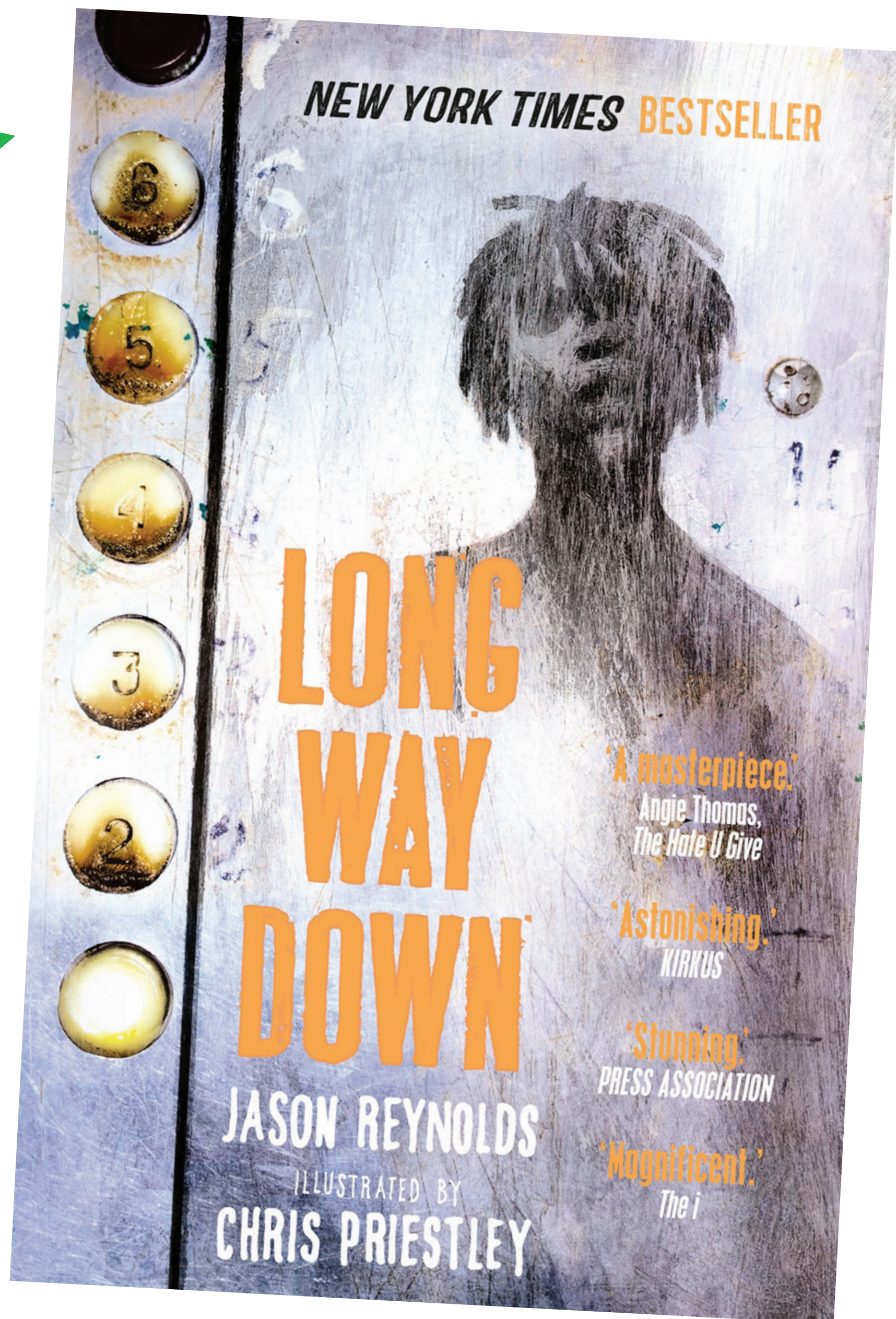


CILIP CARNEGIE SHORTLIST 2019

SHADOWING RESOURCES



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards



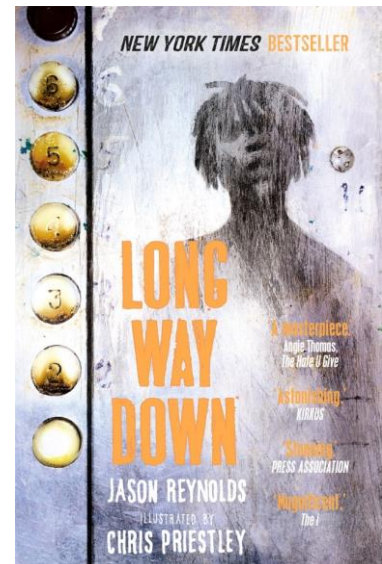
English
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centre

CILIP Carnegie Medal 2019 TALKING POINTS

Title: **Long Way Down**

Author: **Jason Reynolds**

Publisher: **Faber & Faber**



THE RULES

What are The Rules? Why do you think Will clings to them so tightly?

How do each of Will's visitors make him think differently about The Rules?

Does the book make you want to accept the value of these Rules, or challenge them?

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

How does this story teach Will (and the reader) a lesson about choices and consequences?

Each of the people Will meets on his elevator journey is a victim or a perpetrator of violent crime – but is there some blurring between these two groups?

Will is faced with a tough choice – what would you do?

POETRY

What does writing in free verse (and the first person) allow Reynolds to do that regular third-person prose wouldn't have?

How did the poetry affect your experience of reading the book?

Choose a couple of pages and try reading them aloud – does that add something to your experience of the book?

CUMULATIVE STORIES, STRUCTURE

What did you think of the structure of the book – how do the individual characters' stories add up to a whole novel?

The entire story covers just over a minute – how does Reynolds build up the tension and interest when there's just a minute of narrative stretched over so many pages?

SMALL PERSONAL STORIES, BIG QUESTIONS

This is basically the story of just one young man. But how does the author examine bigger issues (including the commonplace nature of gun violence), and indeed a whole society, through this individual small story?

Is this book a moral book, a book about right and wrong?

The author tackles big and dark social questions – but is there something hopeful to be found here, too?

Did the book change your perceptions, or change your mind about anything?

ENDING

“You coming?”: the final words of the book. What did you think the moment you read those?

How did you like the ending, and the fact that Reynolds leaves things unresolved – did you want to know what happened next, or are you happy to imagine for yourself?

The most obvious question we’re left with at the end is whether Will is going to take his revenge after all. But are there other significant questions left unresolved, too?

FINALLY

All those people who visit Will in the elevator – do you think they’re actually ghosts? Or what else might they be?

Reynolds started writing this book based on an experience of his own, when he was a teenager and a friend of his was killed. Does knowing this change how you think about the book?

Do you think this book should win the 2019 Carnegie Medal? Why, or why not?

