A scheme of Work for Year 8: Flour Babies by Anne Fine.

(This scheme has been specifically written for a particular low ability single-sex boys’ group in Year 8. The activities mentioned can and should be adapted for other types of Year 8 class.)

Lesson 1

Objective: to explore and define the word ‘stereotype’ with examples.
(Text level- Reading for meaning, tracing the development of themes, National Literacy Strategy number 5.)

Starter

Write on the board ‘typical Year 8’ girl and ask the class to give examples of things typical Year 8 schoolgirls do/ say/ wear. As they reply write up feedback in three different columns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical…</th>
<th>Appearance and behaviour</th>
<th>Typical expressions used (says…)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 8 girl</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mum</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strict Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 11 boy</td>
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Development:

Then students draw their own grid, with 4 columns and four rows.

They work through in pairs or small groups filling in the grid with headings given by teacher: ‘A typical Mum’, ‘A typical strict teacher’, ‘Young teacher’, ‘Bottom set year 11’. They can use the final column to illustrate each stereotype. Students should fill in things like young teachers smile, wear trendy clothes etc.

Plenary: Point out to the students that different types of people use typical phrases, strict teachers give instructions etc. Tell class what they have drawn are types of people, the proper word for that being **Stereotype**. They fill in this word on their grids.

Own Work:

Write in your exercise books a paragraph about whether you think you are a typical boy or not and describe what you think a typical Year 8 boy is like.
Lesson 2

Objective: to be able to identify stereotypes and stereotyping.
(Reading for meaning- to develop as critical readers, NLS number 4.)

Starter

Begin lesson holding a picture of an old lady who looks nice and frail etc. The students then have one minute to write down what job they think she had before she retired. Students should be then invited to give their opinions. Chances are they will write something gentle and unambitious. Inform them that this lady was a thief. Tell them what they were doing was stereotyping her, i.e. having a fixed opinion about her. Highlight dangers of stereotyping people.

Students then have 5 minutes to write down what they think will happen if students assumed that all strict teachers were horrible and if teachers thought that all bottom sets were automatically badly behaved. Does this in fact happen? What can they do as students to break the cycle of prejudice?

Development

Start reading the first chapter of *Flour Babies* after a very brief discussion about what the book might be about. The opening chapter sets scene in bottom set class. Teacher reads role of teacher and other students the students. Ask the students which of the characters have fixed views of people/subjects in the chapter and get them to note these down while reading e.g.

- Mr Cartright has fixed views of his bottom set ‘4C’ and what subjects are ‘girly’ or ‘manly’,
- The word ‘boffins’ is used of clever students etc.

Plenary: Summarise with the students why class 4C behaves badly. Are they bad or is it because they are expected to be?
Lesson 3

Objective: To explore the presentation of male characters in the novel.
(Reading for meaning- NLS number 5- tracing the development of ideas.)

Starter

Ask class to write down things boys do in class (verbs), things they own (nouns) and how they would describe their behaviour in class (adjectives).

A grid could be used to speed this exercise up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things that boys do in class (Verbs or “doing words”)</th>
<th>Things that boys own (Nouns)</th>
<th>Ways of describing the behaviour of boys in class (Adjectives)</th>
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Brief feedback, often things like boys lean back in their chairs, chew gum, burp, shout out, click knuckles, are naughty etc.

Development

Read second chapter of book noticing the behaviour of the boys in three columns, verbs/ nouns and adjectives. Discuss briefly when finished why boys behave the way they do in class.

Plenary: Ask class to name a verb they have done today and an adjective to describe the book so far etc.
Lesson 4

Objective: To explore the author’s theme of there being a certain time to do things in life.
(NLS number 5 - Reading for meaning- tracing the development of values in texts.)

Starter

Students are given one minute to write down as many things as they can think of that they are not allowed to do until they are older-by law! (Whether or not they are doing it now). They should also write down the age that the law allows them to do it in their own right. (E.g. drinking alcohol with parents is permitted at a younger age than 18)

NB! Teachers may find it wise to do a bit of homework themselves here prior to the lesson.

