

CARNEGIE SHORTLIST ACTIVITY SHEET

Four short activities for reading groups
to enjoy together



1 POETIC LICENCE

Imagine you are one of the main characters from any of the shortlisted Carnegie books.

Writing 'in character', compose a short poem, no more than 12 lines long, to describe your feelings; your thoughts, your fears, your hopes, anything going on inside your head. Try not to use specific incidents from any of the books, but concentrate on your character's emotions.

Read out the poems among your group and see if you can guess which characters the poems relate to.

- What were the clues that help the other members of the group identify the characters?
- Did the poems make you feel differently about the characters?
- Do we all form different perceptions of the same characters we read about in books? How does that happen?

2 ACTING UP

Choose a short scene from one of the shortlisted books and turn it into a mini-drama lasting no longer than 10 minutes.

Think about what you need to adapt it as a mini-drama, and what needs to be left out.

- Using two members of the group, rehearse the short play and act it out.
- Does the play make you feel differently about the characters?
- Do their words still ring true?
- Does it give you a different perspective on the characters, and the events that take place?

3 THREE-MINUTE DEBATES

Six people each choose a different title from the shortlist. Before the debate, everyone votes (in a secret ballot) for their favourite book.

Then each of the six takes it in turns to make a case for his or her chosen book in just three minutes – why it should win, what they liked about it, how well it was written, etc. After all six have made their case, everyone is invited to vote again.

Count up the votes and see which book has won.

- Were members of the group swayed by the debate?
- Did anyone change his or her mind?
- Did it change anyone's view of any of the books?

4 INSPIRATIONS

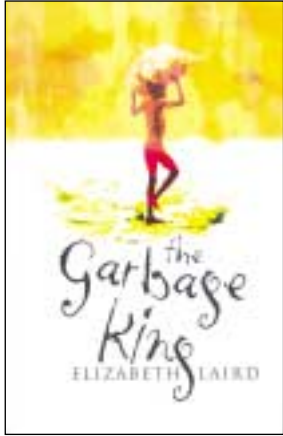
All this year's shortlisted titles suggest that the author has conducted careful research into different areas (historical, social, etc) in order to write her/his book.

Select one of the following topics relevant to each of the shortlisted titles and conduct some research of your own using library books, the internet, or any other research materials you can find. How easy is it to find material on these subjects? Did you learn more than you already knew? How useful would it be to talk to experts in the field? Or would it be interesting to talk to friends or relatives who may have lived through these eras or have experience of issues such as these?

- The Fire Eaters – the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962
- A Gathering Light – the murder of Grace Brown at Big Moose Lake, July 1906
- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time – Asperger's syndrome
- The Garbage King – the street-children of Addis Ababa
- Private Peaceful – desertion and cowardice amongst British troops in World War I
- Sisterland – Alzheimer's disease

CARNEGIE SHORTLIST TALKING POINTS

Use these questions as starting points to discuss the merits of the shortlisted books



The Garbage King – Elizabeth Laird

- 1** Dani and Mamo come from completely different worlds. Can you find any similarities between their lives and stories?
- 2** Why do you think the author chooses two characters from such different worlds?
- 3** How does the author describe the lives of the street children of Addis Ababa?
- 4** How does Dani and Mamo's friendship develop from their first meeting?
- 5** What does being part of Million's gang mean to the street children?
- 6** What is the relevance of the title The Garbage King? How does it relate to Mamo and to the life the street children live?
- 7** What did you think of the names of the street children, Getachew, Million, Buffalo, Shoes? What do they make you think of?
- 8** Themes of family run through the book. Can you pinpoint some of the important family relationships in the book?
- 9** Dani's role in the street gang becomes that of story-teller. Why is it such an important role and why do you think it earns him respect from the street kids?
- 10** What does Dani learn from his time on the streets?

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A Gathering Light – Jennifer Donnelly

- 1** What is the significance of the words on some of the chapter headings? Why are they on some chapters and not on others?
- 2** How do these headings affect your reading of the book?
- 3** What is the time structure of the novel? Can you plot out the events?
- 4** How do the two stories of Grace's murder and Mattie's life work together?
- 5** Think about all the characters in *A Gathering Light*. Can you work out the different social classes? How are the different classes portrayed?
- 6** Does the author show more sympathy towards certain characters?
- 7** How does the author write about racial tension? How is Weaver treated? What kind of jobs does he have?
- 8** How does the author portray Weaver and his Mama? How is their life different from Mattie and her father's lives?
- 9** *A Gathering Light* is based on a real-life murder. Can you separate the facts from the story the author creates around them?
- 10** Did it help to read the author's note at the end of the story? What kind of research do you think the author did before writing the story?

