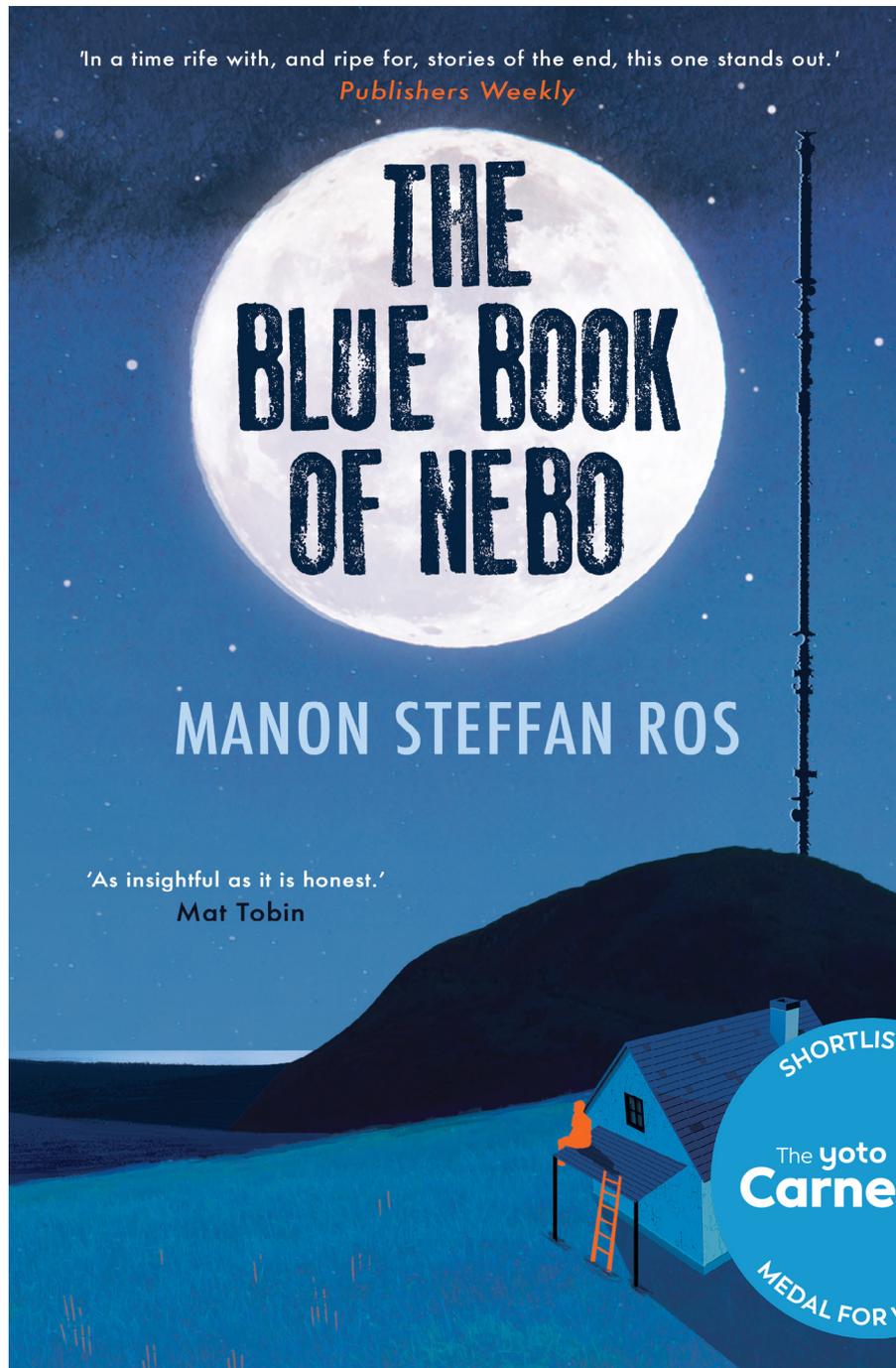


# The yoto Carnegies



## The Yoto Carnegie Shortlist 2023 Shadowing Resources

## Activities for *The Blue Book of Nebo*

**Author:** Manon Steffan Ros

**Publisher:** Firefly Press

**Age:** 13+



### Note to Group Leaders

Shortlisted books may contain material that may not be suitable for some students. We recommend that group leaders read the books carefully before sharing or recommending them to students and/or seek parental guidance. We trust that Shadowers and other young readers will be guided by their group leader, librarian, teacher or parent to help them select suitable, enjoyable and age appropriate material from the lists.

