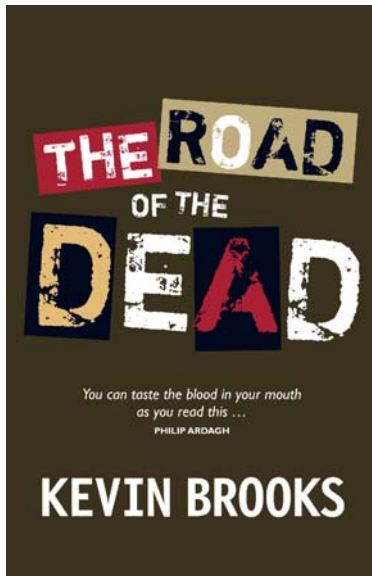


CILIP CARNEGIE SHORTLIST TALKING POINTS

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



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards



The Road of the Dead by Kevin Brooks

1) What is unusual about the narrator of this story, Ruben? Why is his 'gift' relevant to the story, and why do we find out about this so early on in the book?

2) The Road of the Dead begins with the grim news that Ruben and Cole Ford's sister Rachel has been murdered. What is different about the way we first learn that Rachel is dead?

How does the Ford family take the tragic news? How would you expect them to react?

3) Why is Ruben convinced 'the Dead Man did it'? His brother Cole tells the Family Liaison Officer, 'We don't care who killed her. She's dead...all

we want to is bury her.' Why can't the family bury her? Is Cole telling the truth when he says they don't care who killed her?

4) Why is the Road to the Dead set in Dartmoor, hundreds of miles from east London, where Cole and Ruben live? Why is the setting of the novel relevant to the plot and unlocking the mystery of what happened to their sister?

5) Ruben talks about the 'emptiness' of the moor. What does he mean by this? Think about the descriptions some of the physical features of Dartmoor, such as the tors. What effect do these descriptions have on you, the reader? What kind of language does the author use to describe them?

6) Are Cole and Ruben very different from each other? Do they work well as a team? In what ways do they complement each other?

7) What does Jess mean when she says, 'People don't like us when we travel, and they don't like us when we stop.' Why are people anti-gipsy? In what way is the brothers' gipsy culture relevant to the plot?

8) Who is Baby-John Ford? Why is his reputation as 'one of the best bare-knuckle fighters' of his time crucial to the plot? How does this explain the way that Cole behaves?

9) There are some scenes of extreme violence in The Road of the Dead – Ruben questions 'this dance of violence' in his own head. Did you feel this violence was justified? Wasn't it this kind of violence that led to their sister's murder in the first place?

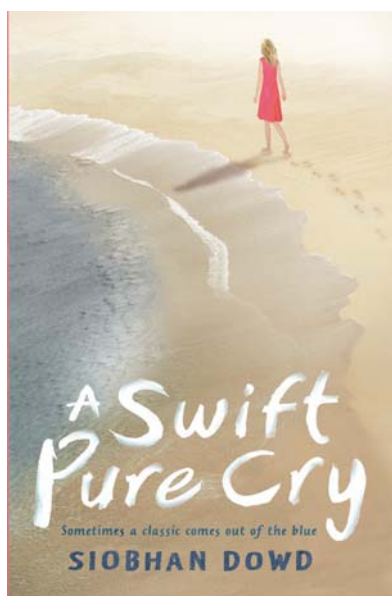
10) How has Ruben's relationship with his brother altered at the end? Obviously the brothers could never bring their sister back to life, but how have they resolved the situation? Are there any loose ends that still need tying up?

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A Swift Pure Cry by Siobhan Dowd

1) The book begins with a quote from James Joyce's novel, *Ulysses*.

It soared, a bird, it held its flight, a swift pure cry,
Soar silver orb it leaped serene, speeding, sustained...

What is the significance of the title in relation to what happens to Shell? The phrase is also mentioned again in the book (page 135) but in another context. Why is it also mentioned here?

2) When the book begins, it's just over a year since the death of Shell's mother. How has the loss affected her and her family? How are the children coping without their mother, and how is Shell's father coping without his wife?

3) Why does Shell's father make the children pick up stones from the field? Is there any point to this?

4) How important is religion to Shell, and what purpose does it serve in her life? Why does she have imagined conversations with Jesus?

5) When Father Rose asks Shell if she's happy, why doesn't she give him a straight answer? Do you think Shell's happy?

6) When Shell overhears the local priests discussing her father, Father Carroll says, "He's like a car with no juice without her." Does this change the way you feel about Shell's father up until this point? What else does Shell's father say and do that changes the way you feel about him?

7) How does Father Carroll try and help the Talent family? What do you think of Father Rose's suggestions that he's have the 'social services' onto them? Should he have called the social services?

8) Are you surprised when Shell and Declan become lovers? Is she in love with Declan? Or is she in love with Father Rose?

9) When Shell discovers she's pregnant, she prepares to leave Coolbar. Why does she change her mind? Is this the right decision? What do you think she would have done if she had run away?