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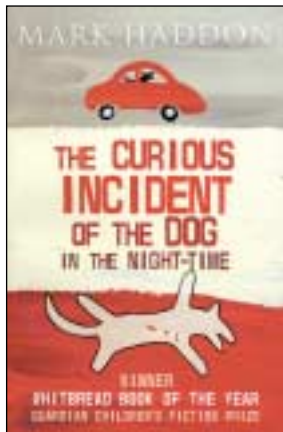


Private Peaceful – Michael Morpurgo

- 1 Throughout the book, the author mentions many different birds. Why is bird imagery so significant to this book?
- 2 How does the author show the passage of time in the book?
- 3 “Strange when I think of it now, but there was a time when I loved mud.”(page 57)
What happens to change the way Tommo feels about mud?
- 4 Tommo, Charlie and Molly have an unusual relationship. How does Tommo come to feel excluded? What sort of feelings does he harbour for Molly?
- 5 Tommo talks of living, not in his brother’s shadow, but ‘his glow’. What does he mean by this? What’s the difference?
- 6 How does Tommo cope with the horrors of war when he and his company head for enemy lines?
- 7 Themes of cowardice and bravery run throughout the book. How does the author question these notions?
- 8 What’s the significance of the nursery rhyme Oranges and Lemons? Why is it sung by the brothers during the bombardment?
- 9 At the end, the author surprises us with a twist in the tale. How does he pull this off? How does he get over the fact that Tommo and Charlie are in two separate places at the end of the book?
- 10 What does the book’s Postscript tell you about the author’s views on this war? Does it come as a surprise?

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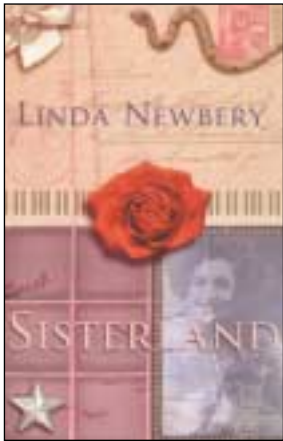


The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time – Mark Haddon

- 1 Christopher's story begins as a murder mystery – a hunt to find who killed Wellington the dog. Since we find out half way through who killed Wellington, what do you think the book is really about? Does it affect your enjoyment of the book?
- 2 What type of a book would you call The Curious Incident? A mystery, a drama, an adventure, a comedy? All of the above?
- 3 Christopher suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism. What do you learn about this condition from the book?
- 4 What things does Christopher find it difficult to deal with on a daily basis?
- 5 What did you think of the language used in the book and the way it is written?
- 6 Do the little diagrams and drawings throughout help the reader to understand Christopher?
- 7 Why is Christopher so afraid when he discovers his father lied about his mother's death? What else does his father lie about?
- 8 How does the story portray Christopher's parents? Are they shown in a sympathetic light? What do you think about Christopher's father?
- 9 Is this a book for children or adults? Is there a distinction? Does it matter?
- 10 Christopher's behaviour in public often embarrasses people and attracts attention. Has the book changed the way you feel about this kind of incident? What would your reaction be now?

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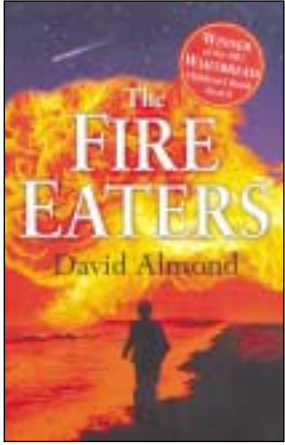


Sisterland – Linda Newbery

- 1 Sisterland deals with many different issues, from Alzheimer's and racism to first love and the Holocaust. How do these work within the story?
- 2 To what extent is the book a mystery. How does the author incorporate this within the plot? Who unravels it?
- 3 Hilly and Zoë are sisters, but they don't have much in common. How does the author portray the differences between the two girls. Do they have more in common by the end of the book?
- 4 How does the author use Alzheimer's disease to move the plot forward? How would you feel living with a person suffering from this condition?
- 5 Is Heidigran always portrayed in a sympathetic light? How does the family cope under the strain? Who suffers most?
- 6 At the beginning of each chapter there's a short introduction – a quote from another book, song or publication. Why does the author do this? What do you think of the variety of sources she uses?
- 7 In what way does the book deal with stereotypes? Is it just Zoë who stereotypes Hilly and her friends, or is Hilly just as guilty of this?
- 8 How does the book deal with history and its presentation through the media? Is it possible to change the past, or distort what's happened?
- 9 How does the book tackle issues of race and sexuality? Are the answers to these question always clear cut?
- 10 Hilly and her family have changed by the end of the book, but in what way? Have they changed for the better? What about Hildegran? How has your opinion of her altered?

CARNEGIE SHORTLIST TALKING POINTS

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The Fire Eaters – David Almond

- 1 What are your first impressions of McNulty. Can you understand why Bobby is so fascinated by him? Why is fire-eating such an important theme in the book?
- 2 How does Bobby's environment influence him? What about his family?
- 3 What effect do Daniel and his family have on Bobby and his attitude? Do they change him in any way?
- 4 How does David Almond convey a sense of time and history? How does this influence the plot?
- 5 How important are Bobby's friends Ailsa and Joseph to him? How is his relationship with Daniel different?
- 6 What do you learn of the Cuban missile crisis that took place in September 1962? Do you think it would have been a frightening time to live through? Why did David Almond choose to set his novel in this era?
- 7 What is your reaction to Mr Todd and the corporal punishment he inflicts? Corporal punishment is no longer allowed in schools. Do you think this is a good thing?
- 8 How do Daniel and Bobby get their own back on Mr Todd? Is the campaign they conduct effective?
- 9 Daniel tells Bobby 'what we did was right.' Do you agree? Why doesn't Bobby walk away when Daniel leaves? Is it braver to stay or braver to go?
- 10 At the end of the book, Bobby's mum talks of 'these dark days'. Have those days gone forever? How have they been illuminated?