

# The Carnegies



## The Carnegie Longlist 2026 Shadowing Resources

# Songs For Ghosts

## Carnegie Medal for Writing

**Author: Clara Kumagai**

**Age range: 14+**

### Description:

Themes of belonging and loss are interwoven across a narrative that spans two cultures, Japan and America. Adam is coming to terms with the loss of his mother when he finds a diary written by a young Japanese woman a century earlier. A clever homage to the story of 'Madame Butterfly,' cultural details, messaging and the supernatural provide a rich narrative that blends magical realism and mystery.

Themes:

- Magical realism
- History
- Japan
- America
- Belonging
- Identity
- Love and relationships

### Shadowing Ideas:

1. Listen to a short biwa performance, perhaps one by Thomas Ranjo whom author Clara Kumagai mentions in the acknowledgements. You could share a piece of music that is important to you, your family or culture with your shadowing group. Explain its importance to you and the story behind it.
2. Songs for Ghosts is inspired by Puccini's opera, Madama Butterfly. Why not create some collage butterflies using paper or other materials. You could use images of Japanese pottery to inspire patterns for their wings. Choose a colour palette reflective of the book cover or select your own favourite shades.
3. Choose an item from your own belongings that you would like to become an heirloom. Perhaps your family owns a particular item that has significance. What does it mean to you and what might it mean to someone who discovers it in the future? You could create a collaborative scrapbook containing pictures and information about your heirlooms and the things that make them special. Keep it in the library where it can become an heirloom for future pupils to enjoy.