

Teaching Ideas for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Award Shortlist 2018

Title: Night Shift

Author/Illustrator: Debi Gliori

Publisher: Hot Key Books, 2017

These notes have been written by the teachers at CLPE to provide schools with sessions which focus on the importance of illustration in building a narrative and supporting children's response. They build on our work supporting teachers to use picture books to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. The teaching notes show how picture books can be used in schools to enhance children's reading comprehension and composition of their own creative writing. We hope you find them useful

Before beginning this sequence:

This is a sequence of sessions aimed at Key Stages 3 and 4.

This teaching sequence focusses on the power of the illustrations in the book and how they are used by the author/illustrator to make key points and to tell the story. The notes could be used to plan a sequence of work in an English lesson but would equally lend themselves to a PSHCE or even Art lessons focussed on illustration or graphical representation.

Although at first glance a simple picturebook, the text is rich in content and thinking and more adult in the concept and emotions it explores. The narrative centres on the author/illustrator's very real and personal experience of depression. As Debi Gliori states in her afterword, 'This book is the result of spending most of my adult life living through periods of depressive illness. Some of these have been severe enough to warrant medical intervention, others have eventually responded to counselling, and sometimes I have simply hung on and waited to become well again.' Readers therefore require a higher degree of understanding and emotional maturity to engage with the content.

It is advised that you read the book first before sharing it with your class to determine whether they have the level of emotional maturity and understanding to engage with the theme, particularly if the content resonates with personal experiences that the pupils may be processing and dealing with themselves. It is an important text, as author Matt Haig states on the back cover, in 'making the invisible visible' and offering an insight into depression that brings this concept out into the open, enabling discussion and releasing the stigma that is often attached to mental health illnesses.

Activities in this sequence open up opportunities for students to talk about their own lives and the lives of others. You will need to set this up very carefully with the students, emphasising a trust approach to talking about their own feelings and experiences, making sure children only share ideas and thoughts if they want to and negotiating with the group that nothing shared in the sessions will be shared outside the room face to face, behind people's backs or on social media, or used against anyone or be seen as a stigma and that the students understand that discussions will take place about points raised are seen as supportive, not

judgmental. You can draw on a wealth of resources from organisations to support you in discussing mental health with your students, such as:

Heads Together: <https://www.headstogether.org.uk/>

Time to Change: <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/resources-youth-professionals/session-plans>

The Mix: <http://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>

In preparation for exploring this text in the classroom, children will also need access to a variety of art materials (cartridge paper, soft drawing pencils (2B+), charcoal pencils, charcoal, pastels, putty rubbers, soft pastels, soft coloured pencils) for them to be able to explore the effects of different media used in the illustrations in this text for themselves.

Session 1

Encourage the students to closely observe the front cover image and text. It might be useful to have a visualiser or some kind of camera projection device to be able to share the images from the text across the sessions with the pupils on a large scale, to allow for close reading. *What do you see? What are your initial ideas about this book? What sort of book do you think it will be? What makes you think that? Is it the sort of book you would pick up if you saw it in a bookshop or library? What intrigues you? What puts you off?*

Now explore the title: Night Shift. *What connotations does this phrase have for you? What do you know or think you know about Night Shift working?* Give time to discuss in pairs or groups then feedback and scribe the students' ideas, or get them to write their own ideas on post-it notes, around a copy of the front cover.

Read the first two pages aloud, using the visualiser or projection device to share the text and images with the students. If this is not possible, copy these two spreads for the children to follow in pairs or small groups. *What do the students think the 'it' that the author refers to in the first spread is? Why do they think this? Look at the way the 'fog' is portrayed in the illustration. It covers the eyes of the character in the bed, whose hand is reaching towards it. Look at the illustration on the second spread; the fog still evident, but darker around the character, the shadow looming in the background. What emotions do these illustrations evoke in us as readers? Why is this? Looking at the facial expressions and body positions of the character; what do we feel about them? What materials do you think the illustrator has used to create these images? Why do you think that she has chosen this medium? What does it allow her to do or show? What effect does limiting the palette to black and white give?* Allow the pupils chance to discuss their ideas in pairs or groups and note their thinking on copies of the illustration.

