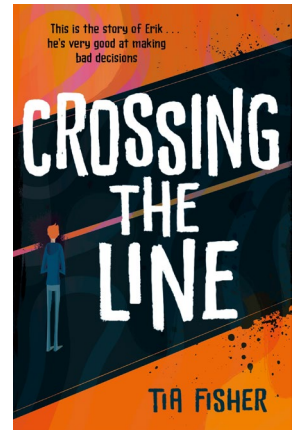


# The yoto Carnegies



## The Yoto Carnegie Shortlist 2024 Shadowing Resources

## Activities for Crossing the Line by Tia Fisher



### Content warning

Drugs, bereavement, violence and crime

### 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. *Crossing the Line* is a verse novel and the words are shaped and spaced to reflect this. You can see some great examples of formatting on pages 28-31. What effect do these elements have on the story? What do you think they add to your reading of the book?
2. Were you aware of the issue of County Lines before you read this book? Take some time to read about it further and put together a poster to raise awareness that could be displayed in your school or library. You could do this as a 'signs to look out for' poster to help people identify those involved, or 'red flags to avoid' for behaviours to avoid in others who may be recruiting people to sell drugs for them.
3. There are numerous reasons why Erik is vulnerable and therefore a potential target for Travis and Ben to recruit; he's grieving for his dad, he's just become a big brother to twin sisters, his mum is struggling as a single parent, there are money worries at home and he's unhappy at school. Do you think it was a combination of things that made him a viable target, or just one? For each reason Erik is vulnerable, can you think of a way you might be able to help and support him?
4. Running is used as a metaphor and as an extracurricular activity for Erik. Do you know of any other books that feature running in the way? What is your experience of running? Find some time to go for a run with a friend or family member. Make a note of how you feel before and after, both physically and mentally. What changed?
5. Did Erik's story and the themes of this book make you feel uncomfortable at any point? Why do you think that might be? Why do you think it's important that we read about people like Erik in books?
6. On pages 154-5 Erik uses Ravi's idea of 'compartmentalisation' to talk about how overwhelmed he's feeling about the different aspects of his life. Draw your own boxes and fill them with your thoughts. These could be your worries, the things you love or your goals for the year ahead. If everyone is comfortable, you could discuss this activity as a group - do any of you have boxes in common?
7. Erik refers to those buying the drugs as cats. Why do you think the author used this metaphor? How does it make you feel towards and about those people?
8. Many of the poems featured in *Crossing the Line* are shape poems, meaning the words have been written in a way that makes the poem take on a particular shape. Write a review or response to the book, and present your thoughts in the form of a shape poem.

## 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 *Crossing The Line* 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?

### A: A question for you

do you feel safe?  
*Safe.*  
Like opening your front door  
& just walking out,  
Like not sniffing the air for danger,  
    Checking  
    *Left-right left-right*  
    *Left-right left-right,*  
Cautious as a little kid  
Crossing the road.

p.1

### B: Dad's favourite jumper

Is sealed  
    like evidence  
    in an M&S bag  
    at the bottom  
    of my wardrobe  
  
It's only been  
    fourteen months  
    but his smell  
    is already  
    beginning to fade.

I have to breathe in  
    more deeply  
    each time.

p.26

### C: They 'remove' you to the Blue Room

when you've turned the air  
blue with swears,  
when you've bashed an eye  
    blue with bruises,  
when you're feeling so blue  
    you lash out.  
that's why they call it  
    the Blue Room.

Nah, not really.

p.53

### D: The alley is walled

left &	right
there's	nowhere
nowhere	nowhere
nowhere	nowhere
nowhere	nowhere
to escape.	

p.256

## 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 Hot Key paperback edition of the book, first published in the UK in 2023.

### Read up to page 112, K1, and then answer these questions:

- We see images of dominoes on the chapter openers from the beginning of the book, and Erik first speaks about the 'domino effect' on page 9. What do you think this metaphor is trying to show us about Erik and his life, and why do you think the author might have chosen to introduce it at the start of the novel?
- This verse novel uses interesting typography (presentation of the text). How does it reflect Erik's inner thoughts and experiences? Can you find a page in this section of the novel that you think does this particularly powerfully?
- The novel is written in present tense, directly addressing a 'you'. What's the impact of this on your experience of the story?
- What's Erik's relationship with Ravi like and how does the author build up this impression?
- How might Erik be considered an 'outsider' in the novel?
- Who do you think is on Erik's side in this novel? Who does Erik seem to think is on his side?
- Which moments of light, joy and intimacy do we see in this part of the novel? Who is involved, and where do they take place?
- What reasons do you think Erik might have for hating his mother? Do you think his feelings are justified?