Three minutes should be spent compiling a list (which will be referred to later)

Development

Look at the opening quotation from Ecclesiastes: ‘To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven’. Explore why the writer has chosen this quotation and what it means and therefore what it might mean in the course of the novel.

Get feedback from the class about why there are certain times for things- like learning to drive for example. Is there a right time for having a boyfriend/ girlfriend? Having a baby? Why does the government think there should be certain times? Is it natural? What is society’s opinion?

In groups of four students should be given five minutes to reach a unanimous verdict as to what they think is the correct minimum age for each activity on the list. They should justify their decision. A majority verdict is not allowed nor is intimidation.

After this time the class should discuss as a whole what the best minimum age is. A majority vote can be taken and the choice written down

Then students on their own or in pairs should write down reasons that the government’s minimum age is different from any they have reached or why they agreed with any of the government’s age limits.

(E.g. is it a coincidence that the minimum legal age for sex is the same as the minimum age for full employment? Is it fair that the grandparents or the state should bear the financial costs of having a baby, or indeed not having one, just because two teenage children can’t resist their hormones?)

Plenary: Briefly explore biblical source and why Anne Fine has chosen the bible to open her novel with. Keep a note when reading the book of the ‘right time’ to do things which Anne Fine mentions.

Own Work:

Students should note down up to 5 other things (not discussed in the lesson) they think they should do at certain times and why they think this is a good idea, entitled ‘A good age for...’
Lesson 5

Objectives: To revise forms of stereotyping and to explore the dangers and benefits of it.
(NLS- Reading for meaning, number 4- develop as critical readers who search for meaning.)

Starter

Give the class one minute to write down the answer to a personal question about themselves that they are prepared to be frank about and to which they have no possibility of knowing the answer. (This activity will work best if the question is one to which they are also guaranteed to assume the wrong answer)
(E.g. Fat teacher who used to be a swimmer at county level could ask the class if he/she had ever won anything at sport.)
When they have written down their answer give them the correct answer and if appropriate accuse them of stereotyping you.
Then split the class into groups of four, giving them five minutes to discuss and then write down; 1) why they chose their answer and 2) why do they think so many people stereotype everyone so readily (what advantage does stereotyping give?).

Development

Read chapter one noting down the behaviour and attitudes of both the teacher and the class.
Then discuss, ‘Who is the most badly behaved?’ and take feedback from the class. Focus on the language used by Mr Cartright. Ask; Who uses the most stereotypes? Who expects people to behave in a certain way? Whose ideas are fixed?

4 C's Behaviour

Mr Cartright's Behaviour

- pens in mouth
- bad tempered muttering

- threats, sarcasm, ‘I’ll be delighted to go over it again in your breaktime’.
- ‘swinging legs to and fro’.
- bad language, offensive vocabulary.

Ask class what stereotypes (from Mr Cartright) we have heard today? Write them up on the board: The Sads/ the Bads/ the Boffins/ the Lads. Ask class what the dangers are of using stereotypes.

Ask class to write down a short list of words they find offensive, and may themselves have been called, making it obvious you are not asking for swear words. Then choosing the term that bothers them the most, write the letters of this word in the margin and compose an acrostic poem about how that word makes them feel and why that is a bad thing/ a wrong label. E.g.

B...
O...
F...
F...
I...
N...

Plenary: Read and share these with the class as appropriate.

Own Work: Or as a light-hearted ending to the lesson: Students should look at Mr Carright’s interpretations of subjects, e.g. textiles = sewing and then think of 5 of their own (i.e. resistant
Lesson 6

Objectives: To explore the comic techniques of the author which make the novel amusing.
(NLS number 7, Reading for meaning-identify the ways implied and explicit meanings are conveyed in different texts.)

Starter

Students should be asked if they know what a situation comedy is and it should be explained by example if they do not.

