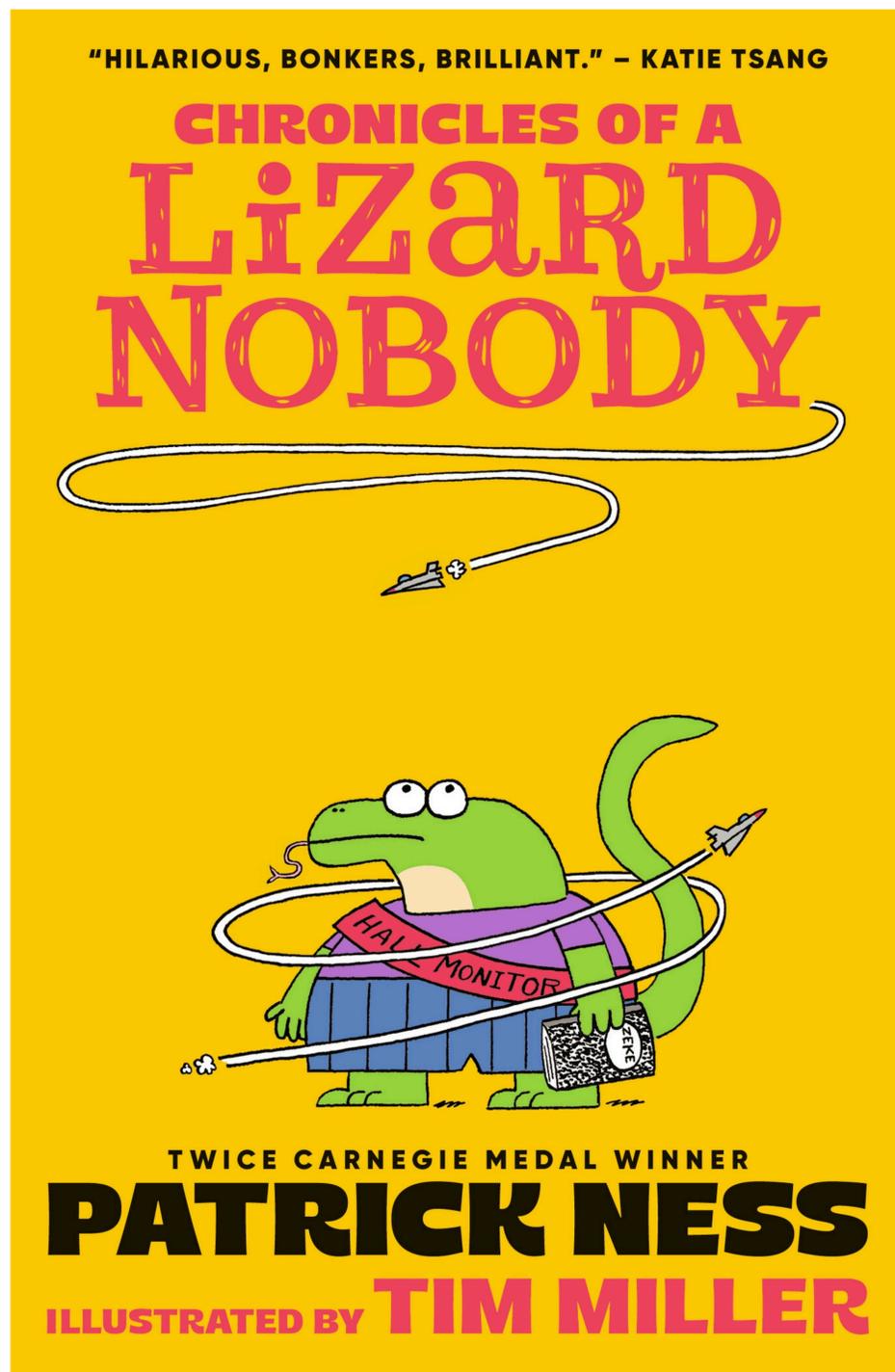


The Carnegies



The Carnegie Shortlist 2026 Shadowing Resources



Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody

Carnegie Medal for Writing

Author: Patrick Ness

Age range: 7+

Description:

Animal antics and comic capers abound in this wildly imaginative, off-the-wall school story populated by monitor lizards Zeke and Daniel, wombats, pelicans and more! Traditional themes around friendships and bullying are imaginatively subverted providing a fresh and funny read that nonetheless has true heart.

Themes:

- Animals
- School
- Friendship
- Bullying
- Mental health
- Disability
- Poverty
- Humour
- Empathy

Shadowing Ideas:

1. Choose an animal featured in the book that you don't know much about and create a big poster. Include an illustration of your animal, information about its habitat and some facts you've learnt about it. Create a display of all your posters and hold a discussion where each group member shares interesting facts about their chosen animal.
2. Zeke's mum has "a black dog". Explore what this means. Browse the shelves in your local library for books about feeling sad, and think about ways in which you could help someone feeling that way. Use the books you've found to create a Shelf Help section.
3. The book creates absurd situations like Zeke having a country on his knee. Patrick Ness talks about "pushing the boundaries of the possible and blowing people's minds" with his writing in an interview with Books for Keeps magazine. Try writing stories using the wildest ideas you can think of and share your work with the rest of your group through a writers circle or spoken word event.

