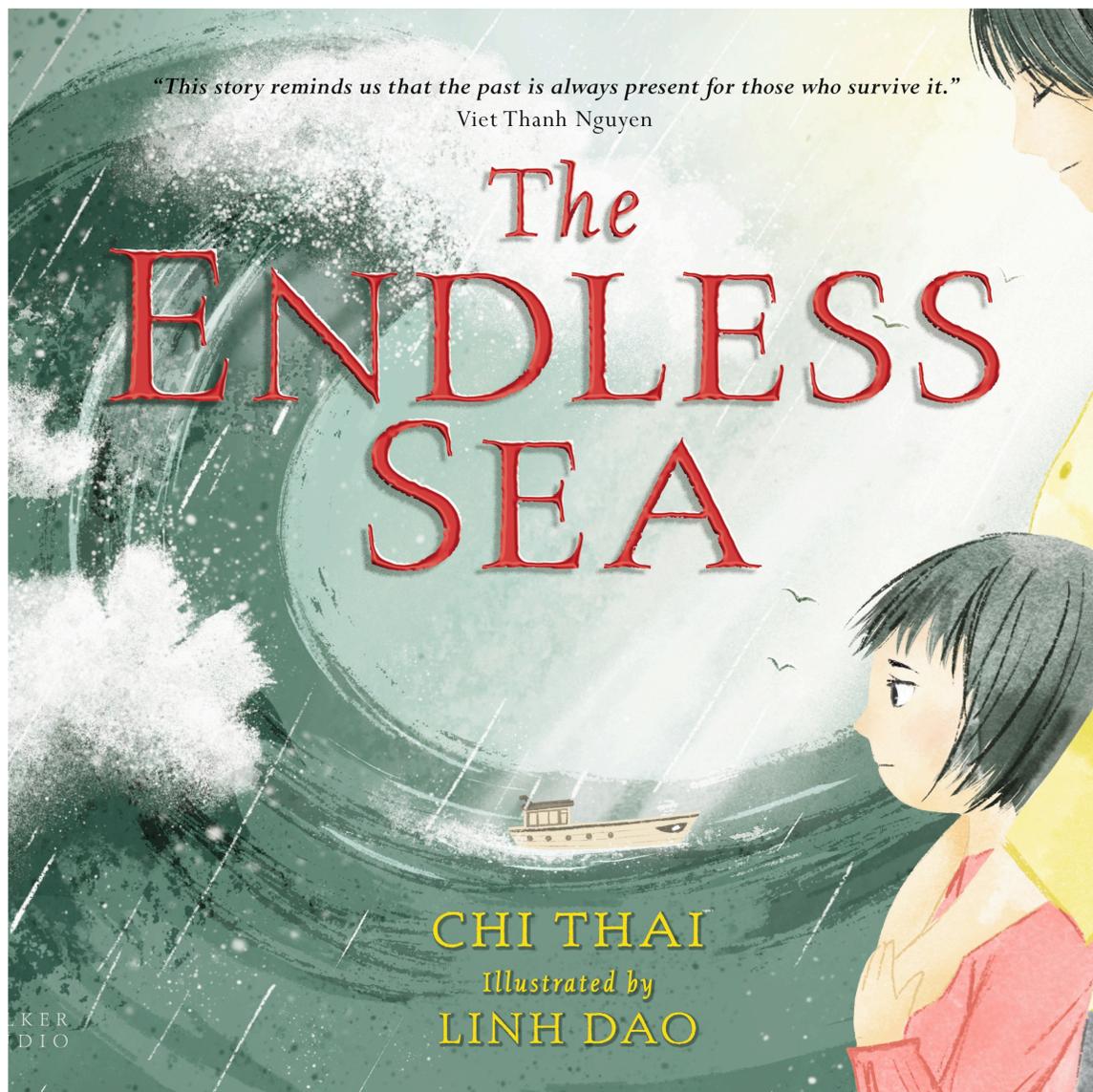
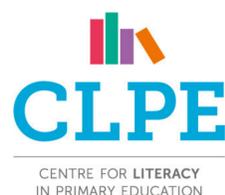


# The Carnegies



## The Carnegie Shortlist 2026 Shadowing Resources



# The Endless Sea

## Carnegie Medal for Illustration

**Illustrator: Linh Dao**

**Age range: 5+**

### Description:

Told from a child's-eye perspective, this follows the perilous journey from Vietnam, subtly referenced by colour palettes and increased military presence, to a journey to find safety. Illustrations add weight, power and emotional depth to the story and provide cultural references to signpost the family's origins alongside their journey. Controlled artistic media help provide an idea of identity being stripped away and gradually built back in this affecting tale.

Themes:

- Family
- War
- Journeys
- Refugee
- Home
- Belonging

### Shadowing Ideas:

1. Write a poem using the line 'I lived in a village, a tiger's whisker away from the jungle' as your starting sentence. You could write about Chi's life in Vietnam before they were forced to flee, or create your own story and character using this sentence for inspiration.
2. Use the illustrations in this book as a starting point for a short play. You could use a narrator to handle the text of the story or create a soundtrack and avoid words entirely. Consider scenery, props and costumes. Perform it in your setting or film your work and share it with other shadowing groups online using the hashtag #Carnegies26
3. Think about a dream you have had in the past that has stayed with you and take it as the inspiration for a piece of artwork. Use a colour palette that evokes the mood, tone and emotion of the dream as you remember it.

