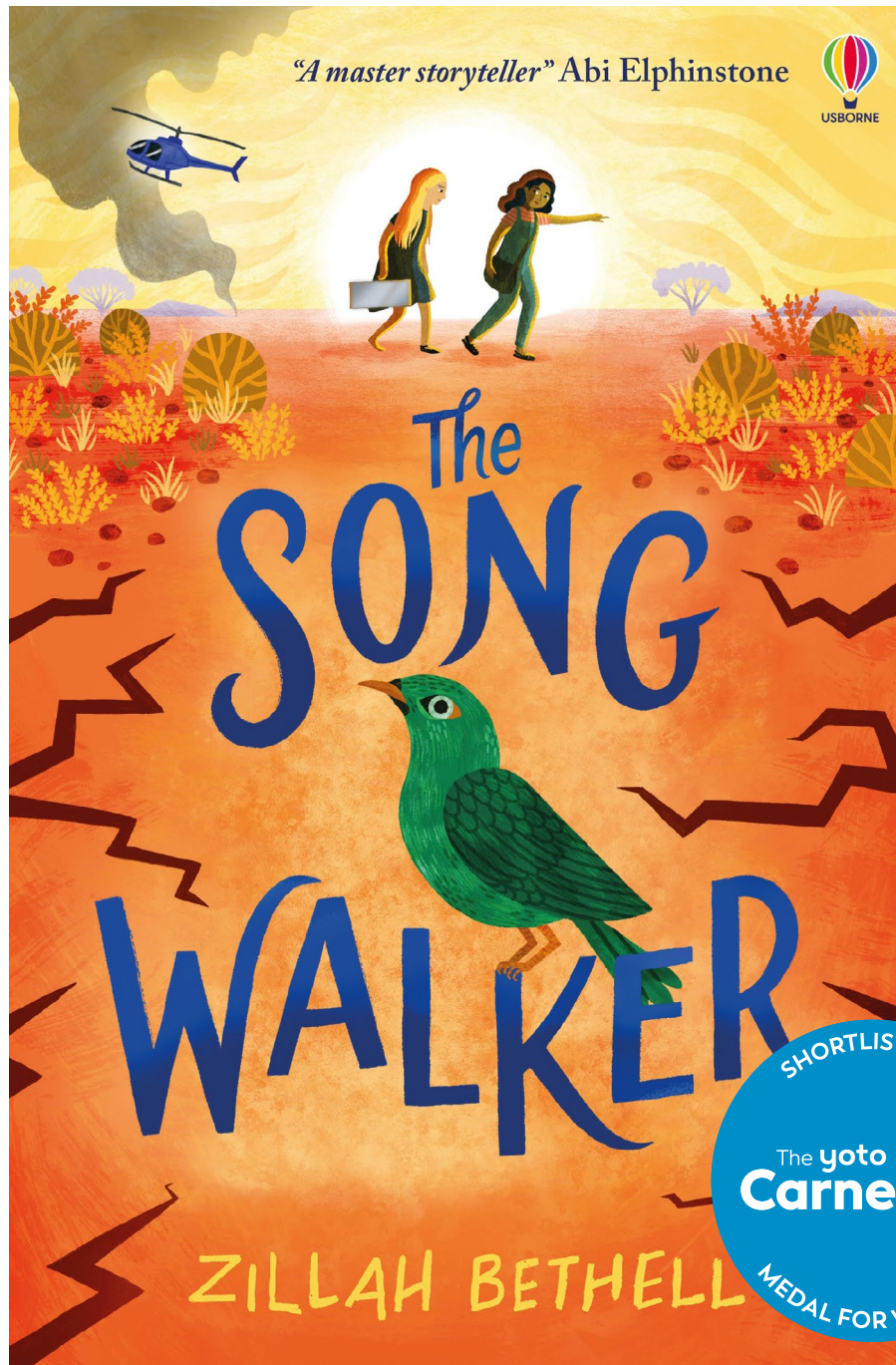
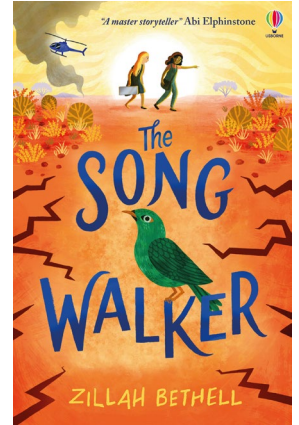


