

# TALKING POINTS

## CILIP Carnegie Medal Shortlist 2013



The CILIP Carnegie  
& Kate Greenaway  
Children's Book  
Awards

## Maggot Moon by Sally Gardner

### Book title and cover

- What do you think the title of the book means?
- Did the cover give you an idea of what to expect in the story?
- Did the cover and title make you want to read the book?

### Structure of the book

All of the chapters in *Maggot Moon* are very short, often just one page and never more than two or three.

- What is the effect of this? Did it make the book more accessible to you?
- Look at the first chapter in the book, which is a single page. Do you think that this pulls you into the story straight away? Did you find it a gripping, page-turning book?

*Maggot Moon* starts the first chapter in the present tense, and then moves into telling the story in the past tense, jumping between the recent past and the events that occurred before that. In chapter 74 it returns to the present tense.

- Why do you think the author changes tense during the book like this?
- Did you find it easy or difficult to follow the story, as it changed tenses?
- When the story returns to the present tense, what effect does this have on your feelings as you read the book to its dramatic conclusion?

### The events of the book

- How does the author build an idea of the world in which Standish Treadwell is living?
- How does the author build an atmosphere of sinister foreboding?
- What does Standish mean when he says, 'The walls of our house may have been shaky, but they weren't see through'?
- How does Standish feel when he goes back into his old house for the first time, when they meet Hector's family?
- What place do you think is represented on television, which Standish refers to as having pretty women and 'Croca-cola'?
- Why do the Motherland want to convince the world that they have landed on the moon? Do a little research and find out when the real moon landing took place, and draw any comparisons with the hype surrounding the real and fictional events.
- Hector says, 'I think the best thing we have is our imagination'. Do you think Hector and Standish really believe in the planet Juniper, and their space ship? How does talking about Juniper help them?
- What story is Standish referring to when he mentions the boy who killed the giant with the catapult and stone? How do you think this relates to his actions following this thought? What is his 'giant' and what is his 'stone'?



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- In chapter 90, the author switches from made up swear words ('frick-frack') to real swear words. What effect does this have?
- What did you think about the ending of the book? How did it make you feel?

### The characters of the book

#### **Standish**

Miss Connolly says, 'What makes Standish stand apart is that he is an original'. Hector says, 'There are train-track thinkers, then there's you, Standish, a breeze in the park of imagination'.

- What do you think each of these people meant by their statement about Standish? Do you agree with them?

#### **Gramps**

- Standish says that thinking about Gramps 'pulled at the gravity in me'. Do you recognise this feeling? What does it tell us about how Standish feels about Gramps?

#### **Mr Gunnel**

- What sort of adjectives would you use to describe Mr Gunnel?
- Were you shocked by the events that occurred with Little Eric?
- How did you feel when Mr Gunnel got shot, and why?

#### **Hector**

- When Gramps disappears from the Lush's house and comes back with a gun, Hector smiles and says 'Are you going to kill us?' Why do you think he seems so calm?
- Hector described the school uniform as turning the children into 'numbers, neat boy-shaped numbers' and also describes the tie as being like a dog's collar. Do you agree with him?
- How does Hector stop Mr Gunnel bullying him?
- Were you surprised by the way that Standish and Hector's relationship develops? What do you think that the kiss between them in one of their final scenes means?

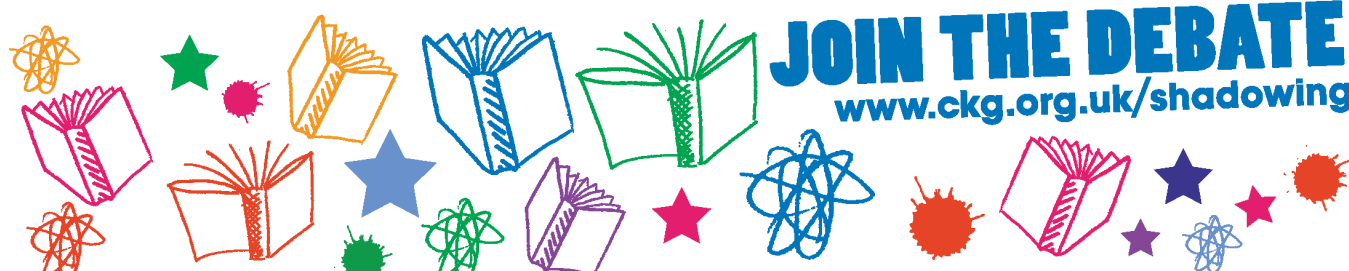
### Illustrations

- What do the line drawings of the rat, tunnelling, drinking poison, dying, hatching maggots and a fly emerging add to the tone of the book? What do you think the illustrations add to your understanding? Do they represent something?

### Dyslexia

The author of this book is dyslexic, as is her main character, Standish Treadwell.

- Did you realise that Standish is dyslexic? What clues does the author give that Standish might be dyslexic? (For example, talking about how the words on the blackboard are circus horses that dance up and down.)
- 'Can't read, can't write, Standish Treadwell isn't bright' – is what the bullies chant at Standish. Do you agree with them? What are the signs that Standish is or isn't 'bright'?



Despite being dyslexic, Standish loves words. He can understand a foreign language by listening to the tone and pattern of it. Standish describes words in a few different ways during the book. Talk about and explain what each of the following phrases means.

- 'I collect words, they are sweets in the mouth of sound.'
  - 'Words are like music, you can squeeze out the essence of them.'
  - 'Her words were worms that buried themselves into your worried mind, to rot all thoughts of freedom.'
  - 'Gramps' words trailed behind him, hot air from a leaden balloon.'
- ❖ Did the book further your understanding of dyslexia?

### What ifs

At the bottom of the introductory paragraph that is Chapter One, Standish says, '... the what ifs are as boundless as the stars.' On the book's dedicated website ([www.maggotmoon.com](http://www.maggotmoon.com)), author Sally Gardner states that the book is written as a 'what if history', where you take a momentous part of history and think about what would have happened if things had turned out differently.

- What do you think the 'What if' is that is being dealt with in this book?
- What are the clues that the author gives as to the area of history that she is writing about?
- What clues does the author give about which country the book is taking place in?

Most people agree that the book refers to what would have happened if Germany had won World War II.

- By doing some research or using your knowledge of this period in time, draw some comparisons between features of the book and real events from history (for example, the Nazi salute, people with abnormalities being sent away, emphasis on 'purity' and Nazi propaganda films).
- Do you think the book is realistic about what life would have been like under Nazi occupation?

### The unsolved mysteries

The ending to Maggot Moon leaves us with a lot of unanswered questions. Talk together about what you imagine may have happened to tie up the ending to these areas of the plot, using clues from the text where appropriate.

- What do you think has happened to Standish's mum and dad?
- What do you think happens to Gramps, Miss Phillips and the Moon Man after Standish leaves them?
- What do you think happens after Standish manages to show his 'Hoax' sign to the cameras, thus letting the world know that the moon landing is being staged?
- What exactly does it mean to be in Zone Seven? Why are Gramps and Standish there?
- Why does Hans Fielder step in when Mr Gunnel is accusing Standish of killing Little Eric?
- Who put the note in Standish's desk?
- What do you think it said on the back of Mr Lush's watch, that they would have to scrape off before selling?



- *Fatherland* by Robert Harris
- *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne
- *Maus* by Art Spiegelman

