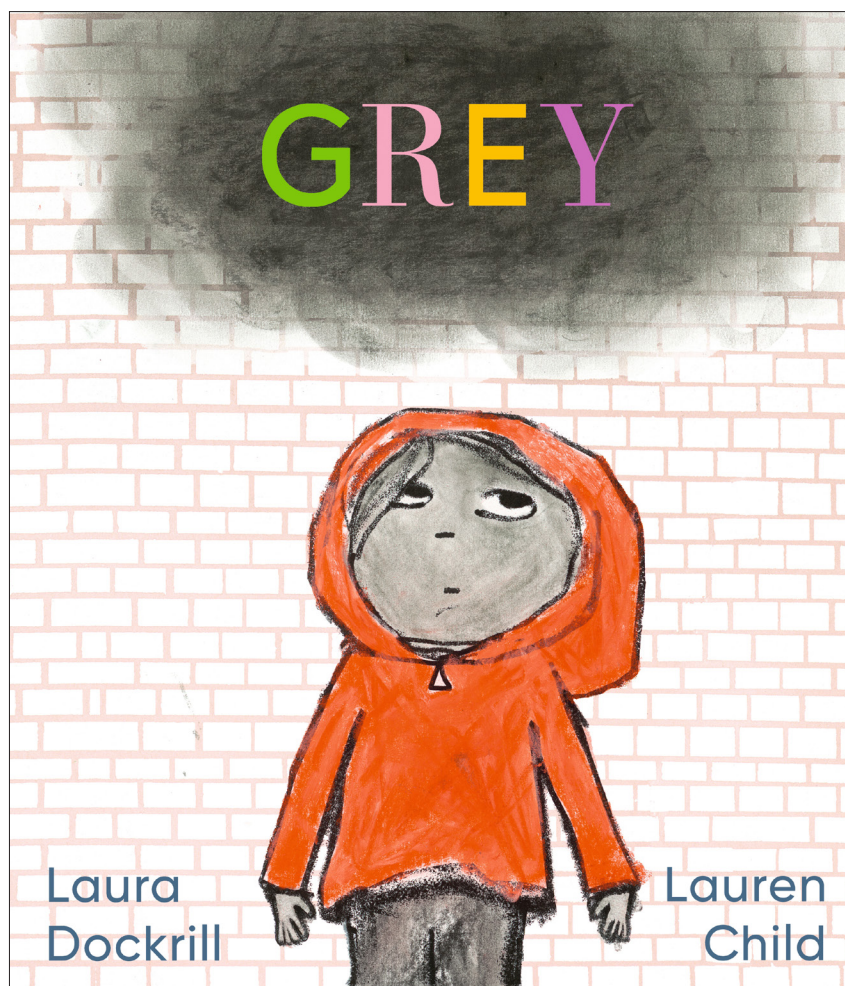


The Carnegies



The Carnegie Shortlist 2025 Shadowing Resources



Teaching Ideas for the Carnegie Medal for Illustration Shortlist 2025

Title: Grey

Illustrator: Lauren Child

Author: Laura Dockrill

Publisher: Walker Books

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 3–7 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:

- In *Grey* Laura Dockrill and Lauren Child have collaborated to explore how we understand and manage feelings. Laura's own experience of post-partum psychosis inspired her to write for her son a message of acceptance, hope and unconditional love, which is powerfully complemented and reinforced by Lauren's illustrations. The text explores issues that some children may find triggering, so allow extended time to read and discuss, with an enabling adult who can sensitively address questions that may arise.

Reading the book and close reading of illustration:

- Begin by scrutinising the front cover. *What does the cover make you think? How does it make you feel? What does the word "GREY" mean to you?* Children might observe that the word is in a range of colours, in large type, in a mixture of fonts, against a dark cloud: *what might this suggest?*
- *What do you notice about the character on the cover? What do their gaze, facial expression or body language suggest about how they might be feeling?* Children might comment that every aspect of the character is a shade of grey, except for the red coat: *why might this be, what might it suggest about them and their potential story? What might a book with this cover and title be about?*
- Share the front endpapers — noticing the mostly grey playground equipment (after reading, compare this with the back endpapers) — title page and opening spread, "Today I am grey." *What might it mean to be "grey", how might this relate to this image?* The children might discuss opposition: of the sense of the text and the bright

and colourful illustration; of a balloon held by an unhappy child; the gutter separating the character from the laden table; the directionality of their gaze away from the page turn.

- Share the next two spreads up to “night sky black”. They might notice that they aren’t just **feeling** grey, they **are** grey. *How does this help us understand the depth of their feelings? How does it make you feel to see the balloon float away? How do you think this happened and why?*
- For the phrases used to describe the emotions that the character is **not** feeling today — “sunshine yellow... balloon orange bright... treetop green... new idea white... night sky black” — ask the children to reflect on what mood or emotion each of these descriptions might correspond to. Take the time to draw on children’s experiences and share personal narratives, modelling the use of expressive and emotive vocabulary beyond the universal “happy” and “sad”. Ensure you value all ideas and viewpoints, especially as each colour might signify different things to different people. For some, red might signify anger or frustration, for others, warmth, happiness or prosperity, as it does in Chinese culture.
- Read on up to ‘And grey is when I don’t feel like me’, allowing time and space to read the illustrations, re-read the text and connect the two to make meaning. Children might contrast the bright colours at the start with the shades of grey of the character and what this might makes us feel; the screwed-up paper background, the half-finished drawing beneath the forceful scribble; the analogies of stormclouds, puddles and cold tea. *What sense do all these things give you about the character and their situation?*
- Read on to the end of the book, exploring the mother’s understanding message of acceptance and unconditional love and allowing time and space for the children to discuss what has happened. Invite them to share what they noticed about how emotions were portrayed or characterised in this story through the illustrations, showing the character’s emotional journey. *What impact did the use of colour have on our emotional response as readers, e.g., the grey figure regaining colour by the end of the book; the bright backdrop or playthings; the coloured, white or patterned backgrounds?*
- 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 them 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 Lauren’s illustrations deepen their engagement with and understanding of the story?*