The yoto Carnegies



The Yoto Carnegie Shortlist 2024 Shadowing Resources

Activities for The Song Walker by Zillah Bethell



Content warning
Bereavement

General Activities for all books

- **Lego Fun:** Create a scene from one of the books using Lego or other building materials/toys.
- **Shadowing Scrapbook:** Document your journey through the 2024 Shadowing period. This can be used to record books and activities discussed in each session, as well as offer a creative space for reviews, reflection and anything else you might like to add.
- Take the title or first line from each of the shortlisted books and create a poem or story by combining them with words and phrases of your own.
- **Carnegie Washing Line:** Cut out shapes of clothes (e.g. socks, tops, trousers etc) using cardboard and write quotes from the Medal for Writing books and pictures from Medal for Illustration and hang on a washing line with pegs to display. Group members could do this as an activity in the session if time allows or asked to do at home and then to bring to the next session.
- Think of some questions you would like to ask the shortlisted authors and share them on social media using the hashtag **#YotoCarnegies24**
- **When Worlds Collide:** Select two characters, each from a different shortlisted book. Imagine what they would say to each other, if they met. How would they behave? You could improvise this, or write a script or short story that describes the encounter. E.g, Erik from Crossing the Line meets Growls from Steady for This.
- **Carnegie Touch and Taste:**
 - **Touch:** Curate a selection of items inspired by the shortlists, place them into a drawstring bag and have shadowers try to identify each item using touch. As time goes on, and shadowers become more familiar with the shortlisted books, you can expand the game to include guessing the title of the book based on the collection of items in the bag.
 - **Taste:** Mine the shortlisted titles for references to food and use this to spark discussions about food they like and dislike. You could encourage everyone to bring a snack each week, focusing each session around one of the titles. Alternatively, you could throw a shortlist celebration party and have everyone contribute a dish inspired by one of the shortlisted books. and then offer them to try different foods from the shortlisted books. Make sure you have a conversation about allergies and dietary requirements well in advance!
- **The Shadowing Tree:** ask shadowing group members to write very short reviews or info about characters on leaf shaped cutouts or sticky notes. The cutouts could be hung on an artificial tree, or a real one, depending on your setting, whilst sticky notes could be arranged on a poster and displayed in the library.
- Think about who would play the main characters in a film or TV adaptation of one or more of the shortlisted titles. Create a cast list and explain your choices.

- Rewrite the ending of one of the shortlisted books. What have you changed, and why? Does it alter how you feel about the story?
- Have a go at creating spine poetry by using the titles of the shortlisted books as phrases/words. Share your creations online using the hashtag **#YotoCarnegies24**
- Create your own playlist to accompany a shortlisted book - you might want to highlight a particular theme, tap into the geography or time period of the book or create a playlist that reflects a particular character.
- Choose a character from one of the shortlisted books and reinvent them in the art style of your choosing. You could create your character digitally, draw them by hand, paint them or even make a sculpture. You could try creating the same character in a variety of styles - Manga, Pop Art, Disney - using different materials.
- Create your own book trailer for one of the books, or work together to make a trailer for the entire shortlist. This could be a TikTok style 'sell' of the book or a more traditional thematic video.

