

The Carnegies



The Carnegie Longlist 2026 Shadowing Resources



The Spick And The Span

Carnegie Medal for Writing

Author: Pil Van Martin

Age range: 9+

Description:

Immersive world building and parallels between magic and AI drive this richly packed novel where the cleaners are left trying to sort the chaotic mess left by magicians. Ward is part of the Spick and Span crew, a cleaning agency of magically resistant children striving to be the best of the best. A multi-strand plot gives richness and complexity and allows exploration of contemporary issues in this furiously paced fantasy.

Themes:

- Humour
- Fantasy
- Discrimination
- Poverty
- Friendship
- Subversive
- Social justice

Shadowing Ideas:

1. The City of Helm is a uniquely magical place. Using the information on pages 9-11, create a poster, leaflet or travel guide detailing all the delights it has to offer. If you're feeling extra creative, you could even script and record a television or radio advert inviting people to visit.
2. Portals open and close spontaneously all over Helm, due to the amount of unspent magic in the air. Imagine you fell through a portal to another land. What might that look/sound/smell like? Can you think of a name for this new world? How does magic work here? Using an empty shoebox and a selection of found objects, create a diorama of this place. You could put these on display and use them as creative writing prompts to spark your own stories.
3. In the opening chapters, Ward and the team must navigate a series of obstacles in Scrubbers' House as part of the Sponge Trials. Reread pages 27-36 and use this as your inspiration for a board game or computer game, complete with rules. Pitch your ideas to the rest of your shadowing group.