

Teaching Ideas for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Award Shortlist 2018

Title: Thornhill

Author & Illustrator: Pam Smy

Publisher: David Fickling Books (2017, Hardback Edition)

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 Upper KS2 and KS3. The text explores themes of social isolation, bullying, neglect, the challenges of the care system, death, bereavement and suicide. Readers therefore require a degree of 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 emotional resilience to engage with the themes, particularly if the content resonates with personal experiences that the pupils may still be processing.

The illustrations are extremely rich and detailed. It is therefore advisable to ensure that you have access to a visualiser or similar device to enable you to share images from the text with the pupils on a large scale.

Session 1

Share the endpapers at the back of the book in the order that they appear. Start with the crow perched on the barbed wire fence, followed by the subsequent double page spreads featuring the continuation of the barbed wire fence and finally ending on the double page spread that is set against the black background and has the 'keep out' sign attached to the fence.

Share each double page spread in order and one at a time. Invite the pupils to comment on what they notice and what it might suggest, what it reminds them of, how it makes them feel and what all of these insights might indicate about the place. Explore the symbolic significance of the details featured in the spreads, take time to consider why the illustrator might have chosen to include a crow, overgrown and unkept vegetation and barbed wire. Note their comments in one colour on some flipchart paper.

Position the four double page spreads so that the pupils are able to see them all alongside one another. Invite them to consider the distinctions between each image, reflect on how they compare and contrast and how this varies our perspective. How for example does the illustrator use black and white differently on each spread and what effect does this have? How does the illustrator create a sense of foreboding? Where might the fence lead? Note the comments and reflections using a different colour on the flipchart paper.

Write the title of the book on the board. Invite the pupils to discuss and reflect upon why the author might have chosen this word as the title of the book. Encourage the pupils to reflect upon the definitions of the different components of the word and consider what this might suggest about the place. Extend the discussion by encouraging them to draw on all of their reflections so far to consider what or where Thornhill might be. Note their contributions using a different colour on the flipchart paper.

Reveal the front cover of the book and invite the pupils to discuss what they notice and how this reinforces, varies or alters their earlier impressions. What effect does the choice of limited palette have? In what ways does the dominance of the black influence how we perceive this place? How does this contrast with the use of white? How is pathetic fallacy used to influence the mood of the cover illustration? Who might the person in the window be? How does the composition influence our perspective and view of this person? Is the individual fearful or should they be feared? In what ways does the illustration influence and shape your view? Note responses in a different colour on the flipchart paper.

Session 2

Read the first diary entry dated, '8th February 1982' (p.1) aloud to the group. Ask the pupils to share their initial impressions. Place the text on the visualiser and read it aloud again. Ask the pupils to share what they see in their minds eye and how the entry makes them feel. Read the entry aloud a third time. Invite the pupils to discuss the ways that the explicit and implied sounds that travel through the building create a sense of anxiety and foreboding.

Draw an outline of a person. Invite the pupils to share their thoughts about how they perceive the narrator. What do we know about how they feel, what they think and what words we would use to best describe these thoughts and feelings? Note these observations on the inside of the outline. On the outside of the outline, invite them to consider what the text suggests about how they might appear.

Turn the page to reveal the double page spread, pause for a moment and invite the pupils to share what effect the placing of the blacked out double page spread has.

Make 5-6 sets of copies of the sequence of illustrated double page spreads that follow the first diary entry and provide each group of six pupils with a set of the illustrations. Invite the pupils in their groups to discuss the illustrations and arrange them in an order that they think relays a fitting narrative. Invite them to share what they noticed in each of the illustrations, what these details suggested about the time, place and character featured, what aspects of the details linked the two worlds and why they decided upon the order that they did.

Draw out the comparisons and contrasts from each group's discussions. Build on these insights by inviting them to focus in on Ella. Draw an outline to represent her and again encourage the pupils to reflect on

what they have observed about Ella and what this suggests about how she might be feeling and what she might be thinking. Note these observations on the inside of the outline and note their observations about her appearance and what these suggest about her character on the outside.

Draw a large Venn diagram, note the year 1982 above one circle of the diagram and the year 2017 above the second circle. Provide each group with a copy of the Venn diagram and invite the pupils to reflect on the differences and similarities that they have observed about the two characters depicted so far.

Once the pupils have had time in their groups to discuss and note their observations, facilitate a whole class discussion to evaluate the ways in which the lives of the two individuals compare and contrast up to this point. Both the Venn diagram and the outlines can be revisited at appropriate moments in the plot and using a different colour pen at each point note the reflections on how our experience and reading of the two characters evolves over time.

