO—Assistance dog.
2. PLSEPEIY—Epilepsy.
3. AKAALS—Alaska.
4. DREMA RYBBOER—Armed robbery.
5. RISFDNE—Friends.
6. LAAAACVLB RILG Balaclava Girl.
7. VSNE—Sven.
8. RISLVA—Rivals.
9. ILGNBULY—Bullying.
10. DBILSAIYIT—Disability.