Book Activities

1. What's in a name? What does your name mean? Do you or your friends or family or pets have a nickname? Where did it come from? Can anyone remember?! Can you write a poem or acrostic with your name and/nickname?
2. Search online for a tutorial online and try weaving a pandanus hat out of paper. What other materials might work? Do you think you could weave a different item - a boot, perhaps, or a basket?
3. Make some wattleseed bread. What do you think it will taste like? Have a competition where everyone has a go and see who makes the best finished product. What did you think? Was it easy to make? Did it taste as you expected?
4. Conduct a tasting using peaches, nectarines and apricots. Which do you think are most like the fruit in the book? Are there any other fruits you could compare them to? What other foods are mentioned? Can you make them or suggest an alternative that you think might be similar?
5. Are you aware of any folklore or mythology that exists in your local area? What stories are you most familiar with and how did you learn about them? Have they been passed down through family members or have you been taught about them at school? Which stories are you most familiar with and which are your favourites? Think about different ways these stories could be communicated and share them with the rest of your shadowing group. You might want to:
 - a. speak them aloud
 - b. write them in your own words
 - c. act them out
 - d. draw particular characters or scenes.
6. Using your research skills, find out as much as you can about the First Country and The Dreaming. Make a note of the three facts that interest you the most and share them with the group.
7. How many different birds are mentioned on the journey? Look them up and find out a little bit about each one. Have a go at sketching them or print out some images and make a collage. Can you use words from the story to decorate their feathers?
8. Tarni learns, memorises and shares her routes through song. Can you make a poem or song to help you remember the main plot points of the story? Can you think of any other instances where a song might help you to remember something?

About these resources

All of these resources are designed to be completed in small discussion groups, ideally your school's Yoto Carnegie Shadowing Group. However, they can easily be done individually. Instead of talking about the tasks, you can write down and keep a record of your ideas.

Before Reading

10-20 minutes

- Discuss what you think *The Song Walker* will be about based on these extracts. You should structure your discussion around the questions below.
 - What other novels do you think it will be like?
 - What genre of novel do you think it will be?
 - What sense do you get of where and when it will be set?
 - If you had to identify three likely themes, what would they be?

Extract 1

What am I doing here?

There must be some reason for me to be here. Some reason why I have found myself walking around - one shoe lost - in the middle of... well... nowhere. Everything happens for a reason, doesn't it? Don't people say that?

I'm sure I have heard it before.

But it is the third question that worries me the most. Or at least it is my inability to answer the third question that worries me.

I close my eyes even tighter and try to block out the landscape. I try to block out my headache. I block out my hunger and my thirst and I try to concentrate.

Okay, I think.

So...

Who am I?

Extract 2

"These go right the way back to the times after the Dreamtime when my people were the guardians of this land."

"What was the Dreamtime?" I ask. "You talk about the Dreamtime like I know what it is, but I don't know what it is."

"It was the beginning of everything," explains Tarni. "When the Rainbow Serpent awoke and made the world to her liking." She points to a painting of a long, colourful snake. Iridescent is the word. "She made the rivers out of her twisting tracks in the sand. She made the mountains by burying her nose in the ground. She awoke all the spirits and the creatures and taught them how to live - even us humans. And she warned all the spirits and the creatures that they had to take good care of the Earth - and of each other - otherwise she would return to remake the world without us in it. The Dreaming is where time begins and time ends. It's where there is no time." She gives me a sidelong look. "Probably a bit too mystical for you, eh?"

I look at Tarni. "Tarni," I say, "I am...sorry. I didn't mean to sound so disrespectful."

"Hmm.. you might not have meant to. But you did."

"I didn't mean to be rude about your ancestors. I don't know where that came from."

Extract 3

Some days go by. I lose count. We walk. We rest. We walk some more. We set up camp. We start a fire. We gather fruit. We gather seeds. We purify water. We hunt for rabbits and birds - well, Tarni hunts for rabbits and birds. We cook the food. We sleep. We awaken. Then we walk again.

I don't notice the landscape now. I don't notice if the next kilometre looks different to the last kilometre. I don't notice if we're walking uphill or down. I don't even notice the pains in my legs and my feet.

Because all the time I am walking, I am worrying. Worrying about the words that float around my head like corks bobbing in a river.

Extract 4

But it is strange.

Where I would expect to see the silver caravan, there is nothing. I look at Tarni and I can tell that she is thinking the same thing.

We stand there for a few minutes, struggling to see it.

At last, Tarni speaks.

“Angente,” she whispers to herself.

“What does that mean?” I ask.

“Angente. It means mirage,” says Tarni.

I nod and, without saying anything else, we both turn to continue towards Karlu Karlu.

