

## 2018 Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist VISUAL LITERACY NOTES

Title: **Thornhill**

Illustrator/Author: **Pam Smy**

Publisher: **David Fickling Books**



### First look

**Thornhill** is presented in a dual format; approximately half the story is told through the printed diary entries of Mary Baines in the year 1982. The rest is seen through the eyes of a girl in the 2017 and is shown in graphic form. It is these visual passages of the book that demonstrate the quality of the artwork in **Thornhill**. The visual text is in black, white and grey; light and darkness, friendship and loneliness, cruelty and comfort are all depicted through the use of shape, line, white space and the monotone shading. Throughout the book solid black double page spreads mark the ends of episodes and the passing of time.

Share the book with the shadowing group to familiarise them to the presentation.

### Look at the graphic text in more detail

We are told quite a lot about Mary Baines as we read her 1982 diary. She tells us a bit about how she looks, but mostly about how she feels.

The other girl in this story is Ella. All we know about her is what we can learn from the images. Can you answer the following questions by looking closely at the pictures?

- Where is Ella's house in relation to Thornhill?
- What is the garden like around Thornhill in 2017?
- What is her father like?
- Do you know anything about her mother?
- From the following list, which words could be used to describe Ella?

cheerful

lonely

curious

courageous

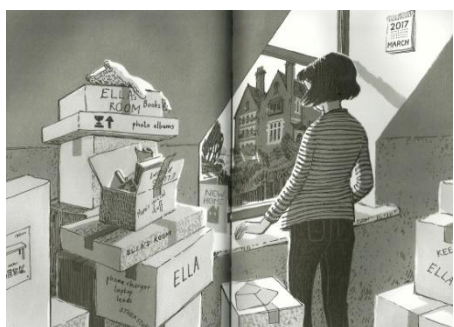
busy

resourceful

angry

adventurous

quiet



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How many pictures contain birds? What sorts of birds? Do they serve a purpose in the narrative?

Talk about all the visual aspects of the book i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. How do these 'extras' to the story contribute to the overall impact of the book?

## Interpreting text

When studying a book, it is always beneficial, to use tasks which require imaginative or creative response. Using creative activities (e.g. art, drama, researching, music etc.) will encourage students to engage fully with the text. The following suggestions may help get the group to think about different aspects of this the book.

### *Writing*

Read the pictures from page 175 to page 203. Imagine you are Ella. Write a diary entry about getting into Thornhill's garden and what you found there.

### *Drama*

Mary writes about the bullying she suffers. How do bullies plan, carry out and get away with tormenting people? Work in a group to act out a bullying scene.

### *Drawing*

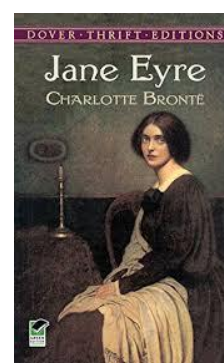
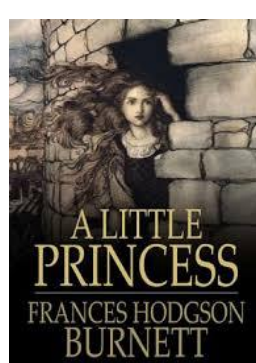
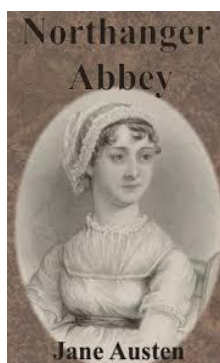
With a pencil, crayons or charcoal draw your own version of a haunted house. Surround the house with a tangled garden.

### *Research*

There is a long tradition of novels that have similar themes to Thornhill. Through the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, stories about girls being orphaned or abandoned were quite common. Often the tale involved the girl living in an orphanage where she is treated cruelly by other girls and 'carers'. Another theme involved a large, old house, full of empty rooms and eerie noises.

It is clear that Mary Baines is a reader. She has read at least two of the books pictured below.