Engaging in illustration:

- Lauren Child’s illustrations are distinctive and unmistakable. The children may connect the character in *Grey* to her well-known characters Charlie and Lola, Clarice Bean or Ruby Redfort. You could collect examples from her other books to compare the style and consider similarities and differences.
- Support the children to create new illustrated metaphors similar to those on pages 8–11: scribble, storm, puddle, tea. Consider what colours might represent other feelings, then take one of the emotions discussed and work with the children to come up with

ideas for a metaphor for this emotion, thinking out loud to model this process for the children. For example, you might choose “I am blue” to represent feeling sad, with a metaphor of “I am a downpour from the sky” to convey the depth of the feeling. Think about how to emphasise this with the choice of illustration. *Will there be a background of a dark sky, heavy clouds? How dark and heavy will these be? How will rain be shown?*

- Allow time and space for the children to create for themselves, exploring how to use the structure of this spread to create a spread for themselves sharing how they might wbe feeling on a certain day, linked to a colour and a metaphor to emphasise this. They may choose to work on this independently or in collaboration with someone else, as Laura and Lauren did in *Grey*.
- To create their spread the children could explore and experiment with a range of media, as Lauren does in her work, e.g., paints, crayons, coloured pencils, felt tips, charcoal, pastels, oil pastels; and different techniques such as drawing, painting, collage, printing, photography. Provide A3 cartridge paper for their finished spread and collate the spreads in a class published book. Read and enjoy these together, discussing each spread in turn. The book might also be displayed prominently for a wider audience to enjoy, in the school library or in a communal space, around a copy of the original spreads.

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.

Grey – Laura Dockrill and Lauren Child (illustrator)

1. Look at the front cover. What does the word 'grey' mean to you? The front cover shows a large grey cloud over the character: can you think of any similes or metaphors that would work with the word grey, e.g. I am grey like a rainstorm?
2. Do you know what it means to feel 'green with envy'? Have you ever 'seen red' or heard someone say that they are 'feeling blue'? Why do you think we use colours so often to talk about our feelings? What do you think it means to feel grey?
3. Challenge yourself to think creatively about colour. Most people will colour grass green, the sun yellow and the sky blue but sometimes it is fun to throw the rule book out the window and just have some fun. Using a colouring sheet of your choice, use a colour spinner to determine what colour you use next.
4. In the book colours are given different names, for example 'treetop green', 'lullaby blue' and 'new idea white'. Come up with your own list of names using a list of primary and secondary colours as a starting point. If you have more time, you could extend this activity and use it to play a variation of the paint chip poetry game.
5. Go on a colour hunt: using six different pieces of coloured paper (e.g., red, yellow, orange, blue, pink and green), search and choose items that match each of the colours and place them on the corresponding sheet of paper. If you enjoy a challenge, you could set a timer and count the totals for each colour or assign one colour per Shadower.
6. What does it feel like to be you? What colours would you be? Lauren Child often uses different media and techniques in her illustrations: try using similar techniques to create a collage exploring the images and colours that capture what it is to be you. Experiment with old magazines, book pages and different textured papers as well as different pens, crayons or paints. Share your creations on social media using the hashtag #Carnegies2025
7. The endpapers of the book show an empty climbing frame: can you draw your own climbing frame or even a whole playground and populate it with people? Label your characters with the emotions they might be feeling as they play, for example someone at the top of the slide might be feeling excited or perhaps scared. Maybe someone wants to join in the fun but is feeling too shy.
8. Get your Shadowing group to photograph themselves acting out different emotions or feelings. Assemble these images into a collage or photo gallery and challenge others to see if they can match the expressions to the feelings. As part of the same activity, it would be interesting to explore if your Shadowing group all pull the same expressions for happy, sad, curious, shy etc or if they differ with each individual.
9. Get the paints out! Grey is an interesting and versatile colour: though it is achromatic in itself (because it is made by mixing black and white) you can add different colours to it to give different tones. For example, by adding blue you will get a cooler grey. What happens if you add red or yellow? What happens if you add small amounts of grey to other colours? Experiment with your paints to achieve different tones. Does your understanding of the colour help you to understand the book?
10. We all experience a wide range of emotions: how we feel in the morning might be different to how we feel in the afternoon or evening, and how we feel today will be different to how we felt yesterday or last week. Take a moment to think about the emotions and feelings you have experienced today or this week and have a go at recording them in your own DIY emotions flip book. Using different coloured paper, draw a different emotion or feeling (much like emojis) on each circle and then fold in half before gluing each half together to make your book.