

October, October

KATYA BALEN

Illustrated by ANGELA HARDING

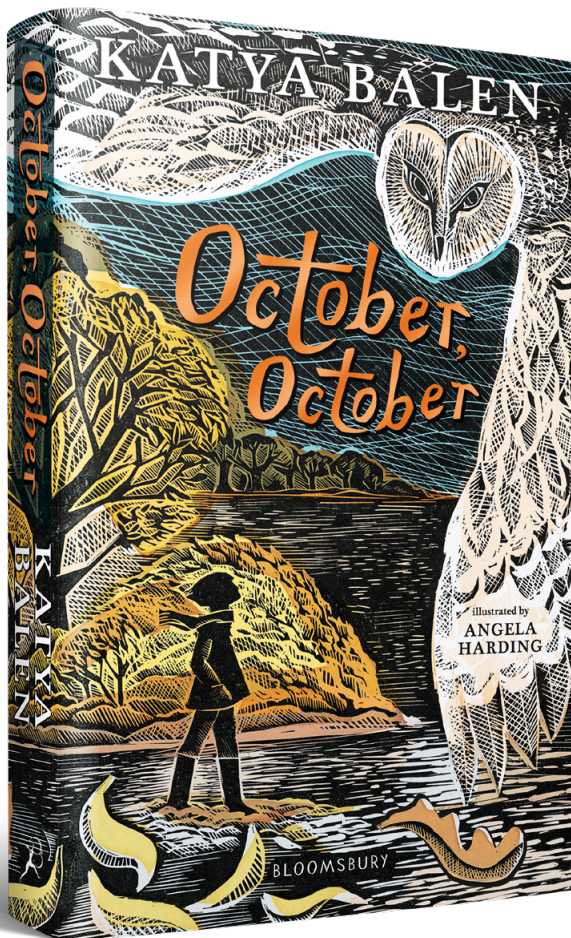
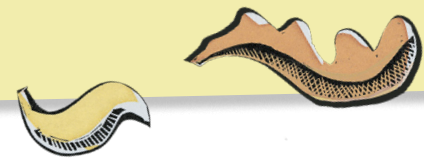
Educational
resource pack



Dear reader,

This educational resource pack is based on Katya Balen's stunning second novel *October, October* and is an ideal learning resource for children in Key Stage 2. It includes sneak peeks from the text, with corresponding reflection questions and activities to keep children both excited and eager to discuss this book. Featuring themes of 'The Wild', 'October', 'City Life' and 'Stories', this pack is perfect for use in the classroom or at home.

We hope you enjoy working your way through this pack.



ABOUT THE BOOK

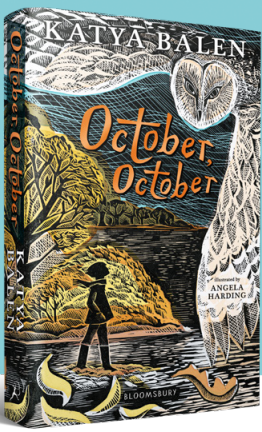
October and her dad live in the woods. They sleep in the house Dad built for them and eat the food they grow in the vegetable patches. They know the trees and the rocks and the lake and stars like best friends. They read the books they buy in town again and again until the pages are soft and yellow – until next year's town visit. They live in the woods and they are wild.

And that's the way it is.

Until the year October turns eleven. That's the year October rescues a baby owl. It's the year Dad falls out of the biggest tree in their woods. The year the woman who calls herself October's mother comes back. The year everything changes.

Author Katya Balen





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CONTENTS

- **EXTRACT 1: THE WILD (taken from pages 7–8)**

Objectives: Mindmap your sensory experience of a wild place; paint your wild place and discuss its importance to you.

Subject Checklist: ✓ Literacy ✓ Art, Design & Technology ✓ RSHE ✓ Citizenship ✓ Geography

- **EXTRACT 2: OCTOBER (taken from pages 17–18)**

Objectives: Explore the significance of key moments in the text; reflect on the importance of your name and why it is special.

Subject Checklist: ✓ Literacy ✓ Art, Design & Technology ✓ RSHE ✓ Citizenship

- **EXTRACT 3: CITY LIFE (taken from pages 229–231)**

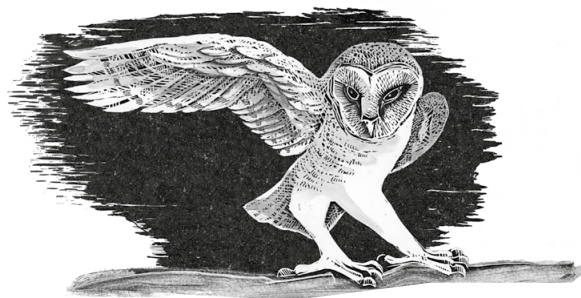
Objectives: Identify the meaning of sensory overload; compare your experiences of a peaceful place and a busy place.