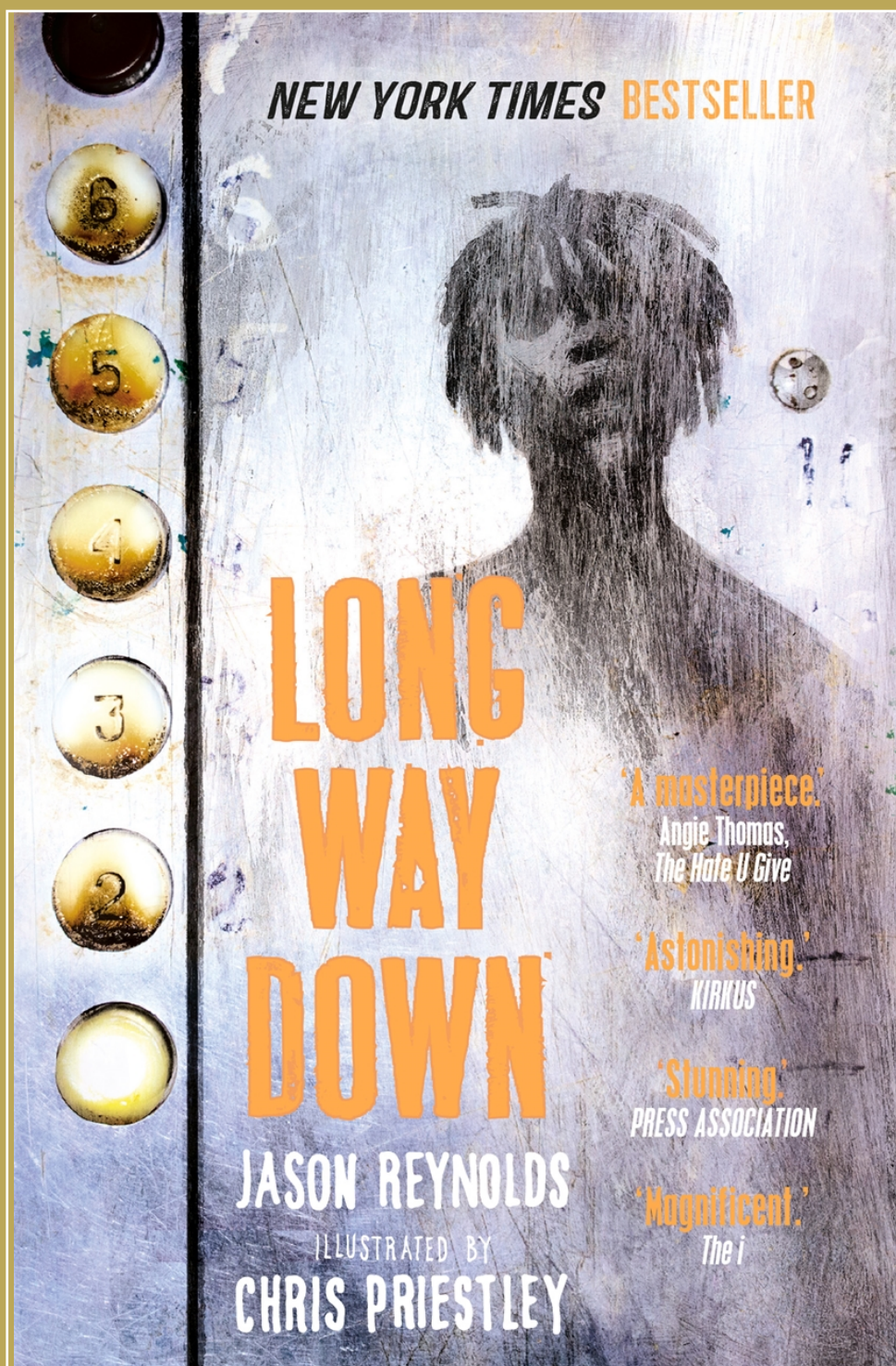
Discussing human rights in this story:

Right to life; to everyone being legally protected; to choose our friends; to be protected by adults.

- How do Will’s feelings about his brother’s death change throughout the book, and as he meets the other affected by gun violence?
- What decisions does Will have to make about his future?
- What do we know about Shawn at the start and then by the end of the book? Do we still have any questions about him or his life?



The Carnegie Shortlist 2019



EMC Resources: A Long Way Down



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards



EMC
Publications

Teachers' Note

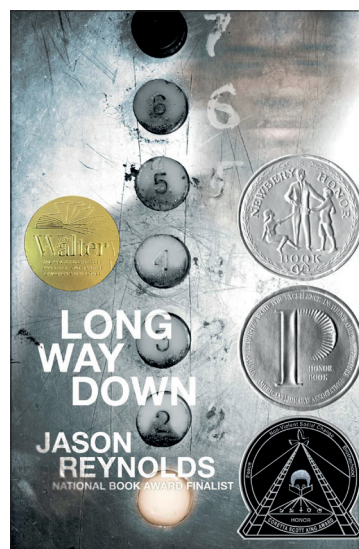
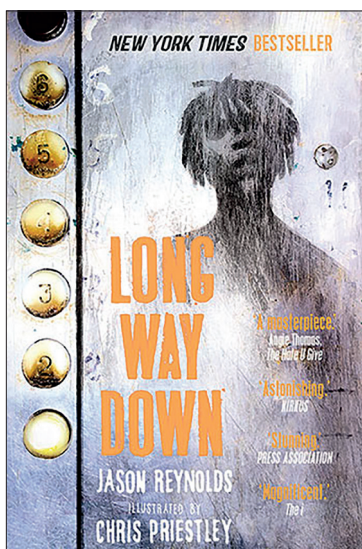
This book contains some material that might not be suitable for some younger students. Teachers should, therefore, make sure to read the book carefully before teaching it or recommending it to students.