Ask the students if this is the way they thought this book would begin. *What do they think the book is about now? Why do they think this? How do they think it will unfold from here?* Encourage the children to note down these predictions around the illustration. Now look at the next spread; *'The fog rolled in every night.'*

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Again, give the children a copy of the illustration so that they can closely read it for themselves. *What do you notice about the fog now? What do you think the fog and the dragon might represent? How has the character been positioned in this illustration? What does this say to you?* Look at the white space around each illustration, showing us only the centre of what is happening. *What effect does this give? Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to do this?* Allow the children time and space to discuss their ideas together and make notes around the illustration of their observations, thoughts and questions, laying out the three spreads seen so far so that they can see the build up to this moment.

Finally, show the children the next spread. Read the text aloud and again and allow the children to closely observe a copy of the accompanying illustration *Does this change your thinking around what the fog represents? What do you notice about the fog now?* Draw students' attention to observing the body position and facial expression of the character, *what does this suggest?* Being in the shower is a very private and intimate moment, when the character is literally at their most exposed, *why do you think the illustrator has chosen to set this scene here?*

Allow time for the students to explore and discuss their thoughts around the theme and storyline of the text, supporting them in sharing and exploring their ideas. Provide children with heavy cartridge paper, charcoal pencils, charcoal and putty rubbers and allow them to spend time exploring the different ways they could create the fog. If the children have limited experience of using charcoal, you may want to demonstrate techniques first, and draw alongside them, ideally under a visualiser so they can see the marks you make, how you smudge and blend, how you layer up to change the intensity of the colour, how to use the putty rubber to remove layers of colour to create different effects.

If the fog 'rolled in...during the day too', what other moments could you portray in the character's day? Who do we think this character is? How old are they? What might they get up to in their day that could be interrupted by the fog rolling in? Now, encourage the students to plan their ideas for their own composition, looking again at the techniques used by Debi Gliori, such as providing intimate glimpses into scenes by setting them in white space, thinking about the facial expression and body position of the character and how to show the movement and intensity of the fog rolling in

Encourage the students to pin their illustrations up around the classroom and give time and space for them to walk around the space, investigating each other's ideas and techniques. Give them post-it notes as they walk and encourage them to use these to make a comment or ask a question about illustrations that interest them. Lead a feedback session to explore the comments and respond to the questions, before looking at the collection as a whole. What have people done that is similar? Different? Are all the illustrations the same? Does this matter? What is the purpose of illustration?

Now look at a range of Debi Gliori's other picturebooks, ideally real copies or shots of covers and inside pages sourced on the internet. Debi's own website has a range of examples at:

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<http://www.debiglioribooks.com/> Discuss the work they can see here; *how would they describe the style of these illustrations? Who do you think she usually writes her books for? Is this book in keeping with her regular style? How is it similar/different? Do you think it has been written for her regular audience? Why do you think this?*

Session 2

Re-read the text from the beginning and on until, 'Night after night, I was diminished.' Allow time for the children to discuss the images on these spreads; *what do they find most powerful or evocative? Why is this?* Focus on the final image, the dragon is back, and brings with it white feathers. *Why do you think this is? What might it symbolise?* Explore the white feather as a symbol of cowardice. This supposedly comes from cockfighting and the belief that a cockerel sporting a white feather in its tail is likely to be a poor fighter. Have they seen any other incidences of white feathers used in this way? In History, they may have explored the white feather being handed out to conscientious objectors, for example. *Why do you think Debi Gliori has used white feathers here? What does this suggest about how the book might progress? Or how the character might develop?* Allow time for the children to discuss their ideas and note these around a copy of the illustration.

Read on until 'I awoke every night afraid of something I couldn't see'. Explore these illustrations, looking at the impact on the character. Allow time and space for the students to explore ideas in pairs or small groups before discussing ideas together. Did they draw on the dragon's wings spreading all over her, the dragon looming over her from above, the hands up pose suggesting surrender, the shadows taking over, the repetition of the powerful stomach churning image? What were the most powerful things for them? Why was this?