Students in groups of four have five minutes to think about all the things that can make a situation “funny”. It may or may not be helpful to ask them to think about a particular current sitcom (or ‘The Simpsons!’) and ask them why they like it or find it funny.

Student should compile a list of the essential ingredients for good situation comedy from the suggestions offered.

Development

Ask class to remind each other of the funny things that happened in Chapter One. Write up their ideas on the board on the left hand side. Then work out why they make the chapter funny by writing on the right hand side the comic device (or trick!) used by the author. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comic Techniques...</th>
<th>Bright boy accidentally put into bottom set class.</th>
<th>Mistaken identity and irony.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy tries to tell teacher but the teacher doesn’t let him get a word in.</td>
<td>Dramatic tension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr Cartright’s attitude to the class.</td>
<td>Insults,Sarcasm and exaggeration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name mix- up, Martin Simon and Simon Martin.</td>
<td>Mistaken identity and irony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martin being very clever, reading book by French author in its original form.</td>
<td>Extreme example- exaggeration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plenary:  Name a comic effect that they could include in their homework.

Own Work: Either write a short story entitled ‘No-one joins this class by accident’ or write Mr Cartright’s end of term report on Simon Martin.

N.B. There are good examples of metaphors and similes in the first chapters of the book, could ask students to keep a metaphor map in their books by illustrating those they come across and or writing down the best insult from each chapter.
Lesson 7

Objectives: To organise thoughts about central character by using a character map.
(NLS Study Skills- number 3 -make notes in different ways.)

Starter

Divide the class into pairs. Give each pair a sealed envelope and ask them to follow the instructions.

The object of this starter is to introduce two new words; ‘arcane’ and ‘philistinism’

Each envelope should contain a piece of paper with one of these words as the title, a group number (Both words should have the same set of group numbers so that e.g. group 6 for arcane can explain the meaning of their word to group 6 of philistinism and vice versa.), a simple and accurate definition of the word, an example of a sentence which contains the word.

Each pair has five minutes to sketch a picture that illustrates what the word means and to construct their own sentence that contains the word.

The corresponding pairs then get together into groups of four. Each pair in turn shows their sketch and their sentence to the other pair who then have two minutes to decide and write down what the other pair’s word means.

After time is up selected pairs can read out their decisions and the class can decide if they understood the word or not.

Development

Read Chapter 2.

Ask students what we know about Simon Martin so far. Also ask what don’t we know? What missing information is there?

Draw an outline of Simon Martin on the board for students to copy, adding around the outside what we know about his appearance, in thought bubbles what we know about his thoughts and on the inside a question mark. (See next page.)

Ask why does Simon think teachers are cunning (p21).

Note down five things that teachers do that you think are cunning. Briefly discuss feedback!

Write Mr Cartwright’s diary after his discussion with Dr Feltham re Flour Babies Experiment. Include his outrage/ what he expects will happen etc. or Simon Martin’s diary after overhearing about the experiment- what he hopes will happen, namely an explosion!

Plenary: Ask class to name something they expect to happen in the next Chapter of the novel.
Flour Babies

Simon Martin

-school is a prison
-makes clicking noises
-whistles
-bored easily
-kinaesthetic learner
-opens doors like a gorilla
-taps time with feet
-enormous feet

{}
The egg experiment

Own work: At your own risk and discretion start the class off with doing the experiment themselves.

They have to look after a raw egg in a similar way for one or two weeks.

My experience is that the following rules assist greatly.

