

The yoto Carnegies



The Yoto Carnegie Shortlist 2024 Shadowing Resources



Activities for The Wilderness Illustrated by Steve McCarthy



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. Carefully consider the endpapers for *The Wilderness*. Can you invent a new plant that you might come across in the wild? Is it dangerous or is it harmless? Name your plant (you might like to use alliteration) and give it a key characteristic.
2. The story takes place in the Autumn. Do you think that the Wilderness looks the same way all year round or do you think they might change their appearance with the seasons? Try illustrating your own Wilderness but imagine you were meeting them for the first time in Spring or Summer. What would they look like, and how would they differ from the Wilderness presented in the book?
3. Would you rather stay inside and read a book or head outdoors on a great adventure? Can reading a book be an adventure? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both options.
4. Oktober gets lost out in the wild, can you also get lost in a book? How might the meaning of the word 'lost' differ? Do you think being lost is always a bad thing? Why?
5. Collect leaves and other natural items from outside and use them to make your own Wilderness collage or art installation. Remember to treat the environment with respect!
6. Consider the books Oktober is reading at the start of the story. They are: *101 Ways to Avoid Getting Lost In The Wild* and *102 Ways to Avoid Getting Eaten*. What advice do you think Oktober might have found within their pages? Can you think of three pieces of advice you would include in each of these books?
7. In the book, Oktober dreamed of the wildest place of all. Can you come up with your own version of the wildest place? What would you fear?
8. Oktober's encounter with a monster isn't at all what we expect it to be. Have you ever encountered something which has surprised you? What happened, and how did you feel about it? Did it change the way you think or behave?

Title: *The Wilderness*
Illustrator: Steve McCarthy
Publisher: Walker Books

These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools and settings with ideas to develop comprehension and extended provision around Yoto Carnegie-shortlisted picturebooks and illustrated texts for children of all ages. They build on our work supporting teachers to use high-quality texts to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. We hope you find them useful.

These notes have been written with children aged 7–11 in mind. However, this is a sophisticated picture book which has scope for it to be interpreted in different ways with pupils of different ages.

Reading the book and close reading of illustration:

- *The Wilderness* is a witty and whimsical adventure story about overcoming fear and finding friendship. As both author and illustrator, Steve McCarthy uses both words and pictures to tell Oktober's story. Extended time should be given for children to closely read the illustration, considering how the text and images work together to tell the story.
- Begin by looking at the front cover where the storytelling begins. *What do you think is happening here? What do you think you know about these characters? What do you notice about the setting and the props they have been given? Where do you think they are going? What do you think they might be thinking or feeling? Do you think they all feel the same? What makes you think this?* Now read the title, *The Wilderness* and consider the layout and font used, the oak leaf on the 'i', underlined by the scarf. *What associations does the word 'Wilderness' have for you? How do you think it might relate to the story you are about to read? What do you think might happen in the story?*
- Share the 'many dangers of the wild' front and back endpapers. *What do they make you think about the story you are about to read? Go on to share the disclaimer and publisher/title pages. How do these images connect or build on your predictions about the story* The children will recognise the characters from the cover. *From looking at their facial expressions, body language and what they are doing, what do you think you know about them? Do any of the characters stand out for any reason? Why is this?*
- Now share the first full-bleed double-page spread of the Vasylenko family home, everyone outside even in the rain, except Oktober up at the attic window. *Does this image reflect what you had predicted about the family? How does it reinforce the sense that Oktober isn't like his siblings? Share the next spread of family dinner. What more does this tell us, or how does it confirm our ideas about Oktober?* The children may note his enlarged eyes and that he is sitting still reading, while the others are active.
- Move on to look at the details of the next spread of the children's bedroom. *What do you notice about how the children, and Oktober, are shown?* Share the next four spreads of the family setting off on a walk, exploring the woods, a waterfall and monument, and surveying a cloudscape. Allow time and space for the children to closely read these spreads. *What do you notice about Oktober in each spread? Where and with whom is he placed in each illustration? What other dangers and fascinations of nature do you observe?*
- Share the next four spreads, as Oktober, separated, encounters the Wilderness. Allow time and space to consider each in turn and the visual storytelling devices used. *How does the spread of 19 small frames convey Oktober's distraction by the butterflies? How does the dark 'LOST' spread make you feel? What sense of Oktober's feelings do you get from seeing him three times falling off the cliff into the leaves? What is the impact of turning the book to see *The Wilderness* 'looking right at him'?*

- Read on to the end of the book, allowing time and space for the children to unpick how the illustrations unfold the resolution. They might comment on the vignettes that show Oktober and *The Wilderness* 'scared too'; the two spreads that show the size difference between the two; the page of vignettes that demonstrate how 'with the Wilderness by his side, Oktober saw all the things he had seen before, only now he saw them differently'; and the final harmonious image.
- After reading, encourage the children to share their thoughts. *What did they like and/or dislike? What did it make them think? Do they have any questions about the book? How did it make them feel? How do the characters, setting and storytelling deepen their engagement with and understanding of the story?*

Engaging in illustration:

- Revisit a range of different spreads to see how the illustrations convey Oktober's anxiety and contrast him with his siblings; how facial expressions and body language capture his feelings about being outside and the threats it holds, e.g., the frontmatter and opening spread of the Vasylenko family; the children's bedroom; any of the illustrations of the family outside, such as at the cliff's edge, even the 'LOST' spread where we identify him by his eyes alone. *How is his character conveyed through small touches like Oktober's size, his eyes, his flailing scarf?*
- *The Wilderness* has a distinctive palette inspired by the fallen leaves of autumn. Steve McCarthy calls this 'my favourite season [...] I wanted to create a legend that celebrated everything that's magic about this special time of year (<https://www.thesohoagency.co.uk/authors/steve-mccarthy>).' This is a story about the big but also the small. Consider the details which even Oktober's family are unaware of, and the page of vignettes where Oktober 'saw all the things he had seen before [...] differently'. Invite the children to focus on the small by engaging in observational drawing, using drawing pencils and coloured pencils and/or watercolours that mirror the palette used in the book.
- Ideally take the children outside to find leaves, shoots, stones, seeds, and similar small objects to draw in situ. Alternatively, gather these to draw in the classroom. Explain that observational drawing is all about looking. Draw alongside the children as they work, encouraging them to look as carefully as possible, trying to see shapes, patterns and shadows. Once they have a drawing they like, they could add colour from the book's autumnal palette using pencil or watercolour. Afterwards, reflect on the work together. *What did they like about drawing in this way? Were there any challenges in drawing like this? What were these and how could you overcome them?*
- Give space for the children to pin up and share their drawings, allowing them to look at the similarities and differences in their work and to talk about what is effective in their own work and that of others.

This sequence of activities was designed in partnership with CLPE, a UK-based children's literacy charity working with primary schools to raise the achievement of children's reading and writing by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively, putting quality children's books at the heart of all learning. Find out more about their work, and access further resources and training at www.clpe.org.uk.