During Reading

Read up to the section listed and then answer the questions. You will probably need to spend about 5-10 minutes answering each set of questions. You can use the questions in a number of ways. For example, you might like to:

- Discuss them in small groups
- Role play answering them in pairs, with one of you asking a question and the other answering as an expert reader
- Keep a personal reading journal to record some of your responses

The page numbers are based on the Usborne paperback edition of the book, first published in the UK in 2023.

Read the unnumbered, illustrated pages, up to numbered page 11

- Page 5 refers to 'First Country Australian' and 'Torres Strait Islander' readers. This is followed by a warning that the story 'may contain the names of deceased persons'. You might like to research the terms used and discuss how this develops your thinking from the 'Before reading' activity above.
- Page 6 dedicates the book to the 'Alyawarre community of the Northern Territory' who read the book in advance of publishing and allowed the Alyawarre name to be used. Why do you think they may have been asked to read the book in advance? Have you heard the term 'sensitivity reader' before?
- Look again at the illustrations across these pages. What do you notice about them? Why do you think these have been included before the book starts?

Read pages 11-15

- What do you notice about the way the book is written at this point? Is this different or similar to other books you have read?
- What do we learn about the setting of the story at the beginning?
- What do we learn about the lone character? How do you think they have come to be in this place, and what do you know about them so far?

Read Chapter One, The End, from page 18-23

- Looking back, how do the two definitions of 'fugue' on page 18 support your reading of this chapter?
- The writer offers you some more clues about the mystery of the main character's past in this chapter. What are they, and what do they add to your predictions about what has happened to this character?
- What do you notice about the use of punctuation in this chapter? What do you think is its purpose in relation to the character?
- Why do you think the writer ends this chapter in the middle of the character's thought: 'Save -'? What do you predict is about to happen next and why?
- Why do you think the first chapter in the book is called 'The End'?

Read Chapter Two, The Girl, p24 up to Chapter Four, The Hole, p50

- How accurate was the prediction you made before you began these chapters?
- What do you think the introduction of a new character, Tarni, suggests about the direction of the story?
- What do you notice about the contrast between Tarni and Moonflower (the name Tarni has given to the main character)? What do you think is the purpose of this contrast?
- How do Moonflower's flashbacks add to your understanding of where she came from?
- How does this section of the book develop your response to Moonflower as a character?

Read Chapter Four, The Hole, p50 to Chapter 6, The Old Man, p81

- What do you think Tarni is doing out in the desert on her own?
- Tarni is from a place called Utopia, but she's not taking Moonflower there. Tarni says they are going in the other direction. Where do you predict that they are heading?

- So far, what do you think is the significance of the injured kwepalpale [bellbird], named Candelabra, that Tarni is carrying with them?
- Tarni tells Moonflower she is a First Country person, and they are walking through First Country territory. She tells Moonflower they are not lost. She is able to kill animals for food, build cages, and make shoes and hats from natural materials. How do you think Tarni's background links to all the survival skills she has?
- Tarni notices that the tips of the fingers on Moonflower's left hand are hard. Taken together with the other clues about her past, why do you think this might be?
- At the end of Chapter 5, Moonflower has a dream. What do you think it tells us about her past life? Do you think Tarni is right to assume she's from the city and a life of privilege?

Read Chapter 6 – The Old Man – from p81-109

- Tarni and Moonflower meet an old man called Eddy in the desert. He is a First Country person, like Tarni. Tarni learns a new song from Eddy, and explains to Magpie that First Country people memorise directions and landmarks through the desert as songs, passed down from generation to generation. She is scathing about city people, their use of technology to get around and their 'boring sofas' and 'boring televisions'. What are your thoughts about the First Country way of life so far?
- What do you think about how upset Tarni is when Candelabra goes missing for a moment? What does this add to your understanding of Tarni as a character?
- There have been lots of descriptions of the landscape of the Northern Territory in the book so far. What do you understand about the conditions of this landscape so far?
- This chapter brings us to the end of Part Two of the book. Before you carry on reading, discuss what you think are the main themes and ideas of the story, what's happened so far, and what you predict might happen next.

Read Chapter 7, The Cave, p112 up to Chapter 9, The Two Murderers, p165

- What do you think about the incident between Magpie (Moonflower's new name) and Tarni and Bobby and his mother?
- What more do you learn from these chapters about First Country culture? What is Magpie learning, too?
- What do you notice about the relationship between Tarni and Magpie at this point in the book?