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www.englishandmedia.co.uk
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BEFORE READING

The front covers

- In a pair, or small group, examine the different front covers below.
 - ▶ What do you think the book will be about?
 - ▶ What is the likely audience for this book?
 - ▶ Do they remind you of any other books? If so, which ones and why?
 - ▶ Do the covers make you want to read the book? If so, why?



Looking inside the book

- In a pair, or small group, flick through the pages of the book. What are your thoughts about how it is set out as poetry? Have you read any other 'verse novels'? If so, which were they and what did you think of them? If not, what are your thoughts about trying one?
- What are your thoughts about the images in the book? What do they suggest about the tone of the book (how it feels)? What do they suggest might happen in the book?

Should the book be on the Carnegie shortlist?

Shortlists for book prizes often create controversy among readers, and even national newspapers. People get very passionate when thinking and talking about literature! The Carnegie Medal is no exception.

- Share your thoughts about the following opinions about the inclusion of *Long Way Down* on the shortlist.

1. I'm outraged that *Long Way Down* is on the Carnegie shortlist. It's by an American writer and is set in America. The Carnegie is a British prize so should be open to British writers only.
2. This isn't a novel, it's an extended poem – so it has no place on a shortlist for novels!
3. Just be reading one review I can tell that this book should not be on the shortlist. *Kirkus Review* wrote: "A raw, powerful, and emotional depiction of urban violence." How can that possibly be a suitable topic for young people's fiction?

DURING READING

We think you should read *Long Way Down* without pausing too often, then do some more substantial work on it afterwards. It does offer several opportunities for ongoing reflection. The following are useful areas to focus on – you can draw on them to keep a journal while reading, and to discuss further once you have finished.

- Thoughts about the form of the book – a verse novel
- Thoughts about the first person narrative voice – in other words, Will's voice
- Thoughts about the use of images
- Thoughts about the treatment of difficult subject matter
- Thoughts about how the different characters connect to each other
- Thoughts about how the novel is structured – what is interesting or special about the way it moves from beginning to end?