Do you recognise any of the books Mary read by the titles on the book covers? See if you can find them in the library.



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Of these four books, the one written by Jane Austen (published 1803) was not supposed to be taken too seriously but to show how silly some female readers were to believe these novels. Another, **Jane Eyre** (published 1847), was intended for adults to read rather than children. The two books written by Frances Hodgson Burnett (**A Little Princess**, 1905, **Secret Garden**, 1911) were written for children. Films or TV series have been made of all four.

### Spooky or what?

There are several echoes of these books in **Thornhill**.

In **Jane Eyre** the old house is called Thornfield and the attic burns, leaving charred remains.

In **A Little Princess** the main carer in a girls' boarding school sends an abandoned child to live alone in the attic.

There is a lonely girl called Mary in **The Secret Garden** who finds a key which opens the door to a hidden garden where she feels safe.



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## Teaching Ideas for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Award Shortlist 2018

**Title:** Thornhill

**Author & Illustrator:** Pam Smy

**Publisher:** David Fickling Books (2017, Hardback Edition)

*These notes have been written by the teachers at CLPE to provide schools with sessions which focus on the importance of illustration in building a narrative and supporting children's response. They build on our work supporting teachers to use picture books to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. The teaching notes show how picture books can be used in schools to enhance children's reading comprehension and composition of their own creative writing. We hope you find them useful*

### Before beginning this sequence:

This is a sequence of sessions aimed at Upper KS2 and KS3. The text explores themes of social isolation, bullying, neglect, the challenges of the care system, death, bereavement and suicide. Readers therefore require a degree of emotional maturity to engage with the content. It is advised that you read the book first before sharing it with your class to determine whether they have the emotional resilience to engage with the themes, particularly if the content resonates with personal experiences that the pupils may still be processing.

The illustrations are extremely rich and detailed. It is therefore advisable to ensure that you have access to a visualiser or similar device to enable you to share images from the text with the pupils on a large scale.

### Session 1

Share the endpapers at the back of the book in the order that they appear. Start with the crow perched on the barbed wire fence, followed by the subsequent double page spreads featuring the continuation of the barbed wire fence and finally ending on the double page spread that is set against the black background and has the 'keep out' sign attached to the fence.

Share each double page spread in order and one at a time. Invite the pupils to comment on what they notice and what it might suggest, what it reminds them of, how it makes them feel and what all of these insights might indicate about the place. Explore the symbolic significance of the details featured in the spreads, take time to consider why the illustrator might have chosen to include a crow, overgrown and unkept vegetation and barbed wire. Note their comments in one colour on some flipchart paper.

Position the four double page spreads so that the pupils are able to see them all alongside one another. Invite them to consider the distinctions between each image, reflect on how they compare and contrast and how this varies our perspective. How for example does the illustrator use black and white differently on each spread and what effect does this have? How does the illustrator create a sense of foreboding? Where might the fence lead? Note the comments and reflections using a different colour on the flipchart paper.

Write the title of the book on the board. Invite the pupils to discuss and reflect upon why the author might have chosen this word as the title of the book. Encourage the pupils to reflect upon the definitions of the different components of the word and consider what this might suggest about the place. Extend the discussion by encouraging them to draw on all of their reflections so far to consider what or where Thornhill might be. Note their contributions using a different colour on the flipchart paper.

Reveal the front cover of the book and invite the pupils to discuss what they notice and how this reinforces, varies or alters their earlier impressions. What effect does the choice of limited palette have? In what ways does the dominance of the black influence how we perceive this place? How does this contrast with the use of white? How is pathetic fallacy used to influence the mood of the cover illustration? Who might the person in the window be? How does the composition influence our perspective and view of this person? Is the individual fearful or should they be feared? In what ways does the illustration influence and shape your view? Note responses in a different colour on the flipchart paper.