Read on, up until 'I got up, looked in the mirror and saw that I was ill'. Give time for the students to reflect on the narrative, discussing thoughts and ideas, reflecting on what they have seen in the images and heard in your reading so far. Depending on the students' prior experience of mental illness they may pick up on the themes at various levels, so be prepared to guide and negotiate discussions sensitively and appropriately. Look at the image on this page; *what does the scale of the character in relation to the mirror suggest? Why do you think Debi Gliori has chosen to place the large, black dragon behind the character, with its hands and wisps of fog covering her face?*

Why do you think she made the decision to depict the illness as a dragon? Collect examples of their associations with dragons. Where have they seen them in books, films? What are they usually like? What do they do? How do they behave? Dragons are mythical creatures; why might this be significant?

Give time and space for the children to discuss and collect their ideas before sharing Debi Gliori's thoughts in the afterword: *'I have used dragons to represent depression. This is partly because of their legendary ability to turn a fertile realm into a blackened, smoking ruin and partly because popular mythology shows*

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them as monstrous opponents with a tendency to pick fights with smaller creatures. I'm not particularly brave or resourceful, and after so many years of combat I have to admit to a certain weariness, but I will arm-wrestle dragons for eternity if it means that I can help anyone going through a similar struggle.'

What does this suggest about why she has created this book? Read the blurb on the back of the book:

Fighting dragons is one way
of fighting depression.

This book could be another.

What do you think this means? What does this tell you about the significance of this text? Give children time and space to explore their ideas in paired or group discussion before writing their own ideas to display around a copy of the back cover.

Session 3

Re-read the text so far and on until, 'Lacking words, I tried to draw a map to help me find something I couldn't name' *What is happening to the dragon as the text moves on? What could this signify? How is the dragon positioned in this image, what could this tell us? What is different about this illustration from the ones we have studied so far?* Explore how this is the first time a double page spread has been used and the first time the illustrator has shown the whole scene filling the page. *Why do you think Debi Gliori has chosen this spread to do this? Look at how the light is flooding in from the skylight. What could this signify? Although the light is mostly filling the room, the character is still shadowed; what could this tell us?*

Look at the phrases that tell us how difficult it is for the character to talk about her illness: '**Words left me.** There was **no language** for this feeling. **Lacking words**, I tried to draw a map to help me find something **I could not name.**' *Why do you think it is so difficult for the character to talk about what they are facing? What might the barrier be for them?* Look again at the recurrence of the white feathers, this time they are falling from her mouth; *what does this suggest?* Look at the scale and position of the dragon on this page, *why do you think she has chosen to depict it in this way? How does the character try to express herself? Why might Debi Gliori have chosen this way for her character?*

Tell the students that they are going to have an open, secure discussion about things that might worry them as part of this session. This means that no one will react in a way that makes anyone sharing experience feelings of shame or disgrace, or be treated in a less favourable way because of anything they choose to share. You will need to conduct and monitor this session carefully and thoughtfully as a professional, emphasising a trust approach to talking about their own feelings and experiences, making sure children only share ideas and thoughts they are comfortable to discuss with the group and only if they want to. Make clear to the group that nothing shared in the sessions will be used in a negative way outside



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the room either face to face, behind people's backs or on social media. To stimulate ideas for what this means, watch the following video from the organisation, Time to Change, who aim to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems – **you will need to watch this video yourself first to ascertain its suitability for your students:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=186&v=SE5Ip60_HJk *What message do you take from this film? How might the teachers and students have responded in a better, more welcoming way to Michael's return?*