For Students

About these Resources

All of these resources are designed to be completed in small discussion groups, ideally your school's Carnegie Medal for Writing Shadowing Group. However, they can easily be done individually. Instead of talking about the tasks, you can write down and keep a record of your ideas.

Before Reading

- Discuss what you think *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* will be about based on these extracts. You should structure your discussion around the questions below.
 - What other novels do you think it will be like?
 - What genre of novel do you think it will be?
 - What sense do you get of where and when it will be set?
 - If you had to identify three likely themes, what would they be?

Spend 10-20 minutes on this activity.

1. She held out two red sashes. Daniel and Zeke just stared at them. She tossed them across the desk with her furry, stumpy arms, basically throwing them over Zeke and Daniel's heads. The one for Daniel came all the way down to his knees, but Zeke's barely went past his shoulders.

2. She was a big deal, his mum. She'd once led an army of robots to attack Canada, not because they had anything she wanted, just to show that she could. She'd also teamed up with aliens and transported the entire White House to the moon last summer.

3. The day his father died, Zeke's mum came home with a black dog. It didn't speak, it didn't look at Zeke, it just hung around his mum like a cloud.

4. He looked up as a trio of giraffes wandered by, ducking their heads under the hallway lamps; and there was the jaguar who sang in the school choir but who was too shy to talk to anyone in class; and there was a whole herd of elks, all legs and wobbles and attitude.

5. Her son liked to think of himself as a supervillain, too, but so far the only thing he'd managed to invade in school was other people's personal space.

During Reading

Warning: Don't read the questions before reading each section.

Read up to the end of the section suggested then answer the questions. You will probably need to spend about 5-10 minutes answering each set of questions.

The page numbers are based on the Walker Books edition of the book, first published in the UK in 2024.

Before reading search online for 'monitor lizards' so you know what they are and what they look like.

Read chapters 1, 2 and 3

- What are your first thoughts about the novel? You might like to think about its use of humour, giving animals human characteristics and the characters introduced so far.
- How do the illustrations add to your experience of the novel so far? What do they reveal that the writing doesn't? What is the relationship between the writing and the illustrations?
- Which of the lizards is your favourite at this point and why?
- Zeke has something called 'France' on his knee. What do you think this is?
- What's the social status of lizards in the school? How is school life for the animals at this stage similar to school life for humans?
- What are your first thoughts about Pelicarnassus? What part do you think Pelicarnassus and his supervillain Mum will play in the story from this point on?

Read chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8

- What are your first thoughts about Miel, the lizard? What role do you think he will play in the book?
- We learn that the entire country of France sits on Zeke's knee. What's it like reading a book containing impossible, absurd details like this? Do you think the book makes sense? If so, how does the writer make this happen?
- At this point, do you think of the lizards more as animals or as people? What about the other animals? How does life in the book mirror life in human society?
- In chapter 8 we learn that Zeke's Mum gets a black dog the day after his father dies. Do you think this is an actual dog? What else might it be?

Read chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12

- What are your feelings for Zeke at this stage in the novel?
- What are your thoughts about 'France' in this section?
- What are the differences between Zeke and Daniel? What's the basis of their friendship?
- Which animal is your favourite at this point and why? If you were at this school, which animal do you think you would most like to hang out with?

Read chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16

- There's lots of humour in these chapters. Did you find any bits particularly funny? How is the writer, Patrick Ness, creating humour? How do the illustrations add to the humour?
- How does the book deal with human issues through animals? You might like to consider Zeke's confrontation with Ms Pfister.
- What do we learn about Alicia in this section?

Read chapters 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21

- Why is France on Zeke's knee? What are your thoughts about a book that has such bizarre things in it? Why is it possible for books to do this kind of thing? Can you think of similar examples in other books?
- Miel says that Zeke is a mystery. Do you agree with this? What do you think Miel means when he says this?
- Why do you think Norman comes to see Zeke? How and why is Zeke becoming the centre of everything that happens in the book?

Read chapters 22, 23, 24 and 25

- What do you think Pelicarnassus is planning to do with Zeke? What role do you think different animals will play in helping Zeke?

Read chapters 26, 27, 28 and 29

- What does the book have to say about bullying? You might like to think about size and why Pelicarnassus designs a huge pelican suit.
- What do you think of the pelican suit? Were you expecting the story to develop in ways like this?
- What happens to the red sashes? Now that so many strange things are happening in this story, what kind of genre would you say it belongs to?

