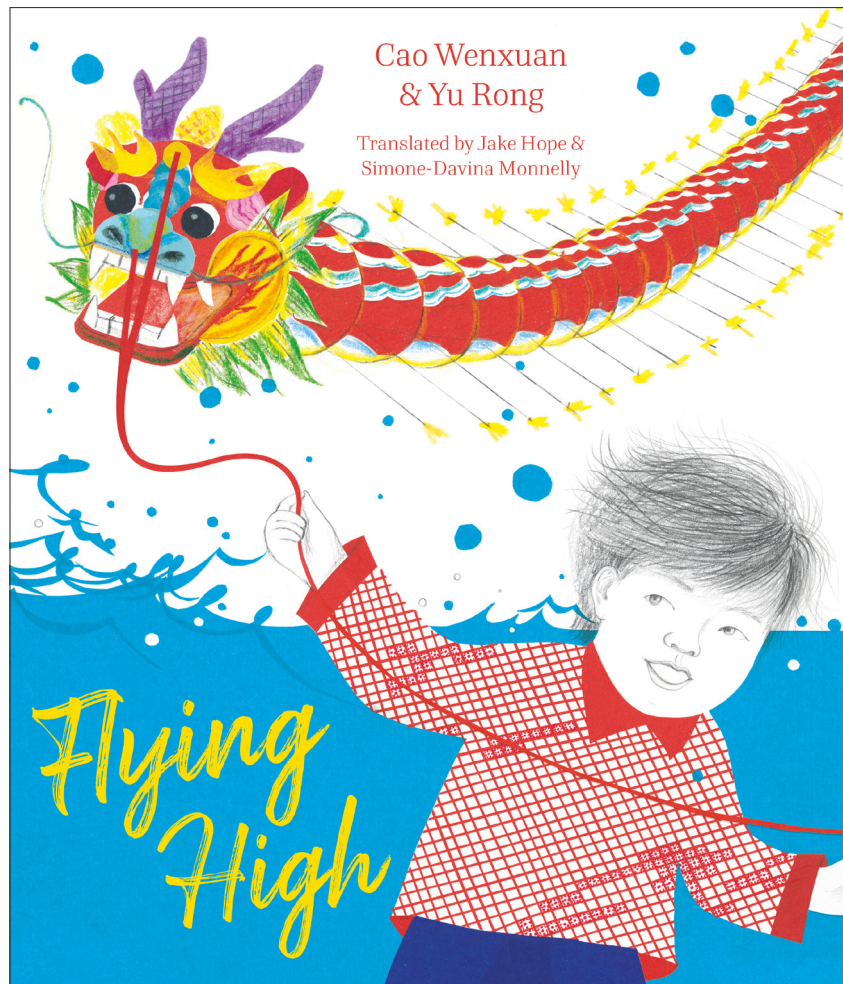


The Carnegies



The Carnegie Shortlist 2025 Shadowing Resources



Teaching Ideas for the Carnegie Medal for Illustration Shortlist 2025

Title: Flying High

Illustrator: Yu Rong

Author: Cao Wenxuan

Translators: Jake Hope and Simone-Davina Monnelly

Publisher: uclanpublishing

These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools and settings with ideas to develop comprehension and extended provision around Carnegie-shortlisted picturebooks and illustrated texts for children of all ages. They build on our work supporting teachers to use high quality texts to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. We hope you find them useful.

These notes have been written with children aged 5–11 in mind. However, this is a sophisticated picture book which has scope for it to be interpreted in different ways with pupils of different ages.

Introduction:

- More than just a child's toy, in China kites are cultural symbols, of people's aspirations for freedom, of health and longevity. *Flying High* draws on these associations to tell a powerful story about connecting with the environment and communities that surround us to find our own place in the world despite our own individual worries or concerns. Ju Rong's illustrations reinforce and extend Cao Wenxuan's celebration of diversity, of "so much difference and variety".