Share with the children photographs of these people: Stephen Fry, Professor Green, Lady Gaga, Adwoa Aboah, Rio Ferdinand, Freddie Flintoff, The Duke of Cambridge, The Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Harry. What do these people have in common? They've all spoken out about mental health as part of the Heads Together #oktosay campaign. The campaign is spearheaded by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry to end the stigma around mental health and encourage people to talk and share their experiences. Outside of this session, you may wish to explore some of the experiences shared by some of these well-known figures to broaden children's experiences of the kind of struggles inspirational figures to them might be facing in their everyday lives and why it is important to talk about feelings and anxieties. Again **you will need to watch the videos yourself first to ascertain which are the most suitable for your students.** The Heads Together YouTube channel, containing the #oktosay campaign videos can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoviJNumK10fVQhjErXSlaQ>

In this session, watch the introductory video of The Duke of Cambridge, The Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry discussing their initiative and some of the pressures facing young people today:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45RqUmxDXiY> Focus the children's attention on this part of the dialogue, sharing this transcript:

William: *"But the pressures on children nowadays I think are more than they ever were for us as well, I know each generation can say that, but there are so many things to worry about now, whether you're struggling with exams, whether you're struggling with home life, struggling with friends, and then you add the social media angle, you can understand why that, coupled with the fact that you don't get out of the house because you're staring at the screen the whole time, there's got to be a lot of issues that are going to build from that if you're not careful and managed."*

Harry: *"And it's always sold as though everybody else's life is perfect; that's the problem and therefore you think, if everyone else's life is perfect, there must be something wrong with me."*

Do they feel pressured by any of the issues discussed here? Start an open trust conversation, reinforcing the expectation that this is a forum for listening, not judging and that nothing shared will be shared outside the room or used against anyone or that no one will react in a way that makes anyone sharing experience feelings of shame or disgrace, or be treated in a less favourable way because of anything they choose to

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share. Make clear to the students that they don't have to share if they don't want to and, if they do share ideas, supportive discussions will take place about points raised. Discuss and note any pressures that the children feel make an impact on them, this might be things like body image, bullying, keeping up with consumer trends, pressures to portray themselves in a certain way on social media or in real life.

Now give the children art materials such as heavyweight cartridge paper, soft pencils (2B+), charcoal pencils, stick pencils and soft pastels. If they were to represent in an illustration something that worries them that they might not always be able to find the words to talk about, how might they do it? Come back to some of the techniques that Debi Gliori has used, such as surrounding the image with white space to give an intimate view into a personal moment, the way she uses light and shade, how she shares feelings and creates empathy for the character using facial expression, body positioning, scale. Tell the children that these should be things they are willing to share with the class. Give time and space for the children to explore their ideas through drawing. *Do they want to use any words to accompany their illustration? What might these be?* Allow any students that want to share their drawings publicly to do so and give time for the others to reflect on these and share their thoughts. *Are there shared pressures within the group as a whole? How could they support each other as a community so that they don't need to feel alone in feeling pressured about these issues?*

Look at the next double page spread: 'But I had lost my compass and without it any map was forfeit.' *Why has she used this analogy? Now look closely at the illustration; how is the experience intensified?* The dragon is now swooping overhead, casting a shadow over her, she is small in scale on this expansive double page spread and she is surrounded by eggs so large she needs ladders to climb them. On the right hand side of the page, the largest egg blocks the path for her to continue on her journey – she literally can't go on. *What might this be suggesting? If you were this character's friend, would you see what she is experiencing? Do you think she feels this on the inside but doesn't show it on the outside?* Think back to the video watched at the start of the session. *Do you think it's easy to judge people who behave differently from you without really knowing them? Do you think it's easy to slip into negative reactions? What makes this so? How can we all be more supportive to each other as a community in the class? In our school as a whole? In wider society?*

Session 4

Re-read the text so far and on to the next two spreads, up until 'It is better to light a candle than curse in the darkness.' What are all these phrases? Explore the use of cliché with the students. Do they know examples of any more of these? As the *Oxford Living Dictionary* states, 'They tend to annoy people, especially if they're overused, and they may even create an impression of laziness or a lack of careful thought. Some people just tune out when they hear a cliché, and so they may miss the point that you're trying to make.' Explore the juxtaposition of 'encouraging' words and the illustrations Debi Gliori has chosen to accompany these. *What does this tell us about how these words come across to the character? How do you think it's best to talk to someone who is facing negative feelings?* To prepare children for this



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discussion, you could watch the following video *It's time to change the way we think and act about mental health* to give context around the difficulties that people with a mental illness have found in talking about this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCKMTYVSUfU> and the clichéd or negative reactions they have had to this, such as being told to 'man up' or being described as 'awkward' or thinking that anorexia might be contagious in some way, which may help start off your discussion.