AFTER READING

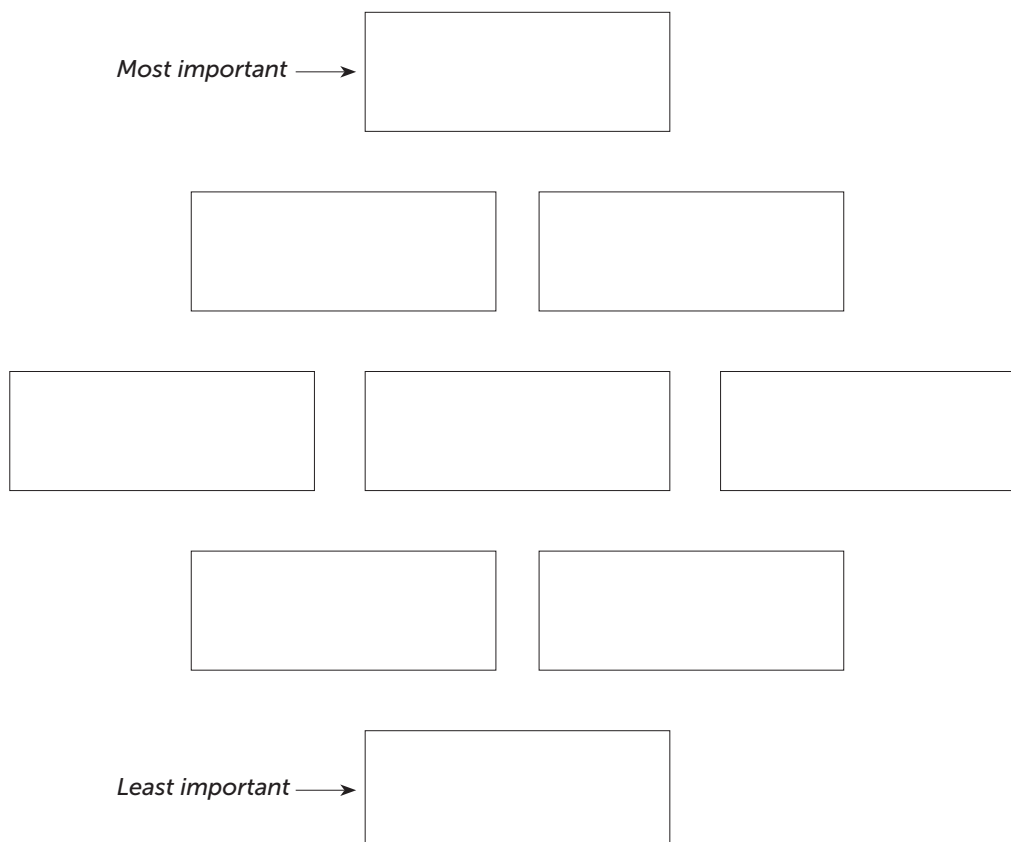
What is the novel about?

- Below are nine suggestions for what *A Long Way Down* is about.
- Working in a pair, or small group, rearrange them into a 'Diamond 9' formation, as shown below.
- Compare your arrangement with another pair or group and discuss any differences.

A Long Way Down is about ...

The pressures that young people feel to behave in a certain way	The dangers posed by guns	The importance of resisting peer pressure
The difficult, violent lives young men lead in urban America	The importance of thinking carefully before acting	How everything is linked to everything else
The importance of family	The power of regret	The stupidity of killing

Diamond 9 pattern



The structure of *Long Way Down*

Long Way Down has an incredibly innovative structure. Most of the action take place in a lift (or elevator, in America), with a new chapter each time the lift arrives on a new floor.

■ Record how the novel develops through this structure, using the grid below.

[NB. In America the ground floor is called the ‘lobby’ and is also regarded as the first floor – that’s why the chapters stop at 2, rather than 1.]

Lift floor	Which character enters? What is their story?	How do Will’s thoughts develop? What does he learn from the new character?
7		
6		
5		
4		
3		
2		
L (Lobby)	(No new character – but consider the big question: will Will follow?)	

Talking points in *Long Way Down*

- Discuss your thoughts about the following talking points that emerge when reading *Long Way Down*.
 1. What was it like to read a novel that is populated mainly by ghosts?
 2. How are all the characters linked together? Given that some of them are in a lift with the person who murdered them, what are your thoughts about the way they behave?
 3. What are your thoughts about the following structural devices that are sprinkled throughout the novel? Why do you think they are included and what do they add?
 - ▶ Anagrams
 - ▶ 'Random Thoughts'
 - ▶ 'The Rules'
 - ▶ The time display (from 9:08:02 a.m. to 9:09:09 a.m.)
 - ▶ Striking a match at each new floor
 4. There are several references to hell in the novel. Which did you spot and why do you think they are there?
 5. 'You coming?' says Shawn to Will at the very end. What does Shawn mean, and how do you expect Will to respond? What are your thoughts about this open ending?

Exploring poetry in *Long Way Down*

One of the many interesting things about *Long Way Down* is that it is written as poetry – it belongs to the genre of 'verse novel'.

