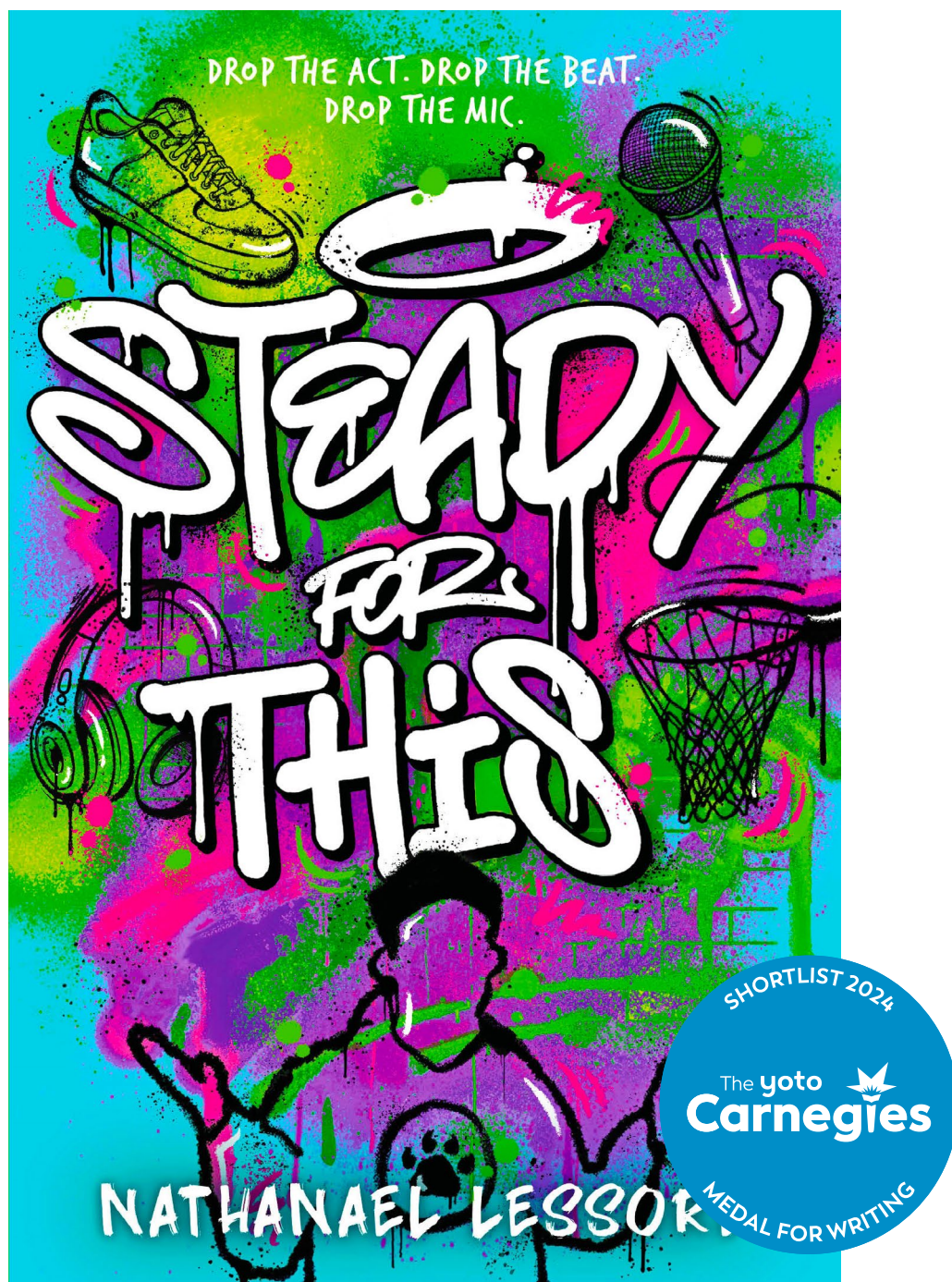
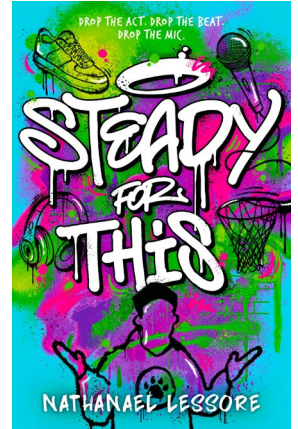