You could also overlay the illustrations with tracing paper and have children write on what the character might be thinking inside as they hear these words on the outside, linked to what they can see in the illustration. How could the way they write emphasise these feelings? e.g. the words could be floating all around her, as if lost.

Now move on to reading aloud and reading the pictures on the '*Night Skills*' spreads. Give the children the time and space to read each of the spreads in pairs or groups, using and applying their close reading skills, then come back to discuss what they have noticed. You might talk about the following points and what these might suggest in terms of adding layers to the narrative:

'Night Skills: the ability to survive inside my own darkness': Explore how the words are alone on each line, one on top of the other; how the huge dragon has now taken her under its arm; look at how the body position of the character mirrors that of the dragon; the fact that some of the eggs are now broken, the bone lying beside the broken egg, the recurrence of the white feathers; larger this time.

'Night Skills: sometimes the teacher uses the harshest methods to hammer the message home': This is the first use of vibrant colour in the text, look at the way the yellow, orange and red have been layered, look at the use of scale, of the way she is placed right in the centre of the fire being breathed? How is the fire different from the fog? The size of the dragon's eyes in relation to the rest of its body, the spikes covering its back and wings, the way that the fire enhances the shadow behind her, the way the dragon's nose, toes and tail all point towards her. The choice of words, **the teacher, harshest methods, hammer the message home**.

'Night skills: holding fast to nothing in the knowledge that nothing will last forever': the significance of the situation the character has been placed in, wearing a blindfold whilst walking a tightrope with the dragon on her back, the way she is facing in relation to the direction of the tightrope; are the dragon's claws directing her in the wrong way, making her fall? The scale of the dragon's legs compared to her, the fact her pyjamas have become frayed and ragged, the red glow below; what does this suggest is lying below, unseen? The way her hands reach out, the repetition of the words appearing singularly, line by line, one on top of the other, the flip of black text on white background to white text on black background.

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Allow time for the children to discuss their reading of the text and images and then ask; *which of these spreads made most impact on you and why? Why do you think she calls these 'Night skills'?* Look at the definition of the words skill, here from the Oxford Dictionary:

1. *The ability to do something well; expertise.*
 - 1.1 *A particular ability*

What are her abilities? What does she have expertise in? Come back to the people interviewed in the video; they are described in the closing text as 'champions'. What skills or abilities have they shown? What do they do well? How can we all display these kinds of skills in our community?

Session 5

Re-read the book so far and on to the next double page spread, 'And one day I dragged myself out to run...' In [an interview with the Daily Record](#), talking about Night Shift, Debi Gliori talks about her battle with depression and the impact running had on her. Share this with the students:

*I have no idea what prompted me to start running, but I am forever thankful to myself that I did.
Even if it was only by contrast, after the runs I felt marginally better than before. At last, a feeling.
Running, I felt sore, breathless, sweaty, pathetic, fat, exhausted and totally unfit.
After running, I felt sore but virtuous, breathless but shiny, sweaty but I loved stepping into a shower. Loved? That was a feeling I hadn't had for a while.
On I ran.*

Link this to student's personal experiences, do they have a hobby, an activity that make them feel more alive in this way? Come back to the illustrations; *how does Debi Gliori show the effects of running on her through this illustration?* Look at how the light creeps across the page towards the flying dragons, and their scale is reduced significantly on the page by the way she has shifted them firmly into the background, the character runs towards the bottom right corner of the page, beckoning us to turn the page and see her journey through. Now explore the next spread. The cliffs she hangs onto merge into the bright white space and the feather that the character discovered is found bathed in bright white. Look at the feather itself. How is it different from the white feathers that were brought by the dragon. What is significant about it? Now look at the endpapers, why do you think she has chosen a repeating pattern of the feather? At the end of the interview in the *Daily Record*, Gliori states: *'In recovering, we have to accommodate both darkness and light and claim them as our own. And see the beauty in both.'* Why is keeping a balance important in all aspects of our life?