Read from Chapter 9, The Two Murderers, p165 up to Chapter 13, The Letter, p212

- What are your thoughts about the new character, Debonaire?
- What do you think Brindabel's letter will say, and where might this lead Magpie and Tarni next?
- Reflect on your developing responses to the characters and the journey of the story. How do you feel about Tarni and Magpie as characters at this point in the book? Have your feelings changed as the book has progressed?

Read Chapter 13, The Letter, p212 to the end of Part Two, p243

- Magpie's ability to play the violin is discovered by Debonaire and she is renamed Maestro. Does her ability add anything to your understanding of her past?
- Debonaire says to Maestro and Tarni '...we all have tests that we need to pass – every single one of us. And sometimes – if we're lucky – we pass them without even knowing.' What do you think she means, in relation to the story so far?
- What are your thoughts about the mysterious way in which Part Two ends? What are your predictions for Part Three?

Read Chapter 16 The Terrible Smell of Smoke p247 up to Chapter 20 The Hotel p302

- Maestro finds out her real name is Sienna. Can you understand Tarni's reasons for not sharing Sienna's real story with her before this point in the story?
- What do you notice about how Sienna's relationship with the landscape is growing and changing

in these chapters?

- Tarni's story about her grandmother and the Stolen Generations is based on historical fact – this really did happen to First Country people. Tarni cites how unfair it is that Sienna going missing as a 'rich lost city girl' (p272) gets so much more attention than any of Tarni's community going missing. Can you think of any other examples of this kind of inequality and injustice in real life?
- What do you think about Tarni's words of advice for Sienna, to help her play her violin with 'heart'? Do you think Tarni's suggestion for Sienna to have more balance in her life is good advice for the reader, too?
- Do you think Tarni and Tidda will reach Karlu Karlu and will they find Tarni's sister Brindabel there?

Read from Chapter 20 – The Hotel p302 to the end of the book

- There are a number of twists in the final chapters of the story. Did you expect these? Looking back, were there clues left by the writer along the way?
- How do you feel about the ending of the story?

After Reading

Initial Thoughts

Spend 10-15 minutes discussing the questions below:

- What are your overall impressions of this novel?
- Which moments stick most in your memory and why?
- Which characters do you like best and why?
- Which other novels does it remind you of and why?
- How gripping did you find the story?
- What are your thoughts about how the book was written?
- Based on reading *The Song Walker*, how likely are you to read other novels by Zillah Bethell?

What's *The Song Walker* about?

Spend 15-20 minutes on the following activities:

- Spend one or two minutes writing down a single sentence that begins: '*The Song Walker* is about ...
- If you are working in a group, share your different sentences and discuss.
- Next read the ideas below that give further ideas about what the novel is about.
- If you are working in a group, spend 5-10 minutes sorting the ideas, from the one you agree with most to the one you agree with least.
- Finally, decide on the idea you agree with most. It can be one from the list or your own. Write down a few ideas about how *The Song Walker* relates to your chosen idea.

The Song Walker is about...

- Growing up and learning who you are.
- The importance of the natural world.
- Appreciating human diversity.
- True friendship.
- The value of different cultures.
- The nature of identity.
- An exciting journey.

Exploring the book further

Research: First Country Australians and the Alyawarre community

- Discuss any knowledge you already have about First Country Australians and the Alyawarre community.
- Afterwards, take some time to research any questions you might have. You could look into:
 - Alyawarre traditions, especially painting
 - First Country, or Indigenous, spiritual beliefs (see Tarni's Dreamtime story on pp.125-126)
 - Beliefs about the land, and connection to nature
 - The Stolen Generation
 - The Northern Territory, where First Country Australians make up 30% of the population, and its landscape.

Spend 20-30 minutes on this activity.

The landscape of the book

Tarni and Sienna experience the landscape in very different ways in the story.

- Draw a sketch of the desert landscape.
- On one side, annotate your sketch with words to represent Tarni's connection with the landscape.
- On the other side, annotate your sketch with words to represent Sienna's connection with the landscape.