### Read up to page 179, Choices, and then answer these questions:

- Erik often talks about choice. What choices do you think are available to him when he meets K1? What would you do in his position?
- Which different pressures is Erik under? Which parts of his life do they come from? How successfully is he dealing with them?
- How is the idea of family developed in this part of the novel?
- Erik's dad is a big part of Erik's life, although Erik struggles to talk about him. How does the author suggest Erik's dad's importance in this part of the novel?
- Why do you think the author includes the detail of Jordan Ikes' mother buying drugs off Erik? How did this moment make you feel?
- How do you feel about Erik in this part of the novel, and why?
- What role does running play in Erik's life? Which different types of 'running' do we see Erik do in this part of the novel?
- How has Erik's relationship with Ravi changed since the beginning of the story?

### Read up to page 244, Trapped, and then answer these questions:

- What choices do you think Erik has now? What do you think he should do, and why?
- How does Erik justify his decisions to himself in this part of the story? Do you think he's being honest with himself?
- How does the author use Erik's memories to help readers sympathise with him in this part of the novel?
- What does 'family' mean to you? What do you think 'family' means to Erik by this point?
- The action moves quickly in this part of the story. How does the author foreshadow that something is going to go wrong for Erik before he gets the phone call from North Street?

### Read up to page 306, Running, and then answer these questions:

- How do you feel as Erik approaches the Nightingale Estate? Why?

- How is Erik growing and maturing in this part of the novel?
- What kinds of pressures is Erik's mum under? Do you think she's handling them well?
- What choices does Erik have at this point in the novel? What do you think he should do?
- What do you think is the worst problem that Erik has faced so far, and why?
- Do you think Ravi and Erik's friendship is believable? Why do you think the author might have chosen to bring Ravi (and his dad) into Erik's plans at this point in the novel?
- How do you think the meaning of 'running' in the novel has changed since the start of Erik's story?

**Read up to page 333, Roll The Credits, and then answer these questions:**

- Think about the range of adult characters in this novel. What different roles do they play in Erik's life? Which adults are particularly influential in this part of Erik's story?
- Why do you think the author chose to have Erik come 4th in the district race?
- How does the author manage the moment when Erik opens up to his mum and Ravi's family? Do you think this part of the story is believable?
- Erik says goodbye to his dad in this part of the novel. Why do you think the author included this moment? How did it make you feel?

**Read from page 334 to the end of the novel and answer these questions:**

- We get to see what happens to Erik after he confesses. What do you think this ending offers readers that finishing with Erik's confession would not?
- How does the author play with the idea of 'the end' in this part of the novel? What might it imply about the stories of teenagers like Erik?
- Who do you think Erik is telling his story to, now that you've read the whole novel?

**Read The Soundtrack at the end of the book**

- What role does music play in the novel?
- Why do you think the author included Ravi's playlist at the end of the novel?
- Which songs would make the soundtrack to your life, and why?

**Read the Children's Society, Getting Help and Author's Note sections at the end**

- How do these additional notes add to your understanding of the issues explored in the text?
- Do you think Tia Fisher has done a good job at representing these issues through Erik's story?
- Is there any further information that you think would be helpful for readers to know about the issues of county lines, the exploitation of children or bereavement?

## After Reading

### Initial Thoughts?

10-15 minutes

Spend time discussing some or all of 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?
- Did it remind you of anything else you've read or watched? Why?
- What did you think about the way the story unfolded?
- What are your thoughts about how the book was written?

### What's *Crossing The Line* about?

15-20 minutes

- Spend one or two minutes writing down a single sentence that begins: '*Crossing The Line* is about ...
- If you are working in a group, share your different sentences and discuss.
- Next read the sentences 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 *Crossing The Line* relates to your chosen idea.

### ***Crossing The Line* is about...**

- The importance of family.
- Growing up in challenging circumstances.
- The idea of choice, and what this means.
- Taking responsibility for your own actions.
- The impact of loss and bereavement on young people.
- How small decisions can have big consequences.
- Warning readers against getting involved in crime.
- Giving people a second chance.
- How quickly life can change.