The yoto Carnegies



The Yoto Carnegie Shortlist 2024 Shadowing Resources

Activities for Steady For This by Nathanael Lessore



Content warning

Homophobia, mental health and anxiety, social media peer pressure

General Activities for all books

- Lego Fun: Create a scene from one of the books using Lego or other building materials/toys.
- Shadowing Scrapbook: Document your journey through the 2024 Shadowing period. This can be used to record books and activities discussed in each session, as well as offer a creative space for reviews, reflection and anything else you might like to add.
- Take the title or first line from each of the shortlisted books and create a poem or story by combining them with words and phrases of your own.
- Carnegie Washing Line: Cut out shapes of clothes (e.g. socks, tops, trousers etc) using cardboard and write quotes from the Medal for Writing books and pictures from Medal for Illustration and hang on a washing line with pegs to display. Group members could do this as an activity in the session if time allows or asked to do at home and then to bring to the next session.
- Think of some questions you would like to ask the shortlisted authors and share them on social media using the hashtag **#YotoCarnegies24**
- When Worlds Collide: Select two characters, each from a different shortlisted book. Imagine what they would say to each other, if they met. How would they behave? You could improvise this, or write a script or short story that describes the encounter. E.g, Erik from Crossing the Line meets Growls from *Steady For This*.
- Carnegie Touch and Taste:
 - Touch: Curate a selection of items inspired by the shortlists, place them into a drawstring bag and have shadowers try to identify each item using touch. As time goes on, and shadowers become more familiar with the shortlisted books, you can expand the game to include guessing the title of the book based on the collection of items in the bag.
 - Taste: Mine the shortlisted titles for references to food and use this to spark discussions about food they like and dislike. You could encourage everyone to bring a snack each week, focusing each session around one of the titles. Alternatively, you could throw a shortlist celebration party and have everyone contribute a dish inspired by one of the shortlisted books. and then offer them to try different foods from the shortlisted books. Make sure you have a conversation about allergies and dietary requirements well in advance!
- The Shadowing Tree: ask shadowing group members to write very short reviews or info about characters on leaf shaped cutouts or sticky notes. The cutouts could be hung on an artificial tree, or a real one, depending on your setting, whilst sticky notes could be arranged on a poster and displayed in the library.
- Think about who would play the main characters in a film or TV adaptation of one or more of the shortlisted titles. Create a cast list and explain your choices.

- Rewrite the ending of one of the shortlisted books. What have you changed, and why? Does it alter how you feel about the story?
- Have a go at creating spine poetry by using the titles of the shortlisted books as phrases/words. Share your creations online using the hashtag **#YotoCarnegies24**
- Create your own playlist to accompany a shortlisted book - you might want to highlight a particular theme, tap into the geography or time period of the book or create a playlist that reflects a particular character.
- Choose a character from one of the shortlisted books and reinvent them in the art style of your choosing. You could create your character digitally, draw them by hand, paint them or even make a sculpture. You could try creating the same character in a variety of styles - Manga, Pop Art, Disney - using different materials.
- Create your own book trailer for one of the books, or work together to make a trailer for the entire shortlist. This could be a TikTok style 'sell' of the book or a more traditional thematic video.

