

The Carnegies



The Carnegie Longlist 2026 Shadowing Resources



Fia and the Last Snow Deer

Carnegie Medal for Writing & Illustration

Author: Eilish Fisher

Illustrator: Dermot Flynn

Age range: 9+

Description:

A seemingly endless winter threatens Fia's village. She sets out on a quest to find the Deer Mother, and bring forth the winter solstice with her snow deer Solas at her side. There's a timeless quality to the writing in this seamless verse novel. Readers are taken on a real journey from darkness into light and feel every icy moment of the hardships encountered along the way.

The ancient feel of the story of Fia and Solas the snow deer is significantly enhanced by the striking and unique illustrations. Subtle body-language and eye contact really capture the closeness of their relationship. There's an aesthetic and technical brilliance in the use of light and dark with white space being used to great effect to simultaneously represent snow and make pops of colour feel both vital and warm. Paleolithic art aesthetics help evoke place and time, and a pervading sense of the cold lingers throughout

Themes:

- Pre-history
- Verse
- Friendship
- Sacrifice
- Myth
- Folklore
- Animals
- Seasons

Shadowing Ideas:

Writing

1. Listen to the story of the deer mother on YouTube- 'A Traditional Story for the Winter Solstice' adapted by Andrew Anderson [Moon Books Publishing, December 2023]. Does it differ from Eilish's story? You could make your own video version of the Winter Solstice myth using Fisher's book for inspiration.
2. Think about the area in which you live. Try writing about the sights and sounds of your area in verse. You could listen to the audiobook version of Fia and the Last Snow Deer read by Honi Cooke for inspiration.
3. Choose a favourite section from the book and get willing members of your group to participate in a reading circle in the style of an Irish seanchai [storyteller].

Illustration

1. What is the colour of snow? Picture Fia's landscape in Prehistoric Ireland. Research what it was like in Mesolithic times. Create a wintry collage using different materials like cotton wool buds, salt and twigs. Visit the Canadian Museum of Nature for inspiration at <https://nature.ca/en/learn-explore/activities/create-a-winter-scene-with-salt>
2. Fia's deer is named after the Irish for light. Consider how the book moves from darkness to light. Create a book display using a graduated backdrop and concentrate on contrasting yellow, white and black to reflect Dermot Flynn's illustrations. You could include facts about the author and illustrator, key plot points, character profiles and descriptions of creatures featured.
3. Create your own shadow puppet theatre using a shoe box or something larger, white tissue paper, silhouettes of Fia, Solas, Wolf and Gerd cut from black card, and a torch. Visit Making a Shadow Puppet Theatre [Ms Boley's Art Room] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZFTLX6JJ0c for ideas. Alternatively you could make shapes with your hands to reflect on the wall. You could appoint a narrator in your group and recreate the spooky scene with Fia and the shadows on pages 171-173.