- Discuss how their relationships with the landscape, and with each other, develop across the novel. Spend 20-30 minutes on this activity.

Music in *The Song Walker*

Music is very important in both Tarni and Sienna's lives. For Tarni, the songlines she has learnt from her ancestors help guide her through the barren landscape of the Northern Territory. For Sienna, on the other hand, being a world class violinist is integral to the identity she rediscovers.

- Listen to an explanation of what the songlines mean to First country people: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33O08xrQpR8>
- Listen to a clip of elders singing the Maraloo songlines here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXbrOSDmUpg>
- Finally, while reading Sienna's description of it on p.228-230, listen to the first part of Tchaikovsky's violin concerto in D major opus thirty-five. Here's an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovFPKu00cCc>. Can you pick out a bit that sounds like 'candelabra flying up into the blue' and the 'flutes twittering'? How does the music make you feel?
- Discuss what music and song means to you and your culture. Can you think of any songs that have helped you learn about a place or event?

Spend 20-30 minutes on this activity.

Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are all from reviews of *The Song Walker*.

- Read all of the reviews and discuss which comes closest to your own view of the book.
- Working individually, write your own paragraph expressing your views about the novel.
- If possible, share your reviews with a group.

You can submit your reviews to the Carnegie Shadowing Scheme website. This can be accessed at:
<https://yotocarnegies.co.uk/medals/>

Give yourself 30-60 minutes to complete this activity.

A.
That is the beauty of Zillah Bethell's writing. How she transports you with every sentence, carries you along chapter by chapter, wraps you in a story that has depth, power, heart, meaning, but most of all humanity.

Anthony on www.goodreads.com

B.
The narrative is both their physical journey, and of course their more metaphorical one, as they seek who they are and what they want, respectively [...]

Written in Wales, by the sound of it, this certainly takes you somewhere else – to a place seldom written about, barely read about, and all the better and more memorable for it. Indeed, if I can borrow the musical terms it itself uses, this is actually about the harmony between White Australia and the First Nations.

thediscerning on www.goodreads.com

C.
The way Bethell 'phases' new characters in and out of the story is eerie and feels almost other worldly. Characters are as different as they are extreme or familiar. *'The Song Walker'* exposes the reader to the plight of Aboriginal communities in Australia, how they blend their ancient beliefs and traditions with the knowledge they have gained from the colonists. I feel very much that this is a story that is aiming to inspire young readers to want to know more about Australia and its history, wildlife and culture. The plentiful variety of fascinating Australian wildlife and bush plants/trees featured is a delight - I regularly searched online for images of birds and animals I'd never heard of, mainly because they only live in that part of the world.

thekidsbookcurator.com

D.
I liked the ending, which does have a bit of a rug pull element to it, but was in keeping with the themes and developments in the preceding chapters. I also very much enjoyed the epilogue, which brought home the very real friendship between both characters, although I would have liked more of a hint of what happened to the girl's relationship with her parents.

ireadthereforeiblog.com

Writing Activities

On your own, or with a partner, complete one or more of these writing activities to help you develop your thoughts about *The Song Walker* further.

You will need 30-60 minutes for each activity.

Writing in Tarni's voice

The story is told from Sienna's perspective in the first person.

- Choose a part of the story that you think would be interesting to rewrite from Tarni's perspective. For example, when Sienna finds out Tarni has hidden her backstory from her and walks away into the desert, or Tarni's trip to the gas station on her own.
- Read each other's writing and explore the differences and similarities between your choices.

Poetry and *The Song Walker*

The Song Walker is full of vivid description, often about the landscape of the 'outback' (a colloquial name for the vast, unpopulated and arid areas such as those described in the Northern Territory in the book). Sienna says on page 301 'A beautiful land this might be. But it's also pretty treacherous.'

- Flick through the book, looking for your favourite descriptions of the landscape.
- Use these to put together a poem which exemplifies both the beauty and the treachery of the Northern Territory's landscape.

An outback survival guide

We learn lots about how to survive in the outback through Tarni's understanding of it as a First Country person.

- Create a guide for surviving in the Australian outback using what you've learnt from the book.

Blogging

- Write a blog entry with the title: 'What *The Song Walker* can teach us about identity.'