Book Activities

1. Growls defies all odds and performs at Raptology despite his earlier struggles with performing live. Have a go at writing or performing your own rap - you could use some of Growls' muddled phrases and sayings as a starting point. Work individually or collaborate as a group. Try adding in extras like music or a beat. Share your performances online using the hashtag #YotoCarnegies24
2. Research the origins of rap and its place within Hip-Hop culture. Create a timeline for its development using images, key dates and quotes from notable artists.
3. Were you familiar with rap music before you read *Steady For This*? If not, has this book changed how you feel about it? Take a listen to some classic and modern rappers like Stormzy, Queen Latifah, Tupac, Kendrick Lamar and Left Eye.
4. *Steady For This* uses humour to deal with a range of serious issues like young carers, mental health problems, race and class, poverty and bullying. Why do you think the author chose to use comedy to tell Growls' story? How can humour help us deal with serious issues in our daily lives? Can you think of any other books that have made you laugh? What do they have in common with *Steady For This*?
5. In chapter 10, Growls and Siobhan play a game of 'Would You Rather' where they present each other with two options to choose from. For example, would you rather be a professional basketball player or a professional rapper? Play in pairs or as a group. You can even theme your options around the shortlisted titles.
6. In the opening chapter, Mr Rix asks the class to tell him "an interesting fact about yourself that you could mention in your autobiography". In pairs, share an interesting fact about yourself and learn an interesting fact about your partner. As a group, take it in turns to introduce each other, using the facts you have just shared.
7. Much of the humour in *Steady For This* comes from Growls getting his sayings mixed up like "The FBI and the Mazda M15" (p 51) and "when Leonardo DiCaprio painted the sixteen chapels" (p.136)..Do you think he does this on purpose or by accident? Why do you think the author has chosen to have Growls do this so frequently?
8. Take a look at the Author's Note, Acknowledgments and Author Bio at the back of the book. What do we learn about the author's background? Of all the books he could have written, Nathanael Lessore chose this one. Why do you think this is the story he chose to tell first?

About these resources

All of these resources are designed to be completed in small discussion groups, ideally your school's Yoto Carnegie Shadowing Group. However, they can easily be done individually. Instead of talking about the tasks, you can write down and keep a record of your ideas.

Before Reading

10-20 minutes

- Discuss what you think *Steady For This* will be about based on these extracts. You should structure your discussion around the questions below.
 - What other novels do you think it will be like?
 - What genre of novel do you think it will be?
 - What sense do you get of where and when it will be set?
 - If you had to identify three likely themes, what would they be?

1.
Why she airing me like a cupboard? We're in geography class the next day, and I can see her see me. I guess the vibe ain't right, geography is dead, fam. Our teacher won't even teach us real geography stuff, like where to find the lost city of Atlanta, or where the wild things are.

2.
Adrian, my big brother from the same mother, taught me that sticks and stones can break my bones but words can only leave emotional scars that others can't see.

3.
Me and Shanks are in the changing rooms at school. We didn't change in Catford, because we ran out of time. Apparently someone made us late and we had to get back. It's calm because we don't really like using the changing rooms when they're too packed anyway. Man get too rowdy, and I have to suck my belly in when I'm changing T-shirts.

4.
Mrs Shanks sometimes took me to their house after school if my mum was working late, shout out receptionist jobs. The first time I went to his yard, I didn't wanna leave. Man had kitchen tiles and matching curtains on some interior-design wave, and his garden was a private one, not even for the whole block.

5.
... today's the day that things change for me and Shanks. We're going to enter Raptology, step one to becoming famous rappers. The Akinyemi Foundation has this rap battle event for thirteen to sixteen year olds every summer, and this is the first year we can legally enter. You basically do three rounds of head-to-head, winners go through and losers go home. Or I guess the losers can say if they're enjoying themselves ...

During Reading

Warning: Don't read the questions before reading each section.

Read up to the page number listed and then answer the questions. You will probably need to spend about 5-10 minutes answering each set of questions.

The page numbers are based on the Hot Key Books edition of the book, first published in the UK in 2023.

Read to the end of page 33

- What are your first impressions of this book? Where do you think it will go from this point on?
- What are your first impressions of the main characters mentioned so far: Growls, Shanks, Tanisha, Mr Rix, Adrian? What is the relationship of each of them to Growls?
- What happened when Growls was livestreaming his freestyle? What was your reaction to this? What do you think this event will lead to in the rest of book?
- What do you think about Growls' narrative voice – the way he tells his story, the way he uses language? Did any bits particularly stand out for you?

