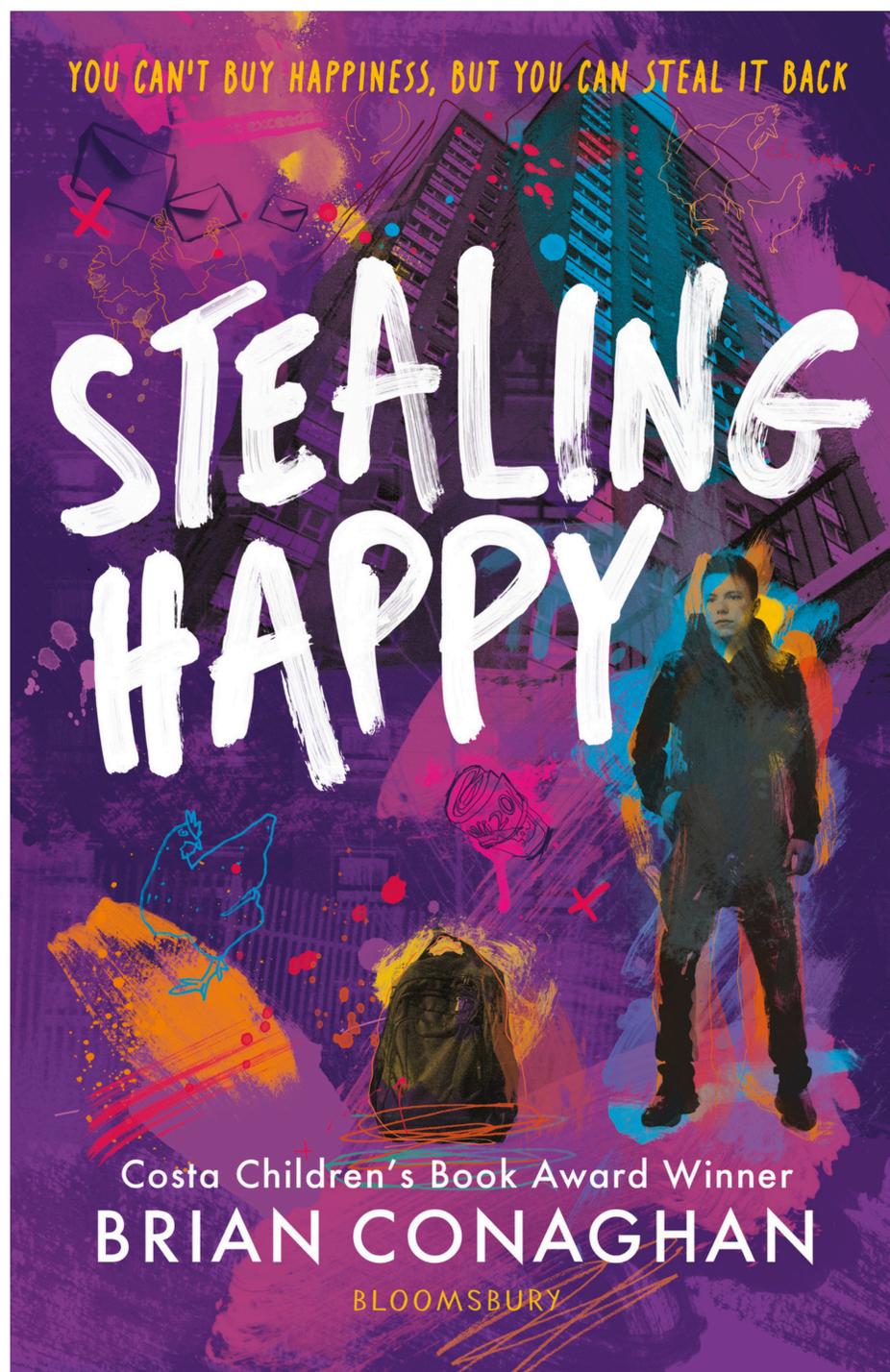


The Carnegies



The Carnegie Longlist 2026 Shadowing Resources



Stealing Happy

Carnegie Medal for Writing

Author: Brian Conaghan

Age range: 12+

Description:

Sonny's family are struggling with financial hardship; his dad is unable to work due to long Covid and the family has borrowed money from a loan shark to try to remain solvent. Despite the bleakness of their situation, there's colour, warmth and humour as well as authentic depiction of Tourette's syndrome which leads to Sonny making inopportune outbursts threatening his plans to carry out a Robin Hood style heist against the loan shark.

Themes:

- Poverty
- Neurodiversity
- Social class
- Loan sharks
- Family pressure
- Humour
- Empathy
- Social inequality
- Tourette's

Shadowing Ideas:

1. Sonny and his friends create a plan to 'rob Chick Lennon' to find the money that his family needs to pay off the loan shark. Think of ideas to raise money, rather than steal it, for a cause close to your heart in school or in your local community.
2. Sonny sees himself as a stand-up comedian. Have a go at writing and performing your own comedy show or sketch for your group. You might want to use some existing jokes or sketches, but you could also write your own.
3. Write a letter to one of the characters in this book, giving them advice on helping Sonny and his family. Consider how the different characters in the book may respond to what is happening or what has happened in the story.