### Warning

Contains content relating to death and mental health.

## General Activities for the Full Shortlist

1. Imagine each of the shortlisted titles as a dessert! Do you think the book you read is a Lemon Sorbet with a light and tangy plot or a Sticky Toffee Pudding with a complex, multi-layered narrative?
2. Take the last line of one of the shortlisted books and use this as the opening line for your own story or poem.
3. Taking each of the shortlisted books in turn, think about the characters and the way they navigate the plot and various subplots. If you were going to wake up inside each book, which character would you choose to be and why?
4. Imagine that two characters are sitting on a bench. Only two people can sit on that bench at any given time, so when a third person arrives, the first person has to make up a reason to leave. Shadows should think carefully about the different characters from their chosen book; what reasons might they have for being near to or sitting on a park bench. They must then become the character and interact with the other person/people on the bench. You could base this activity on a single title or have some real fun by using characters from across the shortlist. What will happen when characters from different worlds collide?
5. 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.
6. Play charades, using non-verbal communication to act out the title of each book and get the rest of your group to guess which book you are presenting.
7. Think of some questions you would like to ask the shortlisted authors and share them on social media using the hashtag **#YotoCarnegies23**
8. Redesign the cover of a shortlisted book. How would your creation differ from the existing cover? What would you include and why? Explore colour, shapes and themes.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Take the first line from each of the shortlisted novels and create a poem or story by combining them with words and phrases of your own.

## Book Activities

1. Sketch the house that Dylan lives in, along with the surrounding area. Use as much detail from the text as you can to recreate the landscape of Ros' post-apocalyptic world.
2. Create a field journal for your garden/playground/local park/ green space. Start a new entry for each date that you visit and make notes or sketches to outline weather conditions, plant life, animals, and anything else you may have noticed. Focus on using all five senses.
3. If *The End* really did come, and you could only carry five books into the future with you, which five titles would you take and why? Share your lists on social media using the hashtag **#YotoCarnegies23**. Tag the authors and illustrators too if possible.
4. Create a collaborative journal by decorating a notebook and filling it with a series of prompts. Each member of the group will take the journal for an agreed period of time, responding to just one prompt. The group must agree not to read over any entries until the final shadowing meeting, when the journal can be discussed as a group. You could work on loose sheets, if preferred, combining them at a later date.
5. Learn some short phrases/key words in Welsh using Duolingo/Youtube/Open University. How does it feel to be learning a new language? What does Welsh sound like to you? How does it feel to shape the words in your mouth? What does the language do to your voice?
6. How far is the language we speak linked to our sense of identity? Why do you think Dylan might not want to speak Welsh?
7. The last line of the book reads "Are you okay?" I asked, and Mam squeezed my hand, her wet eyes sparkling in new lights." Using your imagination, outline what might happen next. You can do this using a storyboard, a bullet pointed list or by improvising a dramatic scene with the other members of your shadowing group.
8. *The Blue Book of Nebo* is short but powerful. Can short books offer the reader the same quality of experience as a full length novel? What impact would it have on the story if the book was 150 pages longer.

### **Wellbeing/mindfulness:**

Create your own Best Things list like Rowena (see page144). You can include moments, memories, feelings, people, feelings, things - there are no rules!

### **About these resources**

All of these tasks are designed to be completed in small discussion groups. However, they can easily be done individually. Instead of talking about the tasks, students can write down and keep a record of their ideas.

## **Before Reading**

**10-20 minutes**

- Discuss what you think The Blue Book of Nebo 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?

### **Extract 1**

She got this book from a house we broke into in Nebo. It was in one of the small drawers of a little desk in the corner of someone's living room. Usually we only steal the really important stuff, like matches or rat poison or books. But she held this notebook in her hands and turned it over a few times before putting it in her bag.

### **Extract 2**

I haven't written for a long time because I don't have a lot to say, but I've got something now.