Read to the end of page 72

- What has happened to Shanks? How do you feel about this at this point?
- Mr Rix says to Growls on page 53, 'Listen, for kids who are into rap music and talk the way you do, the world out there can be extremely unforgiving.' What do you mean by this? What is Growls' response? What is your response?
- What are your thoughts about Growls' meeting with the counsellor, Karen? Why do you think the writer chose to include this conversation?
- What are your first impressions of Shevon? Why do you think the writer has chosen to introduce her into the story?
- What do you think will happen from this point on in the novel?

Read to the end of page 111

- Growls' friendship with Shevon develops and meets problems in this section. What would you say is the basis of their friendship and of its problems?
- Karen, Growls' counsellor, says to him, 'sometimes the most heroic thing you can do is just to be there for people when they need you the most, that's all a relationship is.' How does this reflect what's happened in the novel so far?
- What do you think will happen from this point on in the novel?

Read to the end of page 142

- Growls learns a lot from Mr Rix and Siobhan. What kinds of things does he learn and how? Do you think it's all one way traffic? Are Mr Rix and Siobhan learning from Growls? If so, how?
- What are your thoughts about the Raptology competition being mentioned again? Should Growls enter? What is the likely outcome?
- What do you think will happen from this point on in the novel?

Read to the end of page 184

- What are your thoughts and feelings about what happened when Growls and Shanks met up again?
- What are your thoughts about the wedding? What are Siobhan's family like? Why do you think she was so upset whenever people asked about her mum?
- What do you think will happen from this point on in the novel?

Read to the end of page 213

- What happened to Siobhan's mum a year before the wedding? How does this information change your perception of the novel?
- What is Siobhan's home life like when Growls goes to her house? How does it differ from his own? How is it similar?
- On page 212, Growls begins one of his raps with 'Am I *steady for this*'. These lines provided the book with its title. Why do you think the writer chose this title? What do you think it is referring to, either in what has happened before or what is going to happen?
- What do you think will happen from this point on in the novel?

Read to the end of the book

- What do we learn about Adrian in this section? What are your thoughts about how his character is portrayed and how it develops?
- What did you think of the Raptology competition? How did the writer present it to his readers?
- What are your thoughts about how the novel ended?

After Reading

Initial Thoughts

Spend 10-15 minutes discussing the questions below:

- What are your overall impressions of this novel?
- Which moments stick most in your memory and why?
- Which characters do you like best and why?
- Which other novels does it remind you of and why?
- How gripping did you find the story?
- What are your thoughts about how the book was written?
- Based on reading *Steady For This*, how likely are you to read other novels by Nathanael Lessore?

What's *Steady For This* about?

Spend one or two minutes writing down a single sentence that begins: '*Steady For This* is about ...'

- If you are working in a group, share your different sentences and discuss.
- Next read the sentences below that give further ideas about what the novel is about.
- If you are working in a group, spend 5-10 minutes ordering the sentences, from the one you agree with most to the one you agree with least.
- Finally, decide on the statement you agree with most. It can be one from the list or your own. Write down a few ideas about how *Steady For This* relates to your chosen statement.

Steady For This is about ...

- Not worrying about what others think.
- Pursuing your dreams.
- The importance of friendship.
- The importance of family.
- Being willing to take advice and learn from it.
- How we are all different.
- Overcoming setbacks and adversity.
- The importance of having fun.
- The dangers of social media.

Exploring the Novel Further

Other Characters

The novel is told in the voice of Shaun Thompson, aka Growls. They is also the main character. There are several other characters who play a significant role in the novel.

- Write two or three sentences in the voices of 3-4 of these characters, expressing their thoughts and feelings about Growls.
 - Shanks
 - Tanisha
 - Adrian
 - Mr Rix
 - Siobhan
 - Karen
 - Mrs Thompson
 - Shanks' Mum
 - Money Penny

Spend 15-20 minutes on this activity.

Exploring the Humour

Steady For This is a comic novel. While it carries some serious messages, it is very funny. For lots of readers it is a 'laugh-out-loud' book.

- One your own, pick your five funniest moments in the book and put them in rank order.
- Compare your list to someone else's. Decide which are your shared top five moments, combining your two lists.
- Write down your thoughts about what makes *Steady For This* funny. You might like to think about:
 - Growls' narrative voice
 - The way Growls makes mistakes that rely on the writer's skilful wordplay. (Or are they mistakes?)
 - Situations Growls finds himself in.