Read the entire book, aloud, beginning to end, using a visualiser so that the students can see the illustrations and text clearly as you read. Give time for the children to discuss the book as a whole, opening

up conversations to show you want to garner the children's opinions by using Aidan Chambers' 'Tell Me' approach. Once they have heard a book read aloud, the class can begin to explore their responses to it with the help of what Chambers calls 'the four basic questions'. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:

- Tell me...was there anything you liked about this book?
- Was there anything that you particularly disliked...?
- Was there anything that puzzled you?
- Were there any patterns...any connections that you noticed...?

The openness of these questions unlike the more interrogative 'Why?' question encourages every child to feel that they have something to say. It allows everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the 'wrong' answer.

As children reply, it can be useful to write down what they say under the headings: 'likes', 'dislikes', 'puzzles', 'patterns'. This written record helps to map out the class's view of the important meanings and is a way of holding on to ideas for later. Asking these questions will lead children inevitably into a fuller discussion using more general questions. You could go on to explore some more general questions about the book to allow children to respond from a personal perspective. Interesting questions to explore might be:

- When you first saw this book, even before you read it, what kind of book did you think it was going to be? What made you think this?
- Now you've read it, is it as you expected?
- Have you read other books like it? How is this one the same? How is it different?
- Would you like to read it again?
- What will you tell your friends about this book? What won't you tell them because it might spoil the book for them? Or might mislead them about what it is like?
- Do you know people who you think would especially like it?
- What would you suggest I tell other people about it that will help them decide whether they want to read it or not? Older than you? Younger?
- How should I give it to them? For example, should I read it aloud or tell them about it and let them read it for themselves?

Why do you think she has chosen to write about this deeply personal experience? Why is it important to talk about mental health? Is it any different to talking about physical health? Why or why not?

Watch Lady Gaga talk to Prince William as part of the HeadsTogether #oktosay campaign:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXPx_fBJVPU Focus the children on this sentence shared by Lady Gaga: "Even though it was hard, it was the best thing that could come out of my mental illness was to share it with other people and let, you know, our generation as well as other generations know that if you are

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feeling not well in your mind that you're not alone and that people that you think would never have a problem do."

Talk more about why you think Debi Gliori wrote this book. Why is it important for her that it is a picturebook? What do the pictures allow that the words alone might not? Why do you think it is important that inspirational figures are talking about mental illnesses such as depression more openly? Come back to the front cover. Start with the title, *Night Shift*. Why do you think she chose this title now? What could this mean to her? Instead of looking at the title as a commonly used phrase, what happens if we look at the two words separately? Does this make us think differently?

Now look at the cover art. why do you think she chose this design? What might have influenced the decision to make the cover a deep blue? You could explore the idiom 'feeling blue' – do you think the character would see this as a cliché? You could encourage the students to read the poem *Land of the Blue* by Laura Mucha: <http://lauramucha.com/poetry/the-land-of-blue/> or listen to it being read by Helena Bonham-Carter for Allie Esiri's *A Poem for Every Day of the Year* and look at the parallels between this and *Night Shift*. Look particularly at the last verse:

*Across the valley, it waits for you,
a place they call The Land of Blue
and going there will help you know
how others feel when they feel low.*

Do you think that reading *Night Shift* has helped you empathise with others? In what ways?

This sequence of activities was designed by CLPE for the Greenaway shortlist. To access more free resources from CLPE, visit: www.clpe.org.uk/freeresources

In depth teaching sequences for over 200 other high quality texts can be found at:
www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading

Further resources to support children's understanding of picturebooks for all ages and research on the importance of using picturebooks across the primary years can be found at:
<https://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures>

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