I've read the book before. It's called GCSE Biology, and there's a picture of a skeleton on the cover. Sometimes you can read things and not understand them, or you think you understand them, but when you get older, they mean something different to what you thought. And that's what happened today.

### **Extract 3**

I think that I should write Dylan's story, because I don't see him often enough. That is, I see him all the time – we're never apart – but that is what makes a person invisible, seeing them every day. People fade in one another's company.

### **Extract 4**

The hare started to trust me, but that happened slowly, slowly. I started trusting him too. A part of me was still afraid of him, and that weird dead face that always stared at me from the back of his head. But I've read enough to know that people aren't the same on the inside as they are on the outside.

## 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 Firefly Press paperback edition of the book, first published in the UK in 2022.*

### **Read to the end of page 19**

- Based on what you've read, what genre would you say the book belongs to? How can you tell?
- The book is set in a remote location in Wales, with views of Caenarfon and the island of Anglesey. What do you know about this area, if anything? Why do you think the writer has chosen to set her novel in a place like this? (To help with this response, you can search for images and a map location of these places online.)
- What is 'the blue book of Nebo'? What are your thoughts about a novel being structured in this way? For example, what insights will you have as a reader that one or other of the narrators may not have?

### **Read to the end of page 49**

- The novel is set in a 'post-apocalyptic' world. In other words, something terrible has happened that has destroyed much of the planet, leaving very few people alive. The novel is not very explicit about what has happened to start with. What are your thoughts about this? From your reading so far, what have you managed to work out about what happened and why?
- On page 41, Rowenna writes 'There are some things that need to be noted in The Blue Book of Nebo. Other things do not.' What are your thoughts as a reader about NOT being told things? What kinds of things do you think Rowenna is hiding from you and from Dylan?
- Why do you think Rowenna stops at the library to grab lots of books? What do you think the writer wants to suggest by having her do this? What would you try and take with you in a similar situation?

### **Read to the end of page 85**

What are your thoughts about:

- the description of Wylfa, the nuclear power station, blowing up.
- how Susan and David Thorpe's decision to kill themselves is presented.
- Pwyll the hare – what it looks like, how Dylan cares for it, what happens to it.
- Dylan and Rowenna becoming sick and then recovering.

**Read to the end of page 114**

- What are your thoughts about these two comments.

'Sometimes ... I don't want to change a single thing, I don't want this to end. I fit here, now.'  
(Dylan)

'Things are so simple now, and so easy to love!' (Rowenna)

- What is the context for them making these comments?
- Do you think life after an apocalypse could really be better in some ways than it is now? What, if anything, would you change about the modern world? What would you miss most?
- How is Dylan's father, Sam, presented? What are your thoughts about this storyline?
- Dylan writes: 'Today is the day my sister was buried, and today is the day the birds come home.' Why do you think the writer has chosen to put these two events together? What is your response to Mona's death?

**Read to the end of the novel**

- What are your thoughts about the relationship between Rowenna and Gwion and how it is described?
- How does Rowenna and Dylan's relationship change after Mona's death? In what ways did your feelings about them develop during these chapters?
- What do you think about the end of the novel? Is it what you were expecting? Is it a satisfying ending?

## After Reading

### **Initial Thoughts?**

Spend 10-15 minutes discussing some or all of 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 *The Blue Book of Nebo*, how likely are you to read other novels by Manon Steffan Ros?

### **What's *The Blue Book of Nebo* about?**

- Spend one or two minutes writing down a single sentence that begins: 'The Blue Book of Nebo 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 sorting 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 *The Blue Book of Nebo* relates to your chosen statement.

#### ***The Blue Book of Nebo* is about...**

- How close the world is to an apocalypse.
- How modern life needs a reboot.
- The human instinct for survival.
- How people can lead meaningful lives in the most difficult of circumstances.
- The beauty of a simple life.
- The triumph of good over evil.
- The complexity of human relationship.
- The rebirth of Welsh culture.
- The power of books and the written word.

## Exploring the book further

Use one or more of these tasks to explore *The Blue Book of Nebo* further.

### Other characters

The novel is told through the voices of Dylan and Rowenna. They are also the main characters. While the other characters don't take up much space, they play a significant role in the lives of the two narrators.

