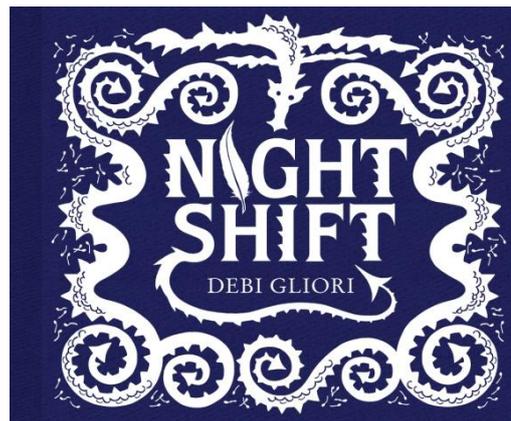


## 2018 Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist VISUAL LITERACY NOTES

Title: **Night Shift**

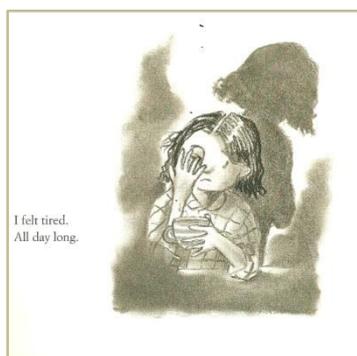
Author/Illustrator: **Debi Gliori**

Publisher: **Hot Key Books**



### First look

The focus of this book is a terrifying mental illness called depression. This may not be a sensible subject to discuss with young people in the context of an artwork 'competition'. However, if group leaders know the members of their shadowing group well enough, they can judge whether or not to open up discussion on this challenging subject.



Look through the book together at all the images. The pictures are quite straightforward, almost entirely in black and white.

They start by depicting a girl suffering the debilitating physical effects of depression – fear, sleeplessness, emptiness and lack of coherent thought or ability to talk. There is a simplicity about the illustrations, that could lead readers to think that this text is intended for primary aged children, however, promotional material for *Night Shift* make it quite clear that more mature readers are expected.

*In publicity for this book, Emma Matthewson, publishing director for Hot Key Books and Piccadilly Press, said: "I could not be more proud to be publishing this new book **for older readers and adults** from Debi Gliori. Debi's stunning artwork combined with the deceptively simple text we hope will be a means for real help for those suffering from depression – as well as for those who know somebody who is or might be." Published April 12, 2016*  
[www.thebookseller.com](http://www.thebookseller.com).



### Look again

Over the centuries many people have tried to write about depression. Winston Churchill spoke of his 'Black Dog'; the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins compared it to clinging on the edge of a high cliff:

*O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall  
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap  
May who ne'er hung there.*



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Now-a days, there is more understanding of mental illness, but there are still those who are unaware just how devastating it can be. The old clichés about ‘pulling yourself together’ or ‘trying to keep positive’ are as useless as telling someone with a broken leg to go for a run. Debi Gliori has used both her artistic and her literary talent to portray depression to those who have not experienced it in as straightforward and simple terms as possible. For the purposes of the Kate Greenaway Medal, judging the artistic qualities takes precedent. As you look at, and discuss, the layout, design and illustration, try to identify the ways in which the artwork helps you to grasp how it must feel to be living with feelings of worthlessness and despair – sometimes for weeks on end.

### Look at design and illustration

- Talk about any all the visual aspects of the book i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. How do these ‘extras’ to the theme contribute to the overall impact of the book? The end papers are silver with a recurring feather motif. Are there feathers anywhere else in the text?
- The colours used throughout the book are predominantly black, white and shades of grey. Only two pages have any bright colour. Why do you think that is so?
- Do you feel the choice of a dragon is appropriate to represent her despair?
- What makes her feel better at the end of the book? Can you think why that image helps her recover?



### Research

Many people who are involved in acts of creativity such as writing, painting, film making, music and drama etc., have represented feelings of despair in their work.



Use the library or internet to find out more about these depictions of depression in photography, paint and film.

1. A photograph taken by Dorothea Lange in the USA during the Great Depression of 1929. Why is this woman feeling so hopeless?

2. This is a very famous painting by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. Why was he so interested in depicting psychological conditions?
3. If you know the Harry Potter books or films you will recognise a dementor. Author J.K. Rowling invented dementors to represent the depression from which she herself had suffered. She describes them in this way: "Dementors are among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, they drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them..." 2 17 Nov 2015
4. This painting is by Vincent Van Gogh. Why did people suspect that he was mentally unwell?



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