Spend 20-30 minutes on this activity.

A Serious Side

There are some serious messages contained within the humour in *Steady For This*. This activity is designed to help you think about these messages.

- Go through each of these statements in turn and discuss where there is evidence in the book to back each of them up.
 - The novel encourages readers to think about some of the risks that come with putting aspects of your life on social media.
 - The novel shows that advice from adults can be really helpful.
 - The novel stresses how important it is to be your own person.
 - The novel suggests that a healthy world is made up of all kinds of people with all kinds of interests and ways of behaving.
 - The novel takes mental health very seriously.
- Choose the statement that you think is most important to the novel as a whole and explain why.

Spend 20-30 minutes on this activity.

Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are all from reviews of *Steady For This*.

- Read all the reviews and discuss which comes closest to your own view of the book.
- Working individually, write your own paragraph expressing your views.
- If possible, share your reviews with others.

You can submit your reviews to the Carnegie Shadowing Scheme website. This can be accessed at:
<https://yotocarnegies.co.uk/medals/>

Give yourself 30-60 minutes to complete this activity.

A.

As soon as I felt comfortable we were laughing WITH not AT Growls — the lovely main character of this book — I devoured it in a couple of days, laughing out loud more times than I can count. Growls really is the sweetest and most original character I've met in a while, and his authentic voice will be a breath of fresh air for teen (/all) readers. The story deals with plenty of big issues in the background; poverty, racism, housing insecurity, young carers, but it's mainly about a kid who's a bit different, learning how to be his best self and to celebrate his talents.

Lucy, www.goodreads.com

B.

There are funny books, there are comical books, and then there's *Steady For This*. To say it was a joy is an understatement. Nathanael has created such a glow of happiness by brilliantly combining the awkwardness of teen life with a barrage of hilarious and heartfelt moments. Nathanael is a much needed fresh, funny and authentic voice. A true star in the making. *Steady For This* would make the most reluctant of readers fall in love with books. Everyone needs MC Growls in their life.

J. P. Rose, author of *The Haunting of Tyrese Walker*, review on www.amazon.co.uk

C.

This was such a sweet and light-hearted story that put a smile on my face. It is refreshing to see a story about the part of London that is not the one you see on advertisements and magazines, but the real part of London, where Londoners actually live. It was a story that also shines some light on the horrors of local councils always breathing down everyone's necks, especially today in a cost of living crisis.

The story with Growls was wonderful, and he is exactly every other teenager who was born and raised in London, from his speech to his thoughts. This guy was hilarious and also lovely, because how he showed his friends and his family he loved them without holding back, how he worked hard to help his family, and how he supported his friend Shaws through and through. I also loved his reaction to counselling. Also, it was great to see the impact a teacher can have on a child during their school years, and even if briefly shown, the impact is felt greatly.

Ilenia, review on www.amazon.co.uk

D.

This was a really fun book but there was one really big problem for me and that was Growls' narrative voice. He was so funny because he kept making loads of mistakes with his language. Only those mistakes were often incredibly clever wordplay. So either he's a linguistic genius pretending to be otherwise, or this is the voice of the writer intruding a bit too much. Not really for me, I'm afraid.

Anonymous

Writing Activities

On your own, or with a partner, complete one or more of these writing activities to help you develop your thoughts about *Steady For This* further.

You will need 30-60 minutes for each activity.

- Flick through examples of Growls' raps, trying to identify what makes them so funny, but also well crafted. Have a go at writing a rap of your own in the same style as Growls.
- *Steady For This* starts when Growls and Shanks are in Year 7 and ends at the start of Year 8. In the voice of Mr Rix, write the report you think he would come up with for one of them when they are due to leave the school after Year 11. If you like, you can write his report for Siobhan instead.
- Write a blog entry with the title: 'The serious message behind the laughter in *Steady For This*'
- Imagine that your school is running a competition to select a book that every class has to read during tutor time. Students have been invited to deliver speeches advocating a book of their choice. Write a speech for *Steady For This*. The audience is a small group of teachers and students, who will make the final decision.