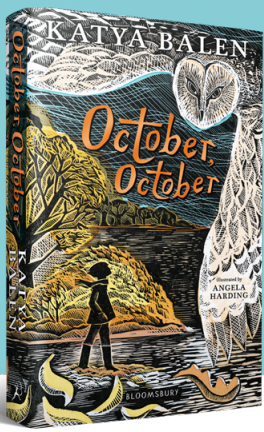
Subject Checklist: ✓ Literacy ✓ RSHE ✓ Citizenship ✓ Drama

- **EXTRACT 4: STORIES (taken from pages 286–287)**

Objectives: Discuss how stories help us to express ourselves; write a short story inspired by the text.

Subject Checklist: ✓ Literacy ✓ RSHE ✓ Art, Design & Technology





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EXTRACT 1: THE WILD (taken from pages 7–8)

We live in the woods and we are wild.

Our house sits in the woods and it's made from the trees that frame it. They've been chopped and planed and smoothed into a house, and so it's not the same as looking at the twisted reaches of the branches but I like to be inside the woods. It feels like a secret because we are hidden away and forgotten about in the best way, even though people know we're here.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How has the writer used **descriptive language** to show what life is like in the woods? Underline some examples.
- Why does October think of herself and her dad as 'wild'? What does this mean?
- How is October's home different to yours? Are there any similarities?
- What is your favourite wild or natural place? How does it feel to be connected to the natural world?
- What can we learn from October and her dad about preserving and protecting the environment? Give examples.

ACTIVITY: MY WILD PLACE

- Close your eyes and think of your favourite wild or natural place. It could be a wood, forest, beach, river or anywhere else where you feel a part of nature. With your eyes still closed, try to think about what your **five senses** experience in this place. Then mindmap all of these smells, sounds, sights, tastes and things you touch on the next page.
- Use your mindmap to paint your wild place, including lots of detail to capture what each of the senses experience. Share your painting with a partner and tell them what makes your wild place so special and about a memory you have of visiting.
- Ask your partner or someone at home about visiting a new wild place sometime in the near future, so that you can connect to another part of the natural world.

SMELL

SOUND

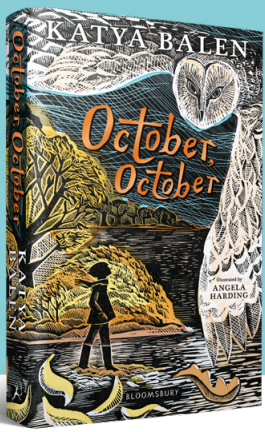
SIGHT



TASTE

TOUCH





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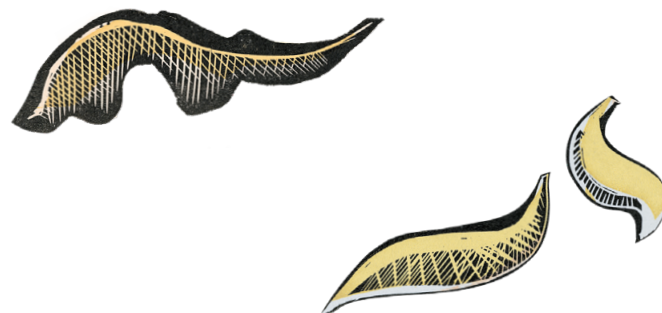
EXTRACT 2: OCTOBER (taken from pages 17–18)

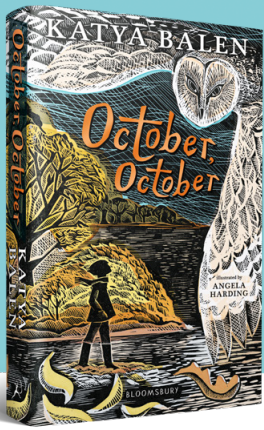
Two days later it is my month because it's October. October is the best month when you live in the woods and maybe when you don't, but I wouldn't know. It's when the trees are starting to shake leaves on to a patchwork floor and the ground is bright as fire. The air is crisp with a whisper of frost and the sky smells like smoke. Everything feels new and exciting.

I was born in October in that clean white hospital far away from here. There's a picture of me as a baby all wrapped up in a rainbow blanket and impossibly tiny. It was taken on an ancient camera from Dad's childhood that spits the picture out straightaway. There's no film left any more, but I don't need photographs to remember stuff.