1. Parental knowledge is important.
2. A reward should be given to all students who attempt the experiment
3. A reward should be given to all students who successfully return the egg intact at the end of the experiment, having followed all the rules. (I have always given a “kinder egg” or “crème egg” for this)
4. A reward should be given for each student who hands in at the end of the experiment a daily diary, which details his or her thoughts and feelings at the end of every day. (I have given “commendations” for this)
5. Additionally a prize should be given to the best diary or refusal. (I have always given an Easter egg for this and it has so far always gone to a diary entry-see below)
6. The experiment is voluntary so to be fair I have always offered and given the “kinder egg” reward and commendations to anyone who refuses to do the experiment but who writes down good detailed and personal reasons explaining their refusal.
7. Students should construct and bring to the next lesson an “egg-cradle” which should be able to protect the egg against the rigours of the school day. No cradle? No egg! (The egg is raw! Students who are looking for ammunition instead of parenthood rarely go to the trouble of making a good cradle.) You may wish to give more advanced notice of this requirement.
8. Students must make sure they, or a designated egg-minder, are in the same room as the egg at all times. This includes going to the toilet and going to school. They can delegate the responsibility to someone else who can be trusted to faithfully carry out their duties, (e.g. a parent if they do not wish risking their egg at school each day) but this service must be negotiated and paid for in cash or kind (e.g. extra washing up duties).
9. Students should be reminded of what their mates in other classes are like. Students should keep the experiment secret to minimise the risk of sabotage.
10. It should be stressed that there is no point in cheating, as this is primarily a test of their own character by themselves. No check will ever be made that they are telling the truth. They can get a “kinder egg” reward by not doing the experiment so why lie? However even though the experiment is voluntary it is also a commitment. If they volunteer they have got to see it through.
11. Students can start over with their own raw egg if the worst happens. Real parents do this. It is up to them to record the fact in the diary and it is up to you to withhold the relevant reward if they do. (I always give it)
12. And yes, they can call it Egg-bert and draw a face on it!
Lesson 8

Objectives: To explore Simon’s attitude to parenting. (NLS Reading for meaning- trace the development of themes, number 5.)

Starter

Give out the eggs to the committed egg-parents and remind them that handling the egg is unhygienic and will also increase the chances of breakage by a zillion percent.

Development

Read Chapter Three recording Simon’s attitude to the Flour Babies in steps:

Focus on Simon’s relationship with his Mum. Discuss briefly in class then work on individual answers to the following questions:

- What was it like before?
- What is it like now?
- What will it be like in the future?
- Is your relationship with your Mum similar or different from Simon’s and why do you think this is?

Plenary: Name one thing that shows Simon is developing as a person in this chapter.

Own Work: In addition to writing their diary entry, the class should ask their parents/ guardians to tell them the earliest memory that they (i.e. the parents or guardians) have of when they were young themselves. Students should write down these memories.
Simon's

Steps

to

Parenthood

→ shows he is interested in his own infancy

curious about her

finds it hard to look after her → shows sympathy for his mum

thinks she is sweet → shows he is proud of her

refers to flour baby as "her" → shows he has feelings

prods and pushes it → shows his impatience
Lesson 9

Objectives: To explore Simon’s search or quest for self-knowledge.
(NLS tracing the development of values, reading for meaning number 5.)

Starter

Each student on their own has three minutes to write down their own earliest genuine memory, how old they were when it happened and why they think they have remembered it.
When time is up selected students can be asked to share their memories.

Development

Ask the class why they think Simon is interested in his memories, and why we all are.
Ask class if they think the experiment will change Simon in any way.
Read Chapter Four and ask ‘Has Simon changed?’ And for evidence to back up their points such as:
- he still plays tricks
- finds concentrating for long periods hard, but is determined to finish the flour baby project
- now gets into trouble for ‘right’ reasons, finding safe place for his flour baby for example
- has developed sympathy for his Mum
- worries constantly about baby through football practice
- BUT remind class Simon is still holding out for the unlikely prospect of the Glorious Explosion = touch of old Simon (what he’d misheard the teachers talking about).

Ask also if there appear to be any similarities between ‘Old Carthorse’ and Simon = both don’t like reading/ overhearing/ their language = non standard English / frustrations at school etc. Why has Anne Fine included these parallels in the novel do you think?

Compile a list of the Advantages and the Disadvantages of Being a Parent/ and or a single parent starting with those things Simon mentions in the chapter:

Plenary: Name five emotions Simon goes through / feels in this chapter

Own Work: (In addition to the egg-diary) Write Simon’s diary/ poem about his Dad, containing his hopes and feelings, his dreams or write ‘A Dream That Will Never Come True’ - a short story or empathetic account based on personal experience.
Lesson 10

Objectives: To explore why Simon is not going to be a totally New Man. (NLS- reading for meaning- to develop as critical readers- number 4.)

