

2018 Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist VISUAL LITERACY NOTES

Title: **Thornhill**

Illustrator/Author: **Pam Smy**

Publisher: **David Fickling Books**



First look

Thornhill is presented in a dual format; approximately half the story is told through the printed diary entries of Mary Baines in the year 1982. The rest is seen through the eyes of a girl in the 2017 and is shown in graphic form. It is these visual passages of the book that demonstrate the quality of the artwork in **Thornhill**. The visual text is in black, white and grey; light and darkness, friendship and loneliness, cruelty and comfort are all depicted through the use of shape, line, white space and the monotone shading. Throughout the book solid black double page spreads mark the ends of episodes and the passing of time.

Share the book with the shadowing group to familiarise them to the presentation.

Look at the graphic text in more detail

We are told quite a lot about Mary Baines as we read her 1982 diary. She tells us a bit about how she looks, but mostly about how she feels.

The other girl in this story is Ella. All we know about her is what we can learn from the images. Can you answer the following questions by looking closely at the pictures?

- Where is Ella's house in relation to Thornhill?
- What is the garden like around Thornhill in 2017?
- What is her father like?
- Do you know anything about her mother?
- From the following list, which words could be used to describe Ella?

cheerful

lonely

curious

courageous

busy

resourceful

angry

adventurous

quiet



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards

How many pictures contain birds? What sorts of birds? Do they serve a purpose in the narrative?

Talk about all the visual aspects of the book i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. How do these 'extras' to the story contribute to the overall impact of the book?

Interpreting text

When studying a book, it is always beneficial, to use tasks which require imaginative or creative response. Using creative activities (e.g. art, drama, researching, music etc.) will encourage students to engage fully with the text. The following suggestions may help get the group to think about different aspects of this the book.

Writing

Read the pictures from page 175 to page 203. Imagine you are Ella. Write a diary entry about getting into Thornhill's garden and what you found there.

Drama

Mary writes about the bullying she suffers. How do bullies plan, carry out and get away with tormenting people? Work in a group to act out a bullying scene.

Drawing

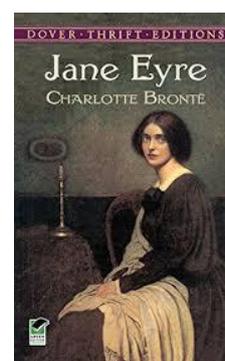
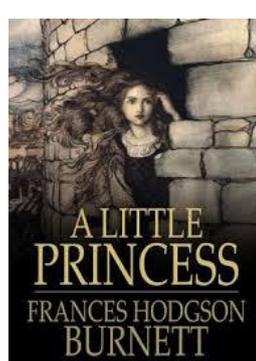
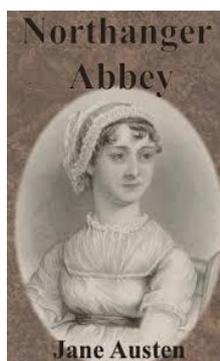
With a pencil, crayons or charcoal draw your own version of a haunted house. Surround the house with a tangled garden.

Research

There is a long tradition of novels that have similar themes to Thornhill. Through the 19th and into the 20th centuries, stories about girls being orphaned or abandoned were quite common. Often the tale involved the girl living in an orphanage where she is treated cruelly by other girls and 'carers'. Another theme involved a large, old house, full of empty rooms and eerie noises.

It is clear that Mary Baines is a reader. She has read at least two of the books pictured below.

Do you recognise any of the books Mary read by the titles on the book covers? See if you can find them in the library.



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards

Of these four books, the one written by Jane Austen (published 1803) was not supposed to be taken too seriously but to show how silly some female readers were to believe these novels. Another, **Jane Eyre** (published 1847), was intended for adults to read rather than children. The two books written by Frances Hodgson Burnett (**A Little Princess**, 1905, **Secret Garden**, 1911) were written for children. Films or TV series have been made of all four.

Spooky or what?

There are several echoes of these books in **Thornhill**.

In **Jane Eyre** the old house is called Thornfield and the attic burns, leaving charred remains.

In **A Little Princess** the main carer in a girls' boarding school sends an abandoned child to live alone in the attic.

There is a lonely girl called Mary in **The Secret Garden** who finds a key which opens the door to a hidden garden where she feels safe.



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards