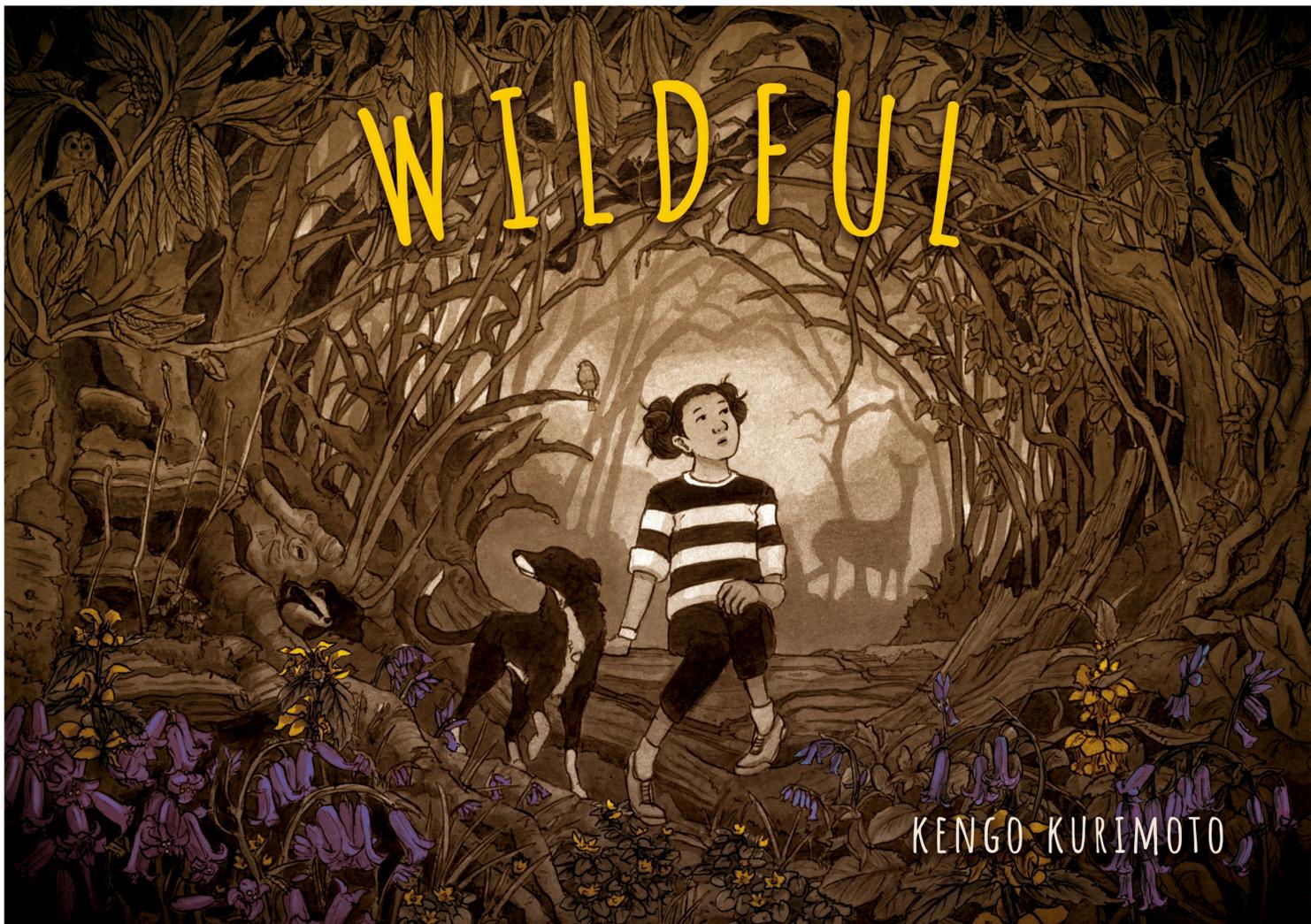
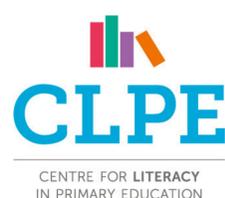


The Carnegies



The Carnegie Shortlist 2026 Shadowing Resources



Wildful

Carnegie Medal for Illustration

Illustrator: Kengo Kurimoto

Age range: 7+

Description:

A quiet, reflective story about finding wonder and solace in the world around us. Poppy and her mum are struggling to come to terms with the loss of their grandmother. There's palpable emotion present on every page. Readers are visually drawn into the world and are invited to think around our relationship with nature and the ways in which this ties in with finding ourselves.