Starter

Teach Latin root of ‘male’ meaning bad and it’s opposite of ‘bene’ meaning good. Think of words that begin with these roots. Elicit beneficial, benefit, benevolent, malevolent etc. even Malfoy in ‘Harry Potter’ novels. It should now be easier to spot malevolent/ malicious in the chapter.

Development

Read Chapter five. What new feelings and emotions emerge out of Simon? Do we see any more improvements in this chapter?

- feelings of pride/ shame
- wants to please
- wants to read to find things out and do mathematical calculations
- he has a changing attitude to teachers, new respect
- writing diary

Ask class why detentions don’t seem to have worked for Simon in the past and why they may not work in general. Brief discussion and feedback.

Simon is reluctant to change as Miss Arnott suggested- do you think he’ll become a changed boy?

Ask class why Simon feels ‘safe’ when he’s back with his mate Sajid at the end of the chapter. Also ask why Simon seems so interested in his Dad’s last day. Why can’t he forget about it and why isn’t he simply angry?

Plenary: Give a reason why the future looks either optimistic or bleak for Simon.

Own Work:

Write an account of the day Simon’s Dad left by Simon’s Mum from her point of view or a poem or an acrostic poem entitled ‘The Last Day’ or ‘The Leaving’.
Lesson 11

Objectives: To explore the complexities of parenting. (NLS Reading for meaning-number 5-tracing the development of themes.)

Starter

Students are given three minutes to write as many reasons as they can think of either for having children or not having children (but NOT both). They must select one category only.

Compile their responses into four lists headed; “Boys for”, “Boys against”, “Girls for”, “Girls against”

If appropriate invite discussion as to what the lists show about class attitudes.

You may wish to include the anecdote that “Cosmopolitan” some years ago compiled lists of the top ten best and worst things about being a man or a woman. Top of the list of best things about being a man was that they never ever get to give birth. Interestingly top of the list of worst things about being a man was also that they never ever get to give birth!

Development

Read Chapter 6 about Robin Foster’s treatment of the flour baby. Why did he fail? What does this show us about his character? What relevance has Robin’s predicament to Simon?

Compile a list of the Top Ten Complaints from the lads about their Flour Babies. Or draw speech/thought bubbles for each boy on the canal. Feed back to class, make group list on board.

What five things does Simon find magical/enjoyable about looking after the Flour Baby/does he think are magical about real babies? Why does he like the Flour Baby so much?

Plenary: Ask the class why Robin failed and Simon seems to excel at being a parent.

Own Work: Make a shape poem about the Flour Babies and the class’ reactions to it on the shape of a sack of flour.
Lesson 12
Objectives: To examine the development of characters in the class, especially Simon, since the start of the experiment. (NLS-Reading for meaning- number 5- tracing the development of ideas.)

Starter
Students should spend three minutes to write down all the reasons they can think of for keeping a diary – any diary!
A top ten list should be compiled from their efforts.
Students should then be given five minutes in groups of four to write down why it can be good, and why it can be a bad thing to read someone’s diary without their permission. Discuss feedback briefly.

Development
Read Chapter 7 - the diary reading
What are the boys’ attitudes to the flour babies now? Why is Simon so quiet?

Plenary: Is it Mr Cartright who has managed to ‘do something with them’ or the boys’ interest themselves that has made the experiment successful. Give reasons for your answer.

Lesson 13
Objectives: To explore the impact of figurative language. (NLS- Vocabulary, number 11- appreciate the impact of figurative language in texts.)

Starter
Define the words ‘Metaphor’ and ‘Simile’. E.g. He is a pig, and He eats like a pig. Give examples of metaphors from the book, the first few chapters have good examples.
Students have three minutes in pairs to come up with metaphors for their parents.
The class can compile a top ten list from the suggestions offered and weed out any similes which have crept in.