## Exploring the book further

Use one or more of these tasks to explore *Crossing The Line* further.

*Allow about 20-30 minutes for each task.*

### How well do you think the novel conveys what life is like for teenagers in the UK?

Think about how it presents:

- School
- Families
- Peer pressure
- Living in a town
- Friendship

Choose one of the issues above that you think is presented particularly well/unrealistically. Find two or three moments from the novel to back up your opinion.

### Exploring the novel-in-verse form

Discuss the statements below about the effect of the verse forms in the novel. Select one that generated an interesting conversation and feed back the details to the whole group or class.

- A: The most powerful poems in this novel are the 'concrete' poems – the ones that are arranged into shapes that reflect the ideas and emotions conveyed in the words.
- B: Telling the story through poetry makes it feel more emotional and direct.
- C: The poems wouldn't work if they were taken out of context: they only work when they're read in order as part of the whole novel.
- D: The range of poetic forms used – concrete poems, poems with more than one voice, poems featuring Norwegian language, poems in different fonts – stops the novel from feeling monotonous, keeping it lively and interesting to read.
- E: This story would work just as well if it was in a different form, such as prose.

### Exploring the setting

Places are really important in this novel. Draw a map of Erik's town, including the places you think are the most significant in the story, and label it with quotes from the novel.

## Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are all from reviews of the book.

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

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

Give yourself up to an hour to complete this activity.

A  
A powerful, immersive novel that deals realistically and openly with how vulnerable teenage boys can be swept up into drug-running. For fans of PUNCHING THE AIR and SPLINTERS OF SUNSHINE. The author does not have direct experience of drug-running herself but has spoken extensively with a teenage boy who has, who vouches for its authenticity. The UK Children's Society charity is authenticity-reading the script. Written as a verse novel, the writing is immediately accessible.  
*Bonnier Books*

B  
*Crossing the Line* has a message for us all. This is harrowing but uplifting, contemporary but classic, funny but sad, and all written in a way that smacks a punch between the eyes. The words flew off the page, and watching from the outside, I found myself screaming at the choices the young protagonist makes all the while understanding the reasons why he made those. Working in a secondary school I can totally relate too. Well done, Miss Fisher. I hope this is read in all schools across the country and by all parents as a wake up to how easy things can spiral.  
*Harry, goodreads.com*

C  
I love verse novels, and the use of verse here works perfectly. It really gets us in Erik's head, and is such a powerful, immersive and in-the-moment way to build the situation he finds himself in. The creative use of layout, shape and movement in the text is so effective too. What's particularly impressive with such pared back text is how well-fleshed out and real the characters surrounding Erik are too. [Erik and his mother's] relationship is so complex, both struggling so much and I loved the way the book explored this, especially towards the end – the various 'TV' scenes were genius and so believable. Likewise, the ending is perfect. No spoilers but it could easily have undone all the work of the rest of the book or alternatively ended up false and mawkish. Instead it manages to be hopeful but real, with some closure, some progress and some lasting uncertainty.  
*Rachel, foyles.co.uk*

## Writing Activities

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

You will need 30-60 minutes for each activity.

### A change of perspective

The story is told through Erik's eyes. Who else do you think would make an interesting narrator for this story? Discuss how the story might be presented differently if we were told it from the following characters' perspectives:

- Erik's mum
- Ravi
- K1
- Mr Robinson (the PE teacher)
- Mr Nelson (Erik's head teacher)
- 'You' (the person Erik is telling his story to at the end)

Choose one of these perspectives and a moment you think is important in the novel. Re-write the moment from your chosen character's perspective (in poem form if you like).

### Extending the ending

The author shows us that Erik's story is never really going to be 'over', when she writes 'THE END/ Except it isn't', followed by the 'Roll the Credits' final chapter. Think about what life might be like for Erik once he has told his story to the person on the end of the phone. Write a final chapter for the novel, exploring what might happen one week/one month/one year/five years later, in the style of Tia Fisher.

### Transforming the text

Choose one or more of the poems from the novel and transform them into prose. What difference does this make to the story? Which form – poetry or prose – do you think is more effective for telling Erik's story, and why?