Reading the book and close reading of illustration:

- Begin by opening out the book to look together at the illustration covering the front and back cover (do not yet share the blurb, just the title), inviting the children to share their first impressions. *What is happening here? What might it suggest about the story you are about to read?* Children might observe the child, the traditional kite, the stylised blue bird and the gulls against a crashing wave. *How do you think the illustration, title and story are connected? Consider the character we see. What do you think you know about them from this illustration? Who do you think this is, what are they doing and what do you think they might be feeling or thinking, what clues do you get from their facial expression and body language?* Now look at the endpapers, observing the stylised blue bird again, the kite building instructions and the dedication and title pages. *What can you see here? What ideas do these give you about the story and the characters?*
- Now share the opening two spreads of the child blowing bubbles with Wawa, then

introducing the importance of kite-flying in the story's setting (Weifang in Shandong province, known as the kite capital of the world). *What do you find out about the child and the story to come, and how do Ju Rong's illustrations help to draw you in? How is the child shown in each spread, and what do these views offer?* Children might observe the different viewpoints, the first as if hovering over the child, the second standing behind them to share the view of the city and its kite-filled sky. *What do you notice about the illustrations?* Children might comment on the detailed pencil drawings for human features; the blocks of colour for clothes and the rooftops; Wawa's stylised form. *Do you think he is a real or imaginary bird? Why?*

- Now share the next four spreads up to “ruined our fun.” *What happens in these pages, and how do Ju Rong's illustrations contribute to how the events make you feel?* Children might comment on the size and scale of the child compared to the other children. Or the unfriendliness of their facial expressions; the violence against him and his kite. Or the almost cinematic use of viewpoints (looking wistfully across the gutter at the other children; the action of the kites in the sky and the children on the ground; the focus on the whale kite being stamped on).
- Share the next three spreads (up to “strong winds blew”) by the river, and discuss: *How do the illustrations on these three pages relate to or convey the child's mood? What is the impact of the big sea-blue blocks?* Then read on as Wawa leads the child through the reeds and forest to the beach and the gulls. Continue to consider how the different styles of illustration foreground aspects of the text: for example, children might comment on the changes of viewpoint: a bird's eye (Wawa's) view down at the boy in the delicate reeds, the kite string in his beak; the delicate trees viewed from the ground up; the variety of shells on the “sandy shore”; Wawa amongst the “flock of seagulls”. *How does each image show the child “my eyes [...] opened wide to see and feel more of world around us”? How does the artist show “so much difference and variety”?*
- Now read to the end of the book. *What more do we learn about the child's discovery, that “People could be different just like the reeds, trees and shells we saw on our walk”? How do we see this insight affect what they do next, celebrating that “I am who I am”? How do the illustrations across the book — the kite-making with grandparents; the wordless spread of the kite festival; Wawa flying alongside the new kite; the child also flying above the people “happy being me” — convey their mood? What are the similarities and differences in the illustrations from the beginning to the end? What do the differences make us think about the way they feel at the end compared to the beginning?*
- Allow plenty of time and space to revisit the book to develop deeper understanding of the meanings being created by the illustrator in collaboration with the author and encourage the children to share their thoughts. *What did they like and/or dislike? What did it make them think? How did it make them feel? How do Ju Rong's illustrations deepen their engagement with and understanding of the story? What have **you** gained or learned after reading this story?*

Engaging in illustration:

- Yu Rong has a distinctive style — she uses mixed media collage, naturalistic pencil-drawn faces and a strong sense of shape and pattern — that children may recognise from her work with Matt Goodfellow on *Shu Lin's Grandpa*, and with Yin Jianling on *The Visible Sounds*, shortlisted for the 2022 and 2023 Carnegie Medals respectively. CLPE also wrote teaching notes for both of these titles which could provide the basis for an interesting author study.
- Look back particularly at the spreads that feature many characters. *How has Yu Rong drawn the child, the other children in the town, and the grandparents in a way that highlights their significance in the story?* Look carefully at how she mixes pencil and colouring pencil to create the faces, hair and body positions of each character, compared to the mix of blocks of colour and detailed pencil drawing for the child in particular. Consider also how her portrayal of Wawa is stylised rather than realistic.
- Engage in a life drawing activity where children capture the likeness of a classmate, using the same pencil, coloured pencil and collage techniques as Yu Rong. Look at how she simplifies her shapes, lines and marks to represent her characters without being photo realistic. This will be a supportive model for children to create an achievable outcome. Model this for the children by exploring and experimenting how to draw another adult in the setting, talking through what you are doing and the artistic decisions you are making as you work. Having access to a visualiser would allow children to observe your technique as you work. Focus on the different lines she uses to create texture in hair and the different shapes she uses to represent eyes, noses and mouths and how the significant characters are portrayed using bold, bright colours.
- Encourage the children to spend time closely observing their partner before drawing, paying careful attention to their facial features, hair colour and texture. Give time and space for them to use pencils, coloured pencils and collage to best capture their subject on the page.