Development
Read Chapter 8
Why is Simon so interested in what his father sang the day he left? Why does he regret the flour baby experiment now? Why does he think he’s not cut out for being a parent?
Copy out the song into schoolbooks, as well as have it on OHT so the class can illustrate the metaphors.
What is the ‘message’ in the song? Why does Simon react the way he does when Martin tells him? What has he discovered?
This is the first time Simon has accepted the contribution of an ‘ear’ole’. What kind of communication does Simon still find difficult? (Talking to Martin, somebody different from himself and ever thinking he’ll need Martin again). Ask class why this is?

Plenary: Ask class how far Simon has changed or to say what the flour baby means to Simon, using a metaphor e.g. it’s a rock/ a shield/ a support/a window etc.

Own Work: Turn any five similes into metaphors,
E.g. the house was quiet like a tomb → the house was a tomb
- Try to use the five metaphors as part of a short poem.
Lesson 14

Objectives: To introduce the irony in this section of the book, and to explore comic and tragic forms of irony. (NLS- Reading for meaning- identify implied meanings- iron, number 7.)

Starter

Define the word irony- (pantomime works well, when main character can’t see other character when audience can, ‘He’s behind you!’)
In pairs students have got four minutes to come up with an example of tragic irony or comic irony. A top ten list of examples can be compiled from their responses.

Development

Re-cap what Simon had told the class about the last day of the experiment- kicking flour babies into oblivion etc.
Read Chapter 9- the weigh-in of the Flour Babies.
What has Simon discovered about himself since the start of the novel? E.g. he can sing...
Introduce ‘ irony’ of ‘glorious explosion’= a comic technique.
Why does Mr Cartright say Simon will make a good parent? Do you think it’s likely? Why? Why not? Explain with reference to Simon’s character. Write a paragraph explaining your answer.

Plenary: Ask class if they think Mr Cartright is a parent and why they think he is or isn’t with an explanation.

Own Work: Write a short story containing either comic or tragic irony. Give them lots of ideas eg a man has spent all day swatting flies than finds a juicy fly in the soup he orders at a restaurant or a very poor man wins the lottery and is so excited he doesn’t see a car coming around the corner and gets knocked down.
Lesson 15

Objectives: To reflect and make reasoned predictions about characters. (NLS-Reading for meaning- review developing skills as critical reader, number 4.)

Starter

By now the week or two week experimental period for egg parenting should have elapsed and you should be in a position to give out prizes and rewards as appropriate. Students can be asked to spend five minutes writing down what they have personally realised since their own experiment has taken place.

Development

Read Chapter 10. What is Simon’s conclusion to the experiment? What does the future hold for Simon?

What are the positives and negatives about Simon’s future? eg
- lots of detentions
- known trouble-maker
- love of freedom
- ability to plan ahead
- ability to value his youth

Simon says (p150) that his father’s memory doesn’t matter to him anymore- how come? Why has he decided ‘ only the people who know you really count’?

Why doesn’t Mr Cartright tell him off at the end? Why isn’t he given a punishment? Why is there a meeting between Simon Martin and Martin Simon at the end do you think? -Shows reversals- Martin admires Simon for first time, they may be more like equals now...etc.

Either:

Write the next chapter in Simon’s life story- when Simon gets home covered in flour... or write an article for the school magazine about Flour Babies, saying why you think it won the Carnegie Award. Write why it appeals to your age group and what makes the characters and themes appealing.

Or write an article for a magazine about ‘What a child must have in order to be happy’ or your own definition of ‘A Good Parent’.

Plenary: Reflect on opening biblical quotation. Ask to explain why Anne Fine chose this for the book, for example Simon has decided a lot about parenting, when the right time for him is and accepted it wasn’t the right time for his dad.

Own Work: Make sure the above tasks are completed, ready for assessments. Students should now have examples of lots of writing in different forms, diary, magazine article, factual etc. to contribute to assessment folders.