Themes:

- Nature
- Mindfulness
- Senses
- Grief
- Healing

Shadowing Ideas:

1. In *Wildful*, Poppy finds comfort in the natural world. Take a walk in nature and try to be fully present. Breathe in deeply and pay close attention to the world around you. Make a note of something you see, something you smell, something you taste, something you hear and something you touch. Take a book with you and read outdoors. How does it feel? Do you prefer it to reading indoors? Why might that be?
2. Poppy learns to love the sounds of the different birds in the woods. Work your way through the book and look at how the different birdcalls are illustrated. Visit <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/identifying-birds/bird-song-identifier> and learn about the different types of birds and the sounds they make. Which one is your favourite? How might you illustrate that sound?
3. Create a pencil sketch of your favourite outdoor place. It might be your garden, your playground or a local park. When your drawing is complete, add a single pop of colour to one element of the scene. You might use this to highlight a particular tree or flower. Perhaps you want to pick out a tiny detail, like a kite or emphasise an animal. Which colour did you choose and what effect did it have on your artwork?

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 aged 7–11 in mind. However, this is a sophisticated graphic novel which has scope for it to be interpreted in different ways with pupils of different ages.

Introduction:

- *Wildful*, the debut graphic novel from Kengo Kurimoto, is an almost wordless exploration of the power and beauty of the natural world, and how places of wildness can be found even in largely urban environments. It also considers the potential healing opportunities provided by taking the time to exist quietly within these spaces, both alone and with others. As part of this theme, the text includes an exploration of bereavement, grief and depression that some children may find triggering, so allow extended time to read and discuss, with an enabling adult who can sensitively address questions or reflections that may arise.

Reading the book and close reading of illustration:

- Begin by exploring the front cover. *What is their eye drawn to? How does it make them feel? What makes them feel that way?* Consider the use of shape, colour, light and dark, the feeling of depth created in the image, as well as spending time seeking out all the small details and animals tucked away amid the surrounding branches. *Does it remind them of anything they've seen before; or anywhere they've been?*
- If they haven't already done so, invite them to reflect on the character in the centre of the image. *What do you notice about the character on the cover? What do their gaze, facial expression or body language suggest about them and their connection with this setting?*
- Read and consider the possible meaning behind the title: "*Wildful*". *What does this mean? Is this a word they've come across before? If not, is it similar to other words they know?* Children might investigate and consider the morphological elements of the title, considering the effect of the suffix -ful on other words they know (wonderful, thoughtful, disgraceful, etc.) and the meaning of the root word 'wild'. *What sort of place, person or thing could be described using the adjective 'wildful'? What might a book with this cover and title be about?*

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<https://clpe.org.uk/about-us/donate-support-our-work>.

- Together, turn the pages to reveal the repeated images on the endpapers and dedication page, and on to the black background double-page spread announcing Chapter 1 and the single line: *“Stop. Listen. What does the wild speak?”* Briefly consider what this might mean and how it might connect with what they’ve seen and discussed so far — two commands and a question, which suggest both a speaker and an audience. *Who might be speaking these words and who to? Do they have an answer to the question?* Return to these reflections after they have read the whole book.
 - Pause briefly on the first spread to discuss children’s experiences of comics and graphic novels and their understanding of how sequential art is read; how the reader moves from panel to panel. On this double-page spread the panels are all the same size and are read left to right and top to bottom, one page at a time. You might consider the techniques Kengo uses to indicate movement across these eight images — the changing position of the gates and house numbers, the posture and gait of the characters, the shifting position and dynamic between the girl and the dog, the strain on the leash, etc.
 - Read on for a few more spreads (up to the girl falling and landing at the bottom of the ditch). Turn backwards and forwards through the pages, revisiting these spreads and considering the ways in which narrative information — action, characterisation, emotion, setting, atmosphere, etc. — is communicated wordlessly through the changes in layout, composition, viewpoint, panel size and shape, repetition, shading, etc. *What do they like about this style of storytelling? Where have they seen it before? What does it remind them of? What does this story opening suggest about the events to come? What are their first impressions of this character? How does this compare with their response to the character on the cover?* On that final spread, consider the different techniques used to show action — the bottom-left-hand uses four small panels to show the character moving forward, swiping at branches, and then starting to fall forward, while the top-right-hand page uses a single wide rectangular frame showing the character in three different positions against the same backdrop. *How do each of these choices communicate momentum? How do they make you feel as a reader?*
- Read on for the rest of the chapter, then invite children to share their response to the
- book so far, including the introduction of dialogue into this otherwise wordless text. *What do they like about the book so far? Is there anything they don’t like? How does it compare with their initial expectations? How do they expect the story to develop from here?*