10) When Shell reads the first newspaper report surrounding the case, 'it makes no sense'. Why is this? Why does it make her question what happened to her?

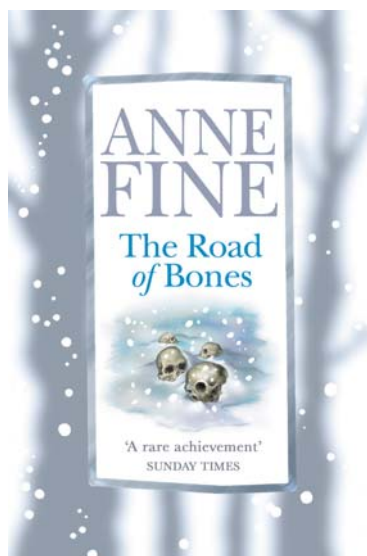
What does it make you think about reports

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Children's Book
Awards



The Road of Bones by Anne Fine

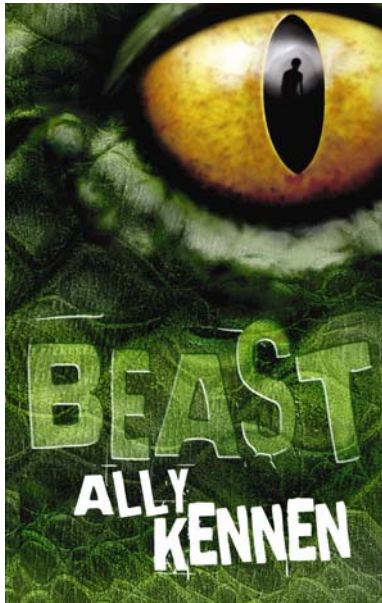
- 1) As a preface to the book, the author writes, "I have taken great liberties with history, geography, language and culture. Nevertheless, inside this story lies a part of the truth." Why do you think the author tells us this? What does she mean by it?
- 2) Where do you think *The Road of Bones* is set? Why isn't the author specific about the setting for her book?
- 3) Why does Yuri's grandmother delight in telling the distressing story of the Kulik twins? Why is story telling – and this story in particular – so important to Yuri's grandmother? What happened to her own husband? How has this affected her?
- 4) Yuri's grandmother has had no education, yet she's far from stupid. How do we know this? Why are her sayings so important to Yuri? What is meant by her saying which provides the title for the book, 'For some, the crystal stair! For others, just the road of bones!'
- 5) What does Yuri mean when he explains "Another of the portraits on the wall had vanished overnight." Why do the teachers have to cut out pictures of the leader's face from their text books?
- 6) His father tells Yuri, "I have no opinions at all. I am a hollow man." What does he mean by this? Does he really have no opinions? If you found yourself in a situation where your opinions could land you in a labour camp, what would you do? Would you speak out, or keep quiet?
- 7) Why does Father Trofim's Diktat spell the end for Yuri's education? Is this good news or bad news for the pupils in Yuri's class? How would you feel if you finished school when you were 12 years old?
- 8) Through a momentary lapse in concentration, Yuri ends up sentenced to ten years' hard labour. Why do the authorities impose such harsh punishments? What effect does this sentence have on Yuri?
- 9) *The Road of Bones* is a story of survival in near-impossible circumstances against the odds. How is it that Yuri manages to survive when so many he meets don't? What makes him any different from some of the less fortunate characters in the book?
- 10) Despite all that has happened to him, Yuri can't help but admire and love his motherland, 'a land made even more noble by its evil sufferings'. How has Yuri changed at the end of his story? How has been marked by the terrible experiences he has suffered?

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Beast by Ally Kennan

- 1) The story is narrated by 17-year-old Stephen. What kind of person is he? Do you sympathise with him? Why?
- 2) At the beginning of the book Stephen lists 'the 10 worst things' he has ever done. How bad are they? How funny are they? What insights does this list give you into Stephen's personality?
- 3) What kind of life does Stephen have as a foster-kid? How has it affected him? What do you think of the family he lives with?
- 4) In the first chapter, Stephen has to cut up a pig to feed to the Beast. What kind of descriptions does the author use to describe this scene?

How does it make you feel? What ideas does it give you about the size of the Beast?