This sequence of activities was designed in partnership with CLPE, a UK-based children's literacy charity working with primary schools to raise the achievement of children's reading and writing by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively, putting quality children's books at the heart of all learning. Find out more about their work, and access further resources and training at www.clpe.org.uk.

Carnegies Shadowing Resources 2025

These resources have been created by the following YLG librarian representatives: Alison Brumwell, Maura Farrelly, Kelly Greenwood, Mary-Rose Grieve, Margaret Griffin, Cassie Hands, Tanja Jennings, Jenny Jones, Ellen Krajewski, Ruth Keys, Alison King and Lizzie Ryder.

General Ideas for all books

1. Take some time to look at the judge's criteria for the Carnegie Medal for Writing and for Illustration. Pick out one or two points and discuss them with one of this year's shortlisted books in mind. Remember, not every criteria will be relevant for every book!
2. Document your journey through the 2025 Shadowing period either on paper or in a shared digital space. You can record the books discussed and activities undertaken in each session, as well as offer a creative platform for reviews, reflection, artwork and anything else you might like to add.
3. 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.
4. 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 BookTok style pitch to sell the book to a viewer, or a more traditional thematic video.
5. Redesign the front cover or endpapers of one of the shortlisted titles. Compare yours to the original. What makes it different? Why did you make these changes?
6. Choose one of the books and reflect on the themes it presents. Could any of these themes be considered an issue of social justice? Which resonates with you most strongly? Create a leaflet or flyer highlighting one of the issues and the ways people can help, as individuals and collectively.
7. Celebrate the shortlisted books with themed food. You could bring in snacks that are inspired by the locations or cultures featured in the books, or choose foods that link to themes, illustrations or a particular character or event.
8. Recommend one of the shortlisted books using just three words. You could write these on sticky notes to put inside the book's jacket for others to find, or create a display for other readers to add to on a noticeboard, clothing line or bunting.
9. Use a jar or shoebox to create a 'book in a box' or diorama. Your box or jar should include key items which reflect the themes, plot, characters and mood of the book.
10. Host your own judging meeting where you decide which book your Shadowing group thinks is the best. Think about why you are voting for the book, link back to the judging criteria where you can and make sure the process is democratic.

Flying High illustrated by Yu Rong

1. At the end of *Flying High* the main character is happy being themselves. What makes you happy to be you? Think of some things that you really like about yourself. If you find this difficult then ask your friends and family to help you. Keep this list handy for when you need a reminder.
2. The illustrations in *Flying High* feature a lot of movement, for example when the main character throws their kite and a stone in the river, when they fly their kites and when they skip back to the festival. Play a game of charades where you think of different activities to mime for your fellow shadowers to guess e.g. fishing, flying a kite, riding a bicycle. Make these mimes as easy or difficult as you like!
3. Children blow bubbles several times in *Flying High*. Buy or make some bubble mixture and wands and have fun blowing bubbles together. Who can blow the biggest? Can anyone do bubble tricks?
4. The world's largest kite festival is in Weifeng in the Shandong Province of China. Find out more about the festival or watch this short video about it. Can you see any kites similar to the ones in *Flying High*? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtgDje-G63w&t=1s> (2 mins 15 seconds) or this one <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iwQeaHcjJc> (9 mins 21)
5. Find out about traditional Chinese shapes for kites, how to fly kites or the cultural significance of kites and kite flying in different countries in the world and present it to others in your Shadowing group.
6. In the kite festival at the end there are many different shapes of kites. What shape would you like your kite to be if you were at a kite festival? Why? Draw, design or cut out a photo of your ideal kite then put it together with those of the other Shadowers, stick them on a large sheet of paper, draw red lines down and create a kite festival scene. Share your creations on social media using the hashtag #Carnegies2025
7. Make a kite and fly it. This is a link to a kite made from an A4 sheet of paper and bamboo skewers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDm-edlhqRw> or this one is for a larger kit made from a bin bag <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2vF9D28YFM>.
8. Towards the end of the book Wawa flies into the sky, there is one double spread where the perspective is looking down at the ground at the main character and the next spread shows the opposite perspective, looking up at the sky and the trees. Take photos or draw scenes looking down from above and then looking up in the same location and put them side by side. Can you find places where this contrast is particularly interesting? You could display them side by side.