

The Carnegies



The Carnegie Shortlist 2025 Shadowing Resources



Teaching Ideas for the Carnegie Medal for Illustration Shortlist 2025

Title: Homebody

Author Illustrator: Theo Parish

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Content Warning: some homophobia, gender dysphoria, transphobia and dead-naming.

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 the 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.

This book is particularly suitable for readers from age 14.

Introduction:

- In *Homebody* Theo Parish shares their “journey to explore who I am”, a heart-warming, powerful and positive account of discovering how to live life on their own terms — “finding your true authentic self whoever you are”. The focus in these notes is on visual narrative and the beautiful illustrations that complement the honest storytelling and lyrical text. The book 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. A wealth of resources is available to support young people and teachers, for example: Childline, GenderedIntelligence, Mermaids, Switchboard and The Mix.

Reading the book and close reading of illustration:

- Begin by looking together at the front cover illustration and inviting the students to share their first impressions. *What does it make you feel and think about? What connections are you making?* Invite them to consider who the character with the flag in the house might be. *What do you think you know about them, from their facial expression and body language, from the fact they are inside a house, and holding a flag?* Readers might recognise the colours of the transgender pride flag, which could lead them to speculate about the character; model how to use respect and sensitivity and an awareness of appropriate vocabulary.
- Support them to unpick the title *Homebody* alongside the subtitle *Discovering what it means to be me*. *What do you think this means in this context and how does it relate to their understanding of the word ‘homebody’?* Open the book to reveal the title page and subtext ‘An ode to an abode’, discussing how this adds meaning to the front cover.

- Now read the opening spreads up to page 21, allowing time and space to arrive at a shared understanding of what they have read. *What do we find out in these pages about Theo, their “journey to understand and be able to express how I feel about my gender”?* Invite them to consider the extended metaphor of the map and the journey and “coming home to myself”. Reflect on the metaphor of Theo navigating the gender map, the idea of being born in the “correct destination — the isle of man of city of woman” — or, like Theo “making my own path”. *How do the illustrations engage you or clarify the concept they are sharing, or give you insights into their experience?*
- After this introduction to Theo and their journey the book comprises six sections covering:
 - their childhood to high school (One, pp. 22–51);
 - post-high school through haircuts and comics (Two, pp. 52–89);
 - discovering themselves through language (Three, pp. 90–123);
 - coming out (Four, pp. 124–153);
 - changing names (Five, pp. 154–191);
 - “finding a place to call home” (Six, pp. 192–213).
- Read and respond to the rest of the book. Continue to reflect together on the different styles of illustration which Theo uses to tell their story. This includes (but is not limited to): narrative strips that advance the action (e.g. a scene at the school lockers, page 38); steps out of the action (e.g. haircuts over the years, page 71); imaginative flights of fancy (“releasing a deep breath you didn’t know you were holding”, pages 118–123); and lyrical flowing over several pages (e.g., finding a name and “knighting myself”, pages 167–173). Support students to explore how the text and illustration work together to help us form an impression of Theo and their journey, turning the pages back and forth and giving the children opportunity to note the differences and perhaps express preferences for the different techniques used.
- After reading, encourage the students to share their thoughts. *What did they like and/or dislike? What did it make them think about? Do they have any questions about the book? How did it make them feel? How do the illustrations deepen their engagement with and understanding of the story?*

Engaging in illustration:

- As both author **and** illustrator, consider together how Theo uses the graphic novel format to increase our engagement with and support our understanding of the trans narrative that is being told. *What are your impressions of Theo and the journey they have made? How do the illustrations and the format inform those impressions?* For example, children might discuss the impact of the shift in viewpoint from one panel to another (a wide shot to a close up, or a third-person perspective to Theo’s point of view). *How do the text and the illustrations work together to draw out the discomfort of gender dysphoria as well as comfort of gender euphoria?*
- Graphic novels often use a limited palette: here, blue-grey and shades of purple from lavender to deep mauve, of red from pink to crimson. *Why do you think Theo might have chosen this palette, do these colours have any associations for you or for the story?* On the cover they are shown waving the transgender flag, and within the story we see the rainbow pride flag, the non-binary yellow, white purple and blag flags

and others (pages 130 and 132). Support the students to discover and research the fascinating range of flags and symbols associated with transgender and non-binary people, organisations and communities to represent pride, diversity, rights and/or remembrance. This could lead to a class display of flags and symbols, colour symbolism and the origin and history of such symbols, e.g., the way the pink triangle has become a symbol for the LGBT community, initially intended as a badge of shame in Nazi concentration camps in the 1930s and 1940s but later reappropriated as a positive symbol of self-identity.

- Students could explore and experiment with a range of media, e.g., paints, crayons, coloured pencils, felt tips, charcoal, pastels, oil pastels to present their flags and the story they want to share about each one. Collate the spreads in a class-published display. Read and enjoy these together, discussing each flag or symbol in turn. The display might be sited prominently for a wider audience to enjoy, in the school library or in a communal space, around a copy of the cover.

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.

Homebody by Theo Parish

1. Have a good look at the cover – what does it tell you about the book? What does the word “Homebody” suggest to you?
2. The book is dedicated: “For you. Whenever and however you need it.” If you wrote a book, who would you dedicate it to? Find some other books in your library that have dedications and share them with your group.
3. What makes you feel at home? Who are the people who really make you feel as though you can be yourself around them?
4. Why do you think the illustrator chose that colour palette? How does it add to the storytelling? What colours would you use to illustrate your story? Homebody is a graphic novel. How does that format shape the way the story is told?
5. On page 9, Theo is shown as a constellation. Have a look at some images of constellations. Create a constellation-style version of you. You could surround it with words that represent you. Share your creations on social media using the hashtag #Carnegies2025.
6. On page 6, what do you think Theo means by taking “the scenic route”? You could create a map of your journey so far. What are the main points of your life that have made you who you are?
7. Do you understand what is meant by the words “gender”, “transgender/ cisgender”, “non-binary” and “Pride”? You could look at these words in smaller groups and choose one to research.
8. As a group, have a discussion about gender stereotypes. What activities/ games/ colours are linked to different genders? How do you feel about traditional views of what gender is and the stereotypes that often are associated with those roles?
9. What makes you feel like you? On the first page, Theo introduces themselves by telling the reader several things about them. Why do you think Theo adds “oh, and I’m nonbinary and transgender” as though it was an afterthought? What things would you want people to know about you? You could illustrate your list as a page from a graphic novel and then create a display.
10. Create a model of your own “homebody” using a small box/ shoebox. What items would you include to represent you? How would you create a space that makes you feel at home/safe?
11. Create a family gallery or a gallery of you and your friends. Don’t forget to include any pets!