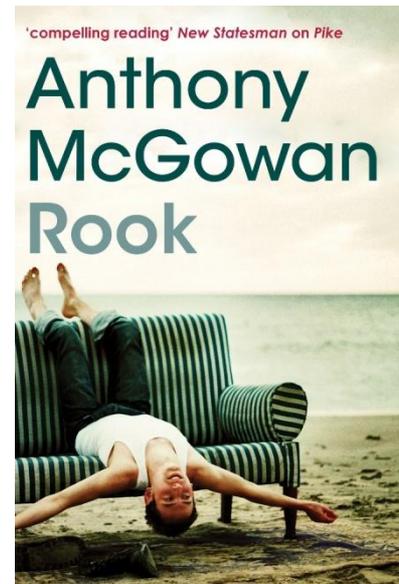


## 2018 Carnegie Medal shortlist Talking Points

Title: **ROOK**

Author: **Anthony McGowan**

Publisher: **Barrington Stoke**



### THE CHARACTERS

Nicky tells us about the ways in which Kenny is different, including his special ability to understand some things that others wouldn't. Can you think of examples of this?

We learn early on that Nicky has a secret, but aren't told immediately what it is – could you guess?

Do our views of a character change as we understand *why* they behave as they do? (Think of Stanno/Pete, for example.)

Why does Nicky *not* want to talk to Sarah, even though he also *does*? When he finally does talk to her, he doesn't stop! (About his family, about himself – and it's very surprising!) What makes him change? (Our own view of her as readers might be different from his to begin with, but does that change, too?)

### REAL LIFE

Many of the family troubles of the two preceding books seem to have gone now – why is Nicky still resentful, still angry with his dad?

What do you make of Jenny's character, and her role in the story?

The author carefully avoids using one particular swear word, then it appears surprisingly and abruptly (page 78, if you're wondering) – what's the effect he achieves in doing this?

### ROOKY AND THE HUMAN WORLD

What did you think of the opening chapter? Here the bird isn't just the subject, but it's all seen from the bird's point of view – what's the effect of this?

In the opening, we see predator turned prey. (Just as later, when he's fed worms, Rooky becomes predator again.) So we are introduced early on to the sometimes cruel laws of nature – how do they apply in Nicky and Kenny's human world?



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Does the way the more powerful animals treat their weaker prey make us think about issues like bullying that we see in Nicky's school?

The book is about the bird, but it's also not about the bird – so what exactly *is* the bird doing in the story? In what ways does each of the boys identify with it?

## QUOTATIONS

How does each of these quotations relate to the book more widely?

- “you shouldn't mess with the law of nature, because you can't change it”
- “There's a good part to anger. Anger is a kind of energy, and it makes you want to do stuff, not just curl up and die”
- “our lives are all about the stories we tell. In fact, our lives are a story. And it's up to you how you tell it.”

## RESPONSIBILITY, FAIRNESS

Are the consequences of Nicky's behaviour *fair*? Do all the characters ultimately get what they deserve?

Sometimes Nicky lies to Kenny in order to make him feel better – does this make the lying OK?

## THE TRILOGY

If you've read *Brock* and *Pike*, the books that came before this, how do the three connect? What, apart from the characters, do they have in common?

If this is the first Nicky & Kenny book you've read, you may have noticed that McGowan refers to various moments in those earlier books here (including several references to the badger episode, for example) – does reading this one make you want to go back and read them now?

Do you like books that bring you back to characters or worlds you know already, or do you prefer something totally new each time? Why?

*Rook* is being billed as the end of a trilogy. Is it a tidy, conclusive end, or is it still open to the possibility of more to come? What would you like to see happen next?

## AND FINALLY...

Does this Carnegie-shortlisted book deserve to win? Why, or why not?



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