- Consider what Kengo Kurimoto chooses to show us and keep back from us in each panel and how this effects our experience as readers. For example, on the spread when Rob first calls down to Poppy, we don't see Rob until Poppy looks up. Then, when she looks in the direction that Pepper ran, the reader is positioned behind Poppy looking into the dark shadows of the woods too. As you read on, reflect: *Whose viewpoint do you see the story from? Does this change as the story moves on? When do we see things that Poppy doesn't see? What affect does this have?*
- At the end of the book, discuss their overall responses and allow plenty of time and space to revisit the book developing a deeper understanding of the meanings being created by the illustrator and the choices they made. They might discuss the overall themes of the book, and how it communicates and shares in the awe and wonder of the natural world, the choice to depict elements of nature in such fine, almost photographic detail, the human story and the relationship between the characters, and the careful use of silence and dialogue across the book. The author has talked in [interviews](#) about the quantity of dialogue changing from draft to draft until he settled on the final version in which the emphasis is on 'experiencing the magic of nature'.

Engaging in illustration:

- Throughout the book, from the front cover and endpapers to the multiple close-up drawings of leaves, budding flowers and blossom, birds and mammals, Kengo Kurimoto uses very carefully observed and highly detailed, anatomically accurate approach to drawing and painting the natural world. This can be compared to the slightly simpler and cleaner approach taken to depicting the human figures, with relatively few lines used to effectively capture a facial expression. Look back at some of their favourite panels depicting the natural world as explored and observed by Rob and Poppy. Reflect together on why Kengo might have chosen this pairing of styles, and why it might have been important to depict nature in such clarity and detail. Explain that he has talked in interviews about how his drawing improved while working on the book: *"Aside from lots of practice, I think the biggest benefit came from the amount of time I spent observing. One time I became intrigued by how chestnuts form and over the course of a year I drew each stage; starting from a bud, bursting into leaves and flowers, then from flowers into the nut. When you really look, each transformation is nothing short of miraculous, and when you learn to see it in all plants, you see the whole forest in a new way."* Tell the children that they are going to have some time themselves to engage in drawing as a way of 'really looking'.

- Invite the children to consider and speculate about the materials he uses. *What can you see in the spreads that gives a sense of the different media used?* Give each child access to appropriate materials: sheets of cartridge paper or good quality sketchbooks (to which they could apply watercolour paints if desired), as well as drawing pencils, fine line pens and/or watercolours that mirror the materials used in *Wildful*.
- Decide where to engage in some observational drawing with the class. You could go outside and find leaves, twigs, flowers or small objects to draw. Alternatively, you might stay in the classroom and provide small objects already gathered. If children are interested in drawing birds or animals, you can provide photographic references to draw from – which Kengo also used in his production of the book. Explain and demonstrate that observational drawing is all about looking as carefully as possible. Encourage the children to try to see the shapes, patterns, perspective and shadows, and how each of these interact. Explain that they might produce a series of short sketches quite quickly before spending time on a more detailed drawing. Once they have a drawing they like, they could add a little shading using pencil or watercolour. They might choose to add colour or aim for a more monochrome effect like the one in the book.
- Afterwards, reflect on the work together. *What did they like about drawing in this way? Were there any challenges in drawing like this? What were these and how could you overcome them?*
- You can find out more about the making of *Wildful* on Kengo Kurimoto's website: <https://www.studiokengo.com/making-wildful>

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.