Dad said he and the woman who is my mother threw names for me around the room, but they bounced off the walls and hit the floor with a thud because nothing felt quite right. They brought me back to the woods and the fire-bellied stove and the birds and the badgers and the falling leaves and Dad said *October* and that name flew.

So this is my month. And we always begin it the same way.





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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What is special about October's name? Why does it suit her so well?
- What season is the month of October a part of? What does the natural world around you look like in that season?
- How do October and her dad always begin her birthday 'in the same way'?
- What is significant about October's 11th birthday? How does this change everything?
- Why is Stig so important to October? What does she learn about herself and the world through Stig?

ACTIVITY: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

- Our names are important because they tell a story about who we are. Perhaps your name has a specific meaning, or you are named after someone? Like October, maybe there was something in particular that meant your name 'flew' for your parent(s)?
- On your tables or with a partner, have a chat about your names and where they come from. Then fill in the worksheet exploring the importance of your name; the month and season you were born in; how you like to spend your birthday and who with.
- Finally, note down two 'At Home Questions' you would like to ask someone you live with to find out more about their name. Perhaps they have a story to tell you about it?



MY NAME IS:

I WAS BORN IN THE MONTH OF:

.....

AND THE SEASON OF:

.....

MY BIRTHDAY SEASON LOOKS LIKE THIS

I LIKE TO SPEND MY BIRTHDAY LIKE THIS

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT HOME:

Q1
ANSWER:

Q2
ANSWER:





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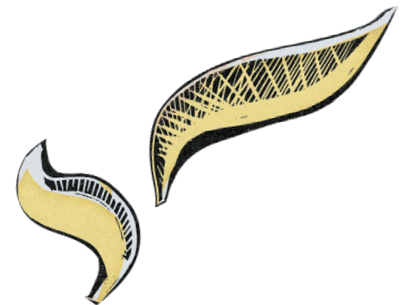
EXTRACT 3: CITY LIFE (taken from pages 229–231)

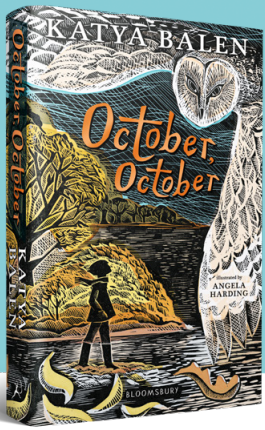
Christmas in the woods is
fire fingers dancing in the grate
bonfire flames
sticky home-made toffee
white snow snapping under my boots
knitted stockings
a present wrapped in a hundred layers with some-
thing hidden in each one
climbing frost-dazzled branches
singing old songs to no music
toe-dipping the shivering pond
hot tea outside wrapped in blankets
perfect.

Christmas in London is
grey snow melting
a lonely tree dressed up
its dying scent draining into the air
a new knitted stocking
that's not the same
a heavy smell of fat and oil and grease
songs on the radio that I can't sing along to
inside inside inside
worry worry worry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What kinds of emotions do you think October is feeling in this extract and why?
- What is interesting about the style of writing in this extract? Can you find other examples of the author's unique style?
- What does October miss about Christmas in the woods and the natural world? What else does she miss?
- Why do you think October finds it hard to adjust to life in the city? Give examples.
- What helps October adjust to life in London?
- How does October's relationship with her mother change over time?





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ACTIVITY: SENSORY OVERLOAD

- Start by lying on the floor in an open space. Imagine being in your favourite safe and peaceful place. Focus on your breathing and the quietness of the space you are in. How does your body feel? How does your mind feel?
- Then imagine being in a busy place that makes it difficult to relax. It might be somewhere very noisy with bright lights and lots of people, like the hospital October visits on page 85. Remembering that you are safe, think about how different your body and mind feel in this place. Then return to your safe place, taking long slow breaths.
- Open your eyes! We can talk about loud, busy places with lots of people as giving us **sensory overload**. This means that all the senses you looked at in Lesson 1 come to life at the same time and this can feel a bit overwhelming!
- Discuss together the places you visualised and the feelings you experienced. Finally, on the table below, compare the differences between your peaceful and busy places and how they make you feel. Look back to the extract to see how October compares her home in the woods and the noise of London to give you ideas.

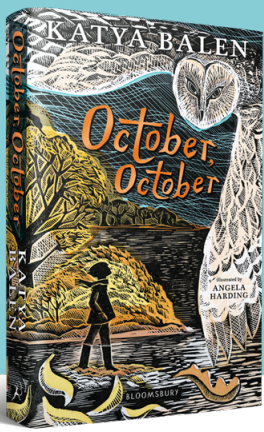
MY PEACFUL PLACE

What is it like? How does it make me feel?