- Explore your thoughts about the poetry of the novel by discussing your responses to the questions and tasks below.
 - ▶ What was your overall experience of reading a novel written in verse? How did this differ from the experience of reading a more conventional novel written in prose?
 - ▶ How is the poetry in this novel similar or different to poetry you have read elsewhere?
 - ▶ Flick through your book and find a poem you particularly like because of what it says. Explain why.
 - ▶ Flick through your book and find a poem that you particularly like because of the way it is set out. Explain why.
 - ▶ How does the writer control your experience of the novel by making your eye move in particular ways across the page, and by drawing your attention to particular words or phrases?
 - ▶ In what ways might someone say that the language in the book isn't poetry?
- When you have gone through all of the questions, write down your own thoughts about the poetry of the novel, drawing on elements of your discussion.
- Share what you have written as a group.

Defending the novel

Imagine that your school has decided to ban *Long Way Down* from its school library because a parent has complained about its portrayal of gun violence.

- Write a letter to the headteacher challenging their decision, explaining to them why this is a book that should be made available to your school's students.

Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are from reviews of the book, with one comment by Jason Reynolds himself.

- Working with a partner, discuss which comment comes closest to your own view of the book.
- Working individually, write your own paragraph to express your views about the novel. You can draw on the extracts you have read if you wish.
- Share your ideas as a class.

A. Spanning a mere one minute and seven seconds, Reynolds' new free-verse novel is an intense snapshot of the chain reaction caused by pulling a trigger. Reynolds' concise verses echo like shots against the white space of the page, their impact resounding. He peels back the individual stories that led to this moment in the elevator and exposes a culture inured to violence because poverty, gang life, or injustice has left them with no other option. In this all too real portrait of survival, Reynolds goes toe-to-toe with where, or even if, love and choice are allowed to exist.

Booklist

B. Jason Reynolds is a literary genius who gives voice to a generation. Powerful, beautiful and will stay with you long after Will's journey ends.

Angie Thomas, author of The Hate U Give

C. Frankly, if you give a child a book of verse for Christmas you're asking for trouble, and more so if it's a teenager, but Jason Reynolds' *Long Way Down* is so unlike normal poetry, being a novel about gun violence and loss and revenge in free verse, you may just think again... It's unlike anything I've read, and the illustrations by Chris Priestley are haunting in both ways.

Evening Standard

D. *Long Way Down* really pushes boundaries, questions your thoughts and beliefs and does not shy away from treading on important topics, such as race and gun violence. Getting a glimpse, albeit a very brief one, of Reynolds' way of thinking makes you look at things differently and go, "Ahh, yes. I see now."

Amazon online review

E. I need my young brothers who are living in these environments, and the kids who are not living in these environments to have no excuses not to read the book. The truth of the matter is that I recognize that I write prose, and I love prose, and I want everybody to read prose, but I would never, sort of, deny the fact that like, literacy in America is not the highest, especially amongst young men, and especially amongst young men of colour. It's something that we've all been working very hard on, and my job is not to critique or judge that. My job is to do something to help that, and to know you can finish this in 45 minutes means the world to me, so that we can get more young people reading it and thinking and then having discussions on what this book is actually about.

Jason Reynolds' own words

Cards for Literary Analysis

These cards have been designed for use with any short story or novel. You can select a particular card to work with or rely on your teacher to give you a particular area of focus. You could then work through the bullet points on your card or select a few that seem most interesting or relevant for a particular text.

Setting

- ▶ In which different settings does this story/novel take place? What part does each setting play? Which setting is most significant and why?
- ▶ How important is setting to the story/novel as a whole? Does the setting have a particular impact on the story/novel, or could it be set almost anywhere?
- ▶ What difference would it make if this story/novel was set somewhere else? E.g. another country, a rural rather than urban setting, in space!
- ▶ How effective do you think the writer has been in creating a sense of place? Are there any particular examples of setting you think are particularly well written? If so, why?
- ▶ Is there anything particularly interesting or special about the way setting is used and presented? In what ways is it similar or different to stories/ novels that explore similar themes and ideas, or that are written in the same genre?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about setting. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Characters