Session 3

Read the diary entry dated '9th February 1982' (pp.30-31) aloud to the class. Ask the pupils to share their initial impressions. Place the text on the visualiser and read it aloud again. Invite the pupils to identify the words and phrases that stand out most to them, help them to picture the scene and strike an emotional chord. Are there any scenes viewed from the window that are particularly moving or memorable? What colours come to mind when you hear the different familial moments being described? What feelings do these colours evoke? Discuss the ways in which the language and scenes depicted in the entry create a sense of mourning, longing and isolation. Note the responses and key points made in the discussion on a flipchart.

Read the diary entry aloud one more time. Provide pupils with a sheet of sugar paper and invite them to use pastels to draw what they see from the window of the narrator. Provide each pupil with four strips of black sugar paper and ask them to use this to frame their drawing to give the impression of the illustration being viewed through a window. Invite them to draft a poem inspired by the emotions conveyed in the diary entry and scenes from their window.

Provide the pupils with white tissue paper or tracing paper that is appropriately sized to cover their drawing. Allow time for them to edit and refine their poem. Once they are satisfied with the final edit, provide time for them to write the final version on to the tissue paper and place this over their drawing so that it resembles a pane of glass or net curtain. Photocopy and enlarge the diary entry, place this in the centre of a display wall backed with multiple sheets of paper to give the impression that it forms part of an open diary and display the completed poetry and artwork around the diary entry.

Session 4

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Read the diary entries dated '9th February 1982' (p.30-31) to '10th February 1982' (pp.32-34). Copy 5-6 sets of these diary entries, divide the pupils into groups of six and provide the pupils with copies of the diary entries. Invite the groups to text mark and highlight words, phrases and sections that provide the reader with insights about the person being described by the narrator.

Draw an outline of a person and invite the pupils to draw on their discussions to note what they think the character being described thinks and feels on the inside of the outline and note their observations about her outwardly appearance and what this suggests about her character on the outside of the outline.

Read the diary entries dated '16th February 1982' (p.35) to '17th February 1982' (pp.36-37). Revisit the character outline devised for the narrator in session two and using a different colour note the pupils' observations about the narrator based on the additional insights gleaned from the diary entries up to this point.

Revisit the Venn diagrams drawn in session two. Ask the pupils to add a third circle to make their diagrams a three circle Venn diagram. Ask them to label the third circle 'her.' Invite the pupils to reflect on the differences and similarities that they have observed about the three characters depicted so far.

Once the pupils have had time in their groups to discuss and note their observations, facilitate a whole class discussion to evaluate the ways in which the lives of the three individuals compare and contrast up to this point.

Session 5

Use the visualiser to share the illustrations that follow the diary entry dated '17th February 1982,' up to the next blacked out double page spread. Take the time to reveal each double page spread one at a time, inviting pupils to comment on what they notice, how they feel and how the illustrations work to evoke these responses.

Revisit the outlines of the two characters and invite the pupils to reflect on what they have observed in the sequence of illustrations viewed. Note their reflections using a different coloured pen.

Invite the pupils to discuss what they might do if they had seen what Ella had seen. Would it arouse curiosity or fear? Would they want to investigate or ignore it? Would they share what they saw with someone else?

Read the diary entry dated '25th February 1982,' (pp.54-57). Revisit the outline of the narrator and invite the pupils to reflect and comment upon how the interaction depicted deepens our knowledge and understanding of the narrator. Note their reflections using a different coloured pen.



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Using your visualiser, share the sequence of illustrations that follow the diary entry dated 25th February 1982 up to the next blacked out double page spread. Take the time to reflect upon the details in each illustration and the way in which tension, suspense and curiosity are built upon with the unveiling of each double page spread. Encourage the pupils to consider the choice and use of animals, overgrown shrubbery, statues, signage, text, weather, different textures, variations of different types of physical and domineering barriers that make it challenging to navigate the grounds, as well as the way in which the illustrator plays with the positioning of Ella to create varying degrees of intrigue and tension. Note their responses.

Drawing on their reflections, invite the pupils to write their own diary entry from the perspective of Ella and her experience of exploring the grounds.

Beyond Session 5

Continue to share the remainder of the book pausing intermittently to discuss the evolution of the three key characters and using the three circle Venn diagram and character outlines to frame and capture the reflections and responses.

What does Jacob's arrival at the end of book suggest? Is it the fate of every child who is intrigued by Thornhill to join Mary? Alternatively, is Thornhill a magnet for misery and individuals who are lonely and isolated?

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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