MY BUSY PLACE

What is it like? How does it make me feel?





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EXTRACT 4: STORIES (taken from pages 286–287)

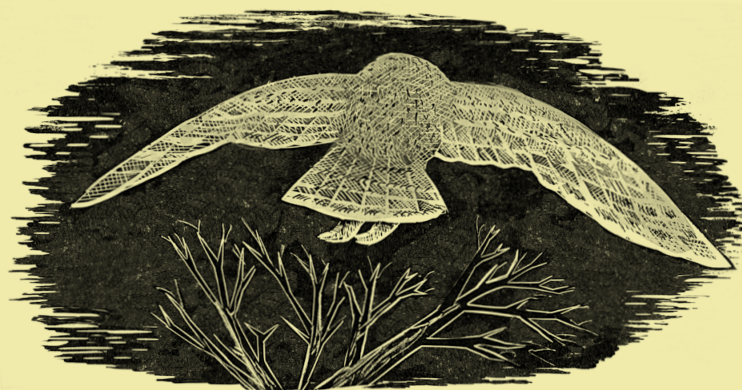
Sometimes at night I hear the soft call of an owl and sometimes I think I see the blink of a gold ring against the inky sky and I hope that she's in the wild wide space above my head and I know we are linked forever.

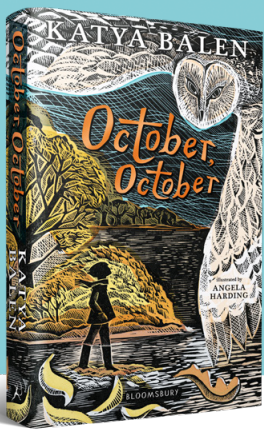
Stig is free and I am free. Being wild and free is different for every person and every thing and it can be folded into the woods or whirling through the city streets. I know not everything has a perfect ending and I know that some things have a perfect place and that some things don't and that all this can change anyway. I am wild in the woods and wild in the city and I have a foot stamped in each world and it's wonderful. The lines of my life scribble over the edges of these magical places and there's brilliance in both.

I can be a pair and I can be alone and I complete myself and many other people complete me too. There is still so much to see and do and Yusuf and I are going to travel the world and find wildness wherever we go.

There are stories everywhere and I want to tell them all.

And all the world is wild and waiting for me.





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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Why do you think the text ends with an illustration of Stig? What do you like about these illustrations throughout the text?
- What do you think October means when she says, 'there are stories everywhere and I want to tell them all'?
- Which other characters have played an important part in the story of October's life so far?
- How can stories help us to express ourselves? What else can we learn from stories?
- Why is it important to remember that 'not everything has a perfect ending', and that's OK?

ACTIVITY: A LITTLE MOMENT

- In a mudlarking session on page 253, Kate tells October:
'This is what I love about mudlarking ... It shows us a little moment from someone's life, a secret or a treasure or a something as simple as the boots they wore every day. But it just shows us that one thing. Just those little moments.'
With a partner, discuss why October and Yusuf love mudlarking so much and what Kate means in this quote.
- You are going to use this idea of 'a little moment from someone's life' to write a short story of your own! Cut out the story ideas on the next page and place them face down, then mix them up and pick one at random ... With a family member or friend, discuss:
- Make sure you plan:
 - the beginning, middle and end of your story
 - the style you will write in
 - an illustration for the end of your story (if you want one)
 - the senses your character(s) will experience
- Share your stories together and try creating a den in a safe space at home for you to read and write other stories in the future!



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BEING WILD

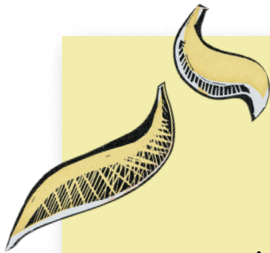
FINDING A PIECE
OF TREASURE

FINDING OUT
A SECRET

SETTING SOMEONE
OR SOMETHING FREE

SENSORY OVERLOAD
IN A NEW PLACE

EXPLORING A
NEW HOME



You've now reached the end of this
resource pack for *October, October*

We hope these notes have proved to be a useful and fun
introduction to the themes and ideas found within this book.

We would love to see examples of any work created as a result
of this pack, so please do email them over to us on:

childrensmarketing@bloomsbury.com

or share on Twitter tagging us at

[@KidsBloomsbury](https://twitter.com/KidsBloomsbury) [@katyabalen](https://twitter.com/katyabalen)