- ▶ Who is your favourite character, and why?
- ▶ Who do you think is the most important character, and why?
- ▶ Who are the other significant characters? What different roles do they have?
- ▶ What is special or unusual about the way one or more of the characters is presented?
- ▶ Which character would you most like to be friends with, and why? Which character might significant adults want you to be friends with, and why?
- ▶ Are characters paired or grouped in any particular ways? E.g. friends, rivals, etc. What ideas are raised by these pairs or groupings?
- ▶ Are the characters typical of ones found in this kind of story/novel? Are they distinctive and individual, or stereotypes? Explain your answer.
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about characters. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Form and structure

- ▶ What do you think is interesting about the way this story/novel begins?
- ▶ What were the key moments in this story/novel? How did they shape the story/novel as a whole?
- ▶ If you had to describe the path of this story/novel, what would it be? E.g. journey from childhood to adulthood, from grief to happiness etc.
- ▶ What did you notice about the end of this story/novel? Was it what you were expecting? Did it tie up loose ends, or leave some things unresolved?
- ▶ Does this story/novel belong to a particular genre? If so, how does it fit in with other stories that you know in the same genre?
- ▶ Does the story/novel use just one form or does it include more than one E.g. letters, diary entries, poems, newspaper reports
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about form and structure. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Themes and ideas

- ▶ What, to you, are the five most important themes and ideas in this story/novel? If you had to narrow your list down to one theme or idea, what would it be and why? In what ways is this theme presented? E.g. if the theme is love, what exactly does the story/novel have to say about love?
- ▶ Does this story/novel deal with big issues that affect the whole world, or small ones that affect individual lives? Give reasons for your answer.
- ▶ Does this story/novel contain any themes or ideas that have made you look at the world in new ways? If so, what are they, and how have they changed your views?
- ▶ Does this story/novel contain any themes and ideas that explore how people should act and behave? If so, what are they and do you agree with how they are presented?
- ▶ Are the themes and ideas presented in ways similar or different to other stories you have read, including stories of the same type, or in the same genre?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about themes and ideas. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Language

- ▶ Identify one or two of your favourite passages in the story/novel where language is used particularly well? Explain how it is used.
- ▶ How would you describe the language used in this story/novel overall? E.g. poetic, plain, chatty etc.
- ▶ Would you say the language in this story/novel is original or creative in any particular way? If so, how?
- ▶ Are there any patterns in the language used? If so, what are they, and what is their effect? Are there any other patterns, such as of imagery and symbolism?
- ▶ How is dialogue used in the story/novel? Do characters, for example, speak in particularly distinctive ways?
- ▶ Is the language similar to how it is used in similar kinds of stories/novels? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about language. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Narrative

- ▶ How does the writer try to capture and keep the reader's attention? How successful are they in doing this?
- ▶ Is the narrative told in order from beginning to end (a linear narrative), or does it move backwards and forwards in time? What is the effect of the order in which events are told?
- ▶ Can you think of any other ways the story/novel could be told? For example, by a different character, or in a different order? How would this affect your experience of reading?
- ▶ Would you say that this story/novel is told in a particular original or creative way? If so, how?
- ▶ Is this story/novel told in a way that is typical for its genre?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about narrative. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Point of view and voice

- ▶ Through whose eyes do we see the events of the story/novel? Do readers get just one point of view or several?
- ▶ What do you find interesting about the point or points of view presented?
- ▶ If the story/novel is told from different points of view, how does the writer do this?
- ▶ What would the story/novel be like if told from someone else's point of view? Whose point of view would you choose, and why?
- ▶ How would you describe the tone of voice used to tell the narrative? Does the narrative draw attention to itself by using a particular tone, or is the tone pushed to the background? What is the effect of the choice made by the writer?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about point of view and voice. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Audience and overall personal response

- ▶ Who do you think this story/novel was written for, and why? Are there any other groups of people who you think should read it?
- ▶ What was your experience of reading this story/novel?
- ▶ What would you recommend about this story/novel to other people?
- ▶ Which parts of this story/novel did you most enjoy? Were there any parts that you didn't enjoy?
- ▶ Do you think this story/novel could be improved in some way? If so, how?
- ▶ What other stories (or films, TV, plays etc.) does this story/novel remind you of? In what ways?
- ▶ Who do you think should read this book and why?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about personal response and audience. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



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