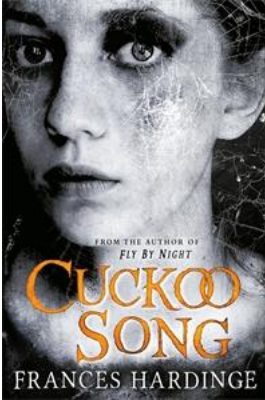


TALKING POINTS CILIP Carnegie Medal Shortlist 2015



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards

CUCKOO SONG By Frances Hardinge



Do you think *Cuckoo Song* is a good title for this book? What do you think it means?

The opening pages introduce us to a character who's confused, with many questions unanswered (who am I? what happened at the Grimmer? why am I so hungry all the time? why does my sister hate me?). Does the author give clever and satisfying answers to all these doubts over the course of her adventures, or are some mysteries left unsolved at the end?

The story

Were you surprised to learn that Triss was in fact Not-Triss? Did it change how sympathetic you were to her when you learned that she was, to use her word, a %monster-?

Why have the Besiders come to Ellchester?

How does meeting Jack's family change the way Trista and Pen think about their own lives and their own problems?

What do you think the strange bird-like creatures that serve the Architect are? Is this explained near the end?

The dark always finds its way into the stories, says a Besider woman, %does it not? The stories worth hearing, at least.+Is there darkness in Cuckoo Song?

Do you think the Crescent family ends the story better off than when it began?

Characters

Why do Triss's parents behave so over-protectively towards her?

Why is Pen so mean to Triss and Not-Triss?

Why doesn't Not-Triss tell her parents the truth about what's happening right from the start?





Triss becomes Not-Triss (or Fake Triss), and then Trista . do you think she changes in the process? Is one of these the *real* her?

Not-Triss's feelings about each of the following characters change over the course of the book do yours change, too?

- Pen
- Violet Parish
- Piers and Celeste Crescent

Whose side is Mr Grace on?

How has Violet been changed by her experiences of recent years? Why does she want to keep moving, even at the end when she doesn't have to?

Good and evil

The Architect is obviously the book's main antagonist . that is, the enemy to our heroes; but are there other characters who are all bad?

The following characters are all after Not-Triss at some point in the story . but are they motivated by good things or bad?

- Mr Grace
- The Besiders
- Piers and Celeste Crescent
- The Shrike

Reality, fantasy and magic

We learn near the beginning that the story is set in the early 1920s . but is it in our world, the *real* 1920s, or somewhere different? Why?

Early in the story, Triss (as she is then) thinks she may be going crazy, hallucinating . when does she realise that there really are very strange things happening, and she's not imagining them?

What special powers give the Architect his name? How might the Underbelly be an example of this?

One of the things the Architect enchants is Sebastian's watch, in order to be its master of time, instead of just a servant . but is time really in the Architect's control, or is he a slave to its rules like everybody else?





The book is filled with interesting objects . what magical properties characterise

- Sebastian's watch?
- The Besiders' coats?
- Mr Grace's scissors?

Some other questions

Many traditional stories use non-human 'changeling' children, sometimes evil, which are left in the place of stolen human children (like Mr Grace's baby) . and it doesn't usually end well for the real child. How is what Frances Hardinge has done different?

How important is it to Not-Triss that Pen gives her a new name: Trista?

The characters talk about certainty and uncertainty a lot, and about who prefers which. (Those who like uncertainty . like the Besiders . are against those with faith and scissors.) So what do you think of the last line of the whole book, which concludes that uncertainty is 'wonderful'?