## Teaching Ideas for the Carnegie Medal for Illustration Shortlist 2026

*These notes have been written by the teachers at CLPE to provide schools and settings with ideas to develop comprehension and extended provision around Carnegie-shortlisted picturebooks and illustrated texts for children of all ages. They build on our work supporting teachers to use high-quality texts to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. We hope you find them useful.*

*These notes have been written with children from age 7 in mind. However, this is a sophisticated picture book which has scope for it to be interpreted in different ways with pupils of different ages.*

### Introduction:

- In *The Endless Sea* illustrator Linh Dao has provided powerful and evocative illustrations that capture author Chi Thai's real-life ordeal journeying as a child fleeing Vietnam for the UK in search of a new home. Chi's journey is poignant in its own right but Linh's illustrations lift it to another level, through her skillful use of composition, colour, light and shade, and characterization through expression.

### Reading the book and close reading of illustration:

- Begin by scrutinising the cover illustration: *who do you think these characters might be? What can you tell from their facial expressions and body language? What do you think they might be thinking or feeling?* Now read the title, "*The Endless Sea*". *What do you think this title could mean, and how might it relate to the two characters?* As you read the book together, encourage the children to be detectives, forensically looking for any clue the illustrator may be offering to the thoughts and actions of the characters, and to the setting: every mark is intentional: they may observe the small boat centred on the page, a huge Hokusai-like great wave curling over, breaking and about to engulf it. *What might all this suggest about the book you are about to read?*
- Linh begins the storytelling on the opening endpapers before any of Chi's text: *who do you think the people in these photos might be, how might they be related to one another and to the story you are about to read?* Similarly for the title page: *where do you think this might be, what clues to the setting of the story do you get from scrutinising the illustration?*

- Then share the opening spread of the village, where some of the speculation is resolved: invite the children to pore over the details and consider what they might suggest to us: *who do you think these people are, what do you think you know about them, from the words and from the illustration?* Turn to read the next double-page spread — where tension is introduced: *what do you learn from these pages, how does Linh use facial expression and body language, the placement of the narrator across the gutter and dressed in contrasting colours? What is life like for the family? How do you know from Linh’s illustrations as well as Chi’s words?* The children might comment on how quickly and economically — within two spreads — the dilemma of the story has been introduced.
- Now share the next double-page spread, a great example of the drama of the page-turn, as we shift from day to night, light to dark, open to clandestine: *how does Linh use illustration to shift the mood, how does this illustration make you feel, the shadow silhouettes fleeing across the page?* Go on to consider the next two pages, as the family walk through the jungle under moonlight, and seek refuge: *how do you think the characters feel in each illustration and how does Linh use facial expression and body language to convey this?*
- The next ten illustrations follow Chi and her family on the boat: *what do you notice in these spreads? What might the characters be thinking or feeling, and how does the illustration convey this? How does Linh’s choice of palette convey the claustrophobia, privation and peril of the journey; then, as the rescue unfolds, how do the illustrations support our understanding, how do they make us feel and what techniques has Linh used to influence us as readers?*
- Read the next spread: *why might the illustrator have chosen to use a series of vignettes on this spread – as opposed to a single full double-page spread illustration? How does it affect the storytelling? And what is the impact of the colour palette on you as a reader?* Compare this spread with the following two which convey Chi’s dreams: *how does Linh use colour and composition to convey an abstract but real fear, the framed fall of Chi and her family to the bottom of the endless sea?*
- Read to the end of the book and the two spreads of Chi’s new life: in the first; *what do you notice about her new life, what stands out for you in her bedroom that tells you about her new life? and at the dinner table: what details do you notice, how do you think everyone feels?* Allow time and space for the children to read Chi’s “Author’s Note” and to discuss the spreads and endpapers.
- After reading, encourage the children to share their thoughts. *What did they like and/or dislike? What did it make them think about? How did it make them feel? What made them feel this way? How do Linh’s illustrations convey the perils and rewards of her family’s journey?*

## Engaging in illustration:

- Revisit a range of different spreads to see how Linh's illustrations complement Chi's text to tell the story of her family's perilous journey to a new life, but also how they extend the narrative to convey relationships, mood, even her dreams. Support the children to consider how Linh's illustrations convey a sense of life in their village in Vietnam, the peril of their flight, the boat journey and rescue; the light and laughter of their new life. *The Endless Sea* has a distinctive look and palette. Linh's use of light and shade, of facial expression and body language, the evocative dream pages. You can see more examples of her work on her website <https://daolinh.com/>, and insights into her [thoughts about illustrating this book in particular](#).
- Linh's use of the endpapers is sophisticated and engaging: they literally book-end the narrative with scenes from Chi's family life before and after migrating, with a mixture of both displayed on their sideboard in the final dinner-table scene. Sensitively invite the children to replicate the endpapers by drawing the photographs that might illustrate key scenes or memories from their own family's life. Model how to use a range of materials, including coloured pencils, oil pastels, and watercolours that mirror the palette and effects used in the book. Demonstrate how to select a couple of key moments or memories: portraits to show family relationships, holiday snaps, baby pictures, formal and informal compositions. They might choose to work from memory, imagination or from photographs brought from home. Work alongside the children, encouraging them to find tones that evoke the endpapers from this story. Afterwards, reflect on the work together. *What did they like about working in this way? Were there any challenges? What were these and how could you overcome them?*
- Give space for the children to pin up and share their drawings, allowing them to look at the similarities and differences in their work and to talk about what is effective in their own work and that of others.

This sequence of activities was designed in partnership with CLPE, a UK-based children's literacy charity working with primary schools to raise the achievement of children's reading and writing by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively, putting quality children's books at the heart of all learning. Find out more about their work, and access further resources and training at [www.clpe.org.uk](http://www.clpe.org.uk).