Read to the end of the book

- How is the fight involving lasers and missiles presented by the writer? What do you think about Zeke's role in the fight?
- What messages do you think the reader is meant to take away after the fight is over? Is the fight more about providing the reader with messages, or about writing something that is funny?
- What are your thoughts about the end of the book?

After Reading

Initial thoughts

Spend 10-15 minutes discussing the questions below.

- What are your overall impressions of this novel?
- Which moments stick most in your memory and why?
- Which characters do you like best and why?
- Which other novels does it remind you of and why?
- How gripping did you find the story?
- What are your thoughts about how the book was written?
- Based on reading *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody*, how likely are you to read other novels by Patrick Ness?

What is *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* about?

- Spend one or two minutes writing down a single sentence that begins: '*Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* is about ...'
- If you are working in a group, share your different sentences and discuss.
- Next read the sentences below that give further ideas about what the novel is about.
- If you are working in a group, spend 5-10 minutes ordering the sentences, from the one you agree with most to the one you agree with least.
- Finally, decide on the statement you agree with most. It can be one from the list or your own. Write down a few ideas about how *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* relates to your chosen statement.

Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody is about ...

- Standing up to bullies
- The madness of school life
- Respecting people, regardless of where they come from
- Growing in self-confidence
- Coping with school when you have problems at home
- The value of friendship
- Unlikely alliances
- Respecting differences
- Having fun.

Exploring the Novel Further

Other characters

The novel focuses mainly on the monitor lizard, Zeke. There are lots of other characters who play a significant role in the novel.

- Write two or three sentences in the voices of three or four of these characters, expressing their thoughts and feelings about Zeke.
 - Principal Wombat
 - Alicia
 - Daniel
 - Miel
 - Mr McPerson
 - Pelicarnassus
 - Ms Pfister

Spend 15-20 minutes on this activity.

Exploring *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody*

Analysing humour

It can be difficult to know why something is funny – other than that it makes you laugh!

- Identify five things in *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* that made you laugh.
- Next, have a go at writing a sentence or two about why they are funny.

Spend 20-30 minutes on this activity.

A funny novel with a serious message

For all its humour, there is a lot of serious stuff in *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody*.

- Write a letter to the writer, Patrick Ness, exploring your thoughts about the blend of the comic and the serious. What messages did you take away from the book? How did the humour help with the more serious stuff? How successful was the book in doing this?

Spend 20-30 minutes on this activity.

Pitching *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* to a film producer

Imagine you are the writer, Patrick Ness's agent. He thinks that *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* would make an excellent animated cartoon.

- Write his 'pitch' to a film production company, explaining the reasons he thinks it would make such a good film.

Spend 20-30 minutes on this activity.

Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are all from reviews of *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody*.

- Read all the reviews and discuss which comes closest to your own view of the book.
- Working individually, write your own paragraph expressing your views.
- If possible, share your reviews with others.

You can submit your reviews to the Carnegie Shadowing Scheme website. This can be accessed at:

carnegies.co.uk/writing-shortlist-2026/

Give yourself 30-60 minutes to complete this activity.

A.

My Thoughts: This was so clever and funny yet also so sad and heartwarming at the same time. It was such a great middle grade novel: the story was engaging, the characters were fun and relatable, and the pictures were awesome.

The book is for kids, but it is very enjoyable for adults too. Patrick Ness explores some important and difficult topics like bullying, having a challenging home life, and parents struggling with depression. You can really understand and root for the characters. We see the importance of friendship, community, understanding those who are different from us, and standing up for our beliefs.

Rebekah, www.goodreads.com

B.

Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody has just about everything young readers will be looking for - it's fast paced, funny, has silly characters and the writing is really quick to get through because of those things. For more mature readers, it's missing a little too much; it's a very silly, obvious story which I think even for younger readers perhaps underestimates them a little.

For a fun, easy read this should be a good fit for readers aged 7-10, but I think any older than that it might need a little more depth.

Becs, www.goodreads.com

C.

What an amazing book! This book does such a great job of creating imagery to go along with some hard emotions. The black dog had me and my kids in all the feels. And France, the weight and pressure it must be to carry France around. The friendship in this story was absolutely amazing. Now, go grab this book and curly up with your littlies to read it.

Ana Lyons, www.goodreads.com

D.

This book was too silly for me. I really love books packed with humour, and there was plenty of that to go around, with the quickfire conversation and clever use of different animals to represent different human types, but overall it was all a bit much. I mean, France on your knee and a pelican in a giant robot suit – who's going to find that believable?

Anonymous

Writing Activities

On your own, or with a partner, complete one or more of these writing activities to help you develop your thoughts about *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* further.

You will need 30-60 minutes for each activity.

Giving animals human characteristics

- Write a story of your own in which animals take on human characteristics.

Write a letter from one character to another after the events of the novel

You can choose one of the suggestions below if you wish:

- Zeke writing to a friend
- A friend writing to Zeke
- A character apologising for past behaviour.