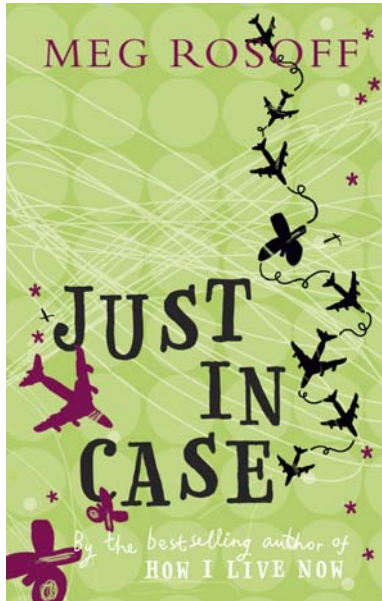
- 5) It's not until half-way into the book that we discover exactly what the Beast of the title is. Why does the author hold back on this information? What effect does this have on you, the reader, when you discover the truth?
- 6) Did you guess what kind of creature Beast is? Does it shock or surprise you? Do you think this type of creature could survive and could grow into such a monstrous size?
- 7) Does Stephen make a good job of looking after the Beast? Who or what else does he look after, and how well does he do it? Have Stephen's parents made a good job of looking after him?
- 8) Stephen's attitude to Carol seems to change as the story progresses. Why is this? Did your attitude towards Carol change too?
- 9) Why does Stephen eventually tell Carol about Selby and what happened to him? Why is this secret so important to our understanding of Stephen?
- 10) Why is Eric's gift to Stephen particularly suitable? What do you think the future holds for Stephen?

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Children's Book
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Just In Case by Meg Rosoff

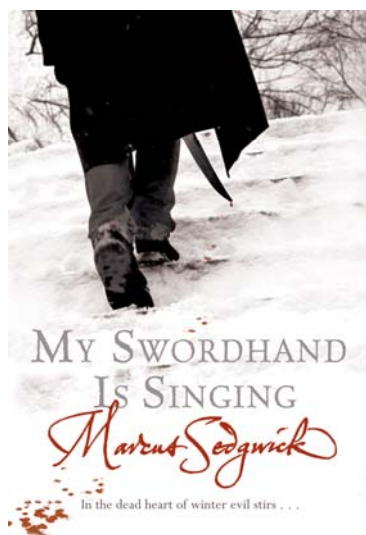
- 1) The book begins with 'one boy on the verge of death. Another on the verge of something more complicated.' How does Charlie's close brush with death set the tone for the rest of the book?
- 2) How is it relevant that Charlie is attempting to fly? What kind of effect does Charlie's experience have on David?
- 3) Why should this leave David to change his identity? Why should David want to leave his old identity behind?
- 4) How does David reinvent himself as Justin? What role does Agnes play in this metamorphosis? Have you ever wanted to reinvent yourself?
- 5) Throughout the book we have interjections from Fate. What effect do these passages have on the reader? What kind of relationship does Fate have with Justin?
- 6) Justin invents himself an imaginary dog for himself, Boy. Why does he do that? How is it that his friend Peter can see Boy?
- 7) Justin discovers that he has a genuine talent for running, a talent that David certainly never had. How does running help Justin sort out some of his identity problems? What effect does it have on his life?
- 8) How much do you think the thoughts and worries of Justin Case are a normal part of growing up? Do you think Justin is the first 15-year-old to feel like this?
- 9) At first, Justin finds his experience at Luton Airport a positive one? What changes this? What part does Fate play in this episode in Justin's life?
- 10) How does his sexual encounter with Agnes change her relationship with Justin? Is it a mistake for both of them? Do you think it was a mistake?
- 11) Is it possible to cheat Fate? Does Justin manage to pull it off at the end?

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My Swordhand is Singing By Marcus Sedgwick

- 1) My Swordhand is Singing is part of a tradition of European vampire tales. Why is the setting so central to the story? How would it be altered if the story were set in another location? Would it still work as well?
- 2) Peter and his father Tomas are treated as outsiders by the townsfolk of Chust. Why? Is this something that upsets them? Or is it something that they actively encourage? How does this friction between woodcutters and townsfolk impact upon the story?
- 3) What is Peter's relationship with his father like? How is it affected by Tomas's drinking? In what other ways does Tomas's drinking impact upon their lives?
- 4) The story begins with 'the song', which we later discover is called the Miorita. Why is Peter so obsessed with this song? Does he understand it fully? How does the song connect Peter with the gypsies and Sofia in particular?
- 5) How does the author convey a sense of atmosphere in this story? What sort of language does the author use to help achieve this?
- 6) Why does Peter feel a sense of guilt concerning his mother's death? Is he to blame in any way? Do you think his father holds him responsible for the death of his wife?
- 7) What kind of feelings were evoked as you read the chapter The Wedding of the Dead? Why do you think the townspeople behaved in this way? What would you have done in Agnes's position?
- 8) Why does Peter have such fond memories of the little wooden goose his father carved for him as a child? In what way does this make the ending of the story even more poignant?
- 9) Marcus Sedgwick's novel has been carefully researched and draws heavily upon vampire myths passed down through the centuries. Why has the author done this? What does this add to his story? Is it right that he has 'taken certain liberties for the sake of the story' as he calls it?
- 10) In his author's note at the end of the book Marcus Sedgwick writes, "there are almost as many types of vampire as there are vampire stories'. Why are readers intrigued by the notion of vampires? What is it about these tales that have fascinated storytellers and their audiences for almost five hundred years? He finishes his author's note with a reference to a modern day vampire tale. Do you believe in vampires?