- Write two or three sentences in the voices of 3-4 of these characters, expressing their thoughts and feelings about Dylan and/ or Rowenna.
  - Gaynor
  - Susan Thorpe
  - David Thorpe
  - Sam
  - Gwion
  - Mona
  - Pwyll

**Spend 10-15 minutes on this activity.**

### Welsh culture

Not only is the book set in Wales, it also engages a lot with Welsh culture, particularly with books and the language. [If you didn't already know, it was written and first published in Welsh.]

- Read the three statements below and discuss the extent you agree with what they each have to say.
  1. *On one level, this is a book about the importance of preserving Welsh culture. Dylan gets a great deal of comfort, knowledge and inspiration from reading classics of Welsh literature and both he and Rowenna come to value the Welsh language after 'The End'.*
  2. *This is a book about Wales as a nation starting afresh. After the old culture has been swept aside, the Welsh culture is free to flourish and provide guidance.*
  3. *The references to Welsh literature and the language are interesting, but they don't really add much to the book as a whole.*

**Spend 10-15 minutes on this activity.**

### How well does the novel portray a post-apocalyptic world?

*The Blue Book of Nebo* belongs to the genre of post-apocalyptic dystopia. In other words, it shows a world ravaged by war or environmental catastrophe. Writers tend to do this so they can comment on society today by exploring issues at a safe distance. What do you think the novel has to say about the following things, and how does it use the post-apocalyptic genre to do this?

- technology
- the environment
- family and friendship
- education

**Spend 10-15 minutes on this activity.**

## Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are all from reviews of the book.

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

Submit your reviews to the Carnegie Shadowing Scheme website. This can be accessed at:  
[https://yotocarnegies.co.uk/?post\\_type=books&p=12668](https://yotocarnegies.co.uk/?post_type=books&p=12668)

**Give yourself 30-60 minutes to complete this activity.**

A. Completely loved this book! I finished the last chapter and immediately turned back to the first! I felt like the two main characters were so dimensional & layered that I wanted to go back to the beginning and read about them again now I knew more.

I know the idea of surviving against the odds of some sort of nuclear disaster isn't new but this, for me, was different. I have never known a story to be so moving but with a complete lack of twee or sugar sweet sentiments. So cleverly woven with thought provoking ideas of what's important & what truly is our heritage.

**Les, [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)**

B. I can't decide if it was unremittingly bleak or strangely hopeful.

**Tom, [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)**

C. There's nothing terribly profound in the novel's simplistic divide between the superficiality of modern life, particularly with people distracted, and ultimately fractured, by social media, and the authenticity of manual work and of the world experienced directly, rather than mediated by smartphones, tablets, and all the rest (not to mention the metaverse). Thankfully *The Blue Book of Nebo* is so beautifully written that one gets carried away by Rowenna's and Dylan's voices

**Bob, [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)**

D. A wonderful and deeply moving take on post-apocalyptic stories, this book tells primarily of the life of a mother and son as they rebuild their existence after the End. The life Rowenna knew but was not fully content with, has completely gone, and she now has the chance to carve a different one; her 14-year-old son is too young to remember the 'before' but has to grow up strong and resourceful quickly now. Through the empathetically written dual narrative, the main characters and the themes of mother-son relationship, loss, belonging, fear, survival, come to life. It's a raw and emotional story, but also utterly full of love and hope.

**Barbara, [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)**

## Writing Activities

On your own, or with a partner, complete one or more of these writing activities to help you develop your thoughts about *The Blue Book of Nebo* further.

**You will need 30-60 minutes for each activity.**

- Write two additional short sections to come after the end of the novel, one in the voice of Dylan, the other in the voice of Rowenna.
- What would you try and save if 'The End' came? Make two lists:
  - 5- 10 books you would save
  - The 10 items you would save (for practical or sentimental reasons).
- Write a blog entry with the title: 'What *The Blue Book of Nebo* can teach us about hope.'
- The passage describing the onset of the nuclear cloud that emanates from the Wylfa power station (pages 68-72 in the Firefly Press edition, 2022) is particularly memorable. Identify particularly interesting words and phrases from these pages (or from another passage you particularly liked) and use them as the foundation for a poem.