

THORNHILL

By Pam Smy

David Fickling Books

2018 Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist,
eligible for Amnesty CILIP Honour

'Adept use of illustration drives the narrative in this remarkable piece of pictorial storytelling. The illustrations have a cinematic quality.' *Judging panel*



UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 5: Nobody has any right to hurt or torture us or treat us cruelly.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This eerie book is two stories set in different times about Mary and Ella – one told in diary format, the other in striking art – whose lives converge in a mysterious foster home called Thornhill. 1982: lonely orphan Mary is incessantly bullied, and has become an isolated mute stuck in her room making puppets. 2017: Ella has moved to a new town and she sees a girl in the derelict Thornhill house opposite. The book paints a vivid picture of the pain that results from bullying and understanding what causes it. The tragic ending shows that all children have the right to belong, and be safe, cared for and listened to.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THIS STORY

Right to live in freedom and safety; to a home; to freedom from harm; to a good life; to education; to meeting friends; to be treated with respect and compassion; to be cared for and protected; to freedom of opinion and expression.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE HUMAN RIGHTS

- How would you describe the illustrated pages of the book?
- What do the blank, black pages symbolise and how do they make you feel?
- From her room, Mary watches 'regular, real people with regular, real families' (page 30). What does she mean? How would she describe herself?
- How do you feel when 'she' hurts Mary? Why is 'she' cruel? And why do the others join in?
- Mary says: 'I am surrounded by adults at school and at Thornhill, but none of them can really see what is happening. They don't want to know' (page 172). Who should be protecting Mary and Ella? Who could you turn to if you had a problem?
- Why has the author chosen death as the answer for Mary and Ella? What alternative endings can you think of?



ACTIVITY

Write or draw an epilogue to the book showing what happens to Jacob. Will he be looked after or vulnerable like Mary and Ella?

RESEARCH

There are references to *Jane Eyre* and *The Secret Garden* in the book. How are these stories relevant to Thornhill? Find them in your library or look them up online. Why do you think Mary liked the books so much?

WE ARE ALL BORN FREE AND EQUAL

The atrocities of World War II sparked a determination to protect the rights of all human beings everywhere. On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The preamble says it must be shared, learned by children and be a part of all our lives.

When using these notes, you can download for reference:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights simplified version, especially useful for younger children [amnesty.org.uk/udhr](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/udhr)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [unicef.org/crc](https://www.unicef.org/crc)

For more free educational resources from Amnesty International go to [amnesty.org.uk/education](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/education)



The CILIP Carnegie & Kate Greenaway Children's Book Awards