## Session 2

Read the first diary entry dated, '8<sup>th</sup> February 1982' (p.1) aloud to the group. Ask the pupils to share their initial impressions. Place the text on the visualiser and read it aloud again. Ask the pupils to share what they see in their minds eye and how the entry makes them feel. Read the entry aloud a third time. Invite the pupils to discuss the ways that the explicit and implied sounds that travel through the building create a sense of anxiety and foreboding.

Draw an outline of a person. Invite the pupils to share their thoughts about how they perceive the narrator. What do we know about how they feel, what they think and what words we would use to best describe these thoughts and feelings? Note these observations on the inside of the outline. On the outside of the outline, invite them to consider what the text suggests about how they might appear.

Turn the page to reveal the double page spread, pause for a moment and invite the pupils to share what effect the placing of the blacked out double page spread has.

Make 5-6 sets of copies of the sequence of illustrated double page spreads that follow the first diary entry and provide each group of six pupils with a set of the illustrations. Invite the pupils in their groups to discuss the illustrations and arrange them in an order that they think relays a fitting narrative. Invite them to share what they noticed in each of the illustrations, what these details suggested about the time, place and character featured, what aspects of the details linked the two worlds and why they decided upon the order that they did.

Draw out the comparisons and contrasts from each group's discussions. Build on these insights by inviting them to focus in on Ella. Draw an outline to represent her and again encourage the pupils to reflect on

what they have observed about Ella and what this suggests about how she might be feeling and what she might be thinking. Note these observations on the inside of the outline and note their observations about her appearance and what these suggest about her character on the outside.

Draw a large Venn diagram, note the year 1982 above one circle of the diagram and the year 2017 above the second circle. Provide each group with a copy of the Venn diagram and invite the pupils to reflect on the differences and similarities that they have observed about the two characters depicted so far.

Once the pupils have had time in their groups to discuss and note their observations, facilitate a whole class discussion to evaluate the ways in which the lives of the two individuals compare and contrast up to this point. Both the Venn diagram and the outlines can be revisited at appropriate moments in the plot and using a different colour pen at each point note the reflections on how our experience and reading of the two characters evolves over time.

### Session 3

Read the diary entry dated '9<sup>th</sup> February 1982' (pp.30-31) aloud to the class. Ask the pupils to share their initial impressions. Place the text on the visualiser and read it aloud again. Invite the pupils to identify the words and phrases that stand out most to them, help them to picture the scene and strike an emotional chord. Are there any scenes viewed from the window that are particularly moving or memorable? What colours come to mind when you hear the different familial moments being described? What feelings do these colours evoke? Discuss the ways in which the language and scenes depicted in the entry create a sense of mourning, longing and isolation. Note the responses and key points made in the discussion on a flipchart.

Read the diary entry aloud one more time. Provide pupils with a sheet of sugar paper and invite them to use pastels to draw what they see from the window of the narrator. Provide each pupil with four strips of black sugar paper and ask them to use this to frame their drawing to give the impression of the illustration being viewed through a window. Invite them to draft a poem inspired by the emotions conveyed in the diary entry and scenes from their window.

Provide the pupils with white tissue paper or tracing paper that is appropriately sized to cover their drawing. Allow time for them to edit and refine their poem. Once they are satisfied with the final edit, provide time for them to write the final version on to the tissue paper and place this over their drawing so that it resembles a pane of glass or net curtain. Photocopy and enlarge the diary entry, place this in the centre of a display wall backed with multiple sheets of paper to give the impression that it forms part of an open diary and display the completed poetry and artwork around the diary entry.

### Session 4

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Read the diary entries dated '9<sup>th</sup> February 1982' (p.30-31) to '10<sup>th</sup> February 1982' (pp.32-34). Copy 5-6 sets of these diary entries, divide the pupils into groups of six and provide the pupils with copies of the diary entries. Invite the groups to text mark and highlight words, phrases and sections that provide the reader with insights about the person being described by the narrator.

Draw an outline of a person and invite the pupils to draw on their discussions to note what they think the character being described thinks and feels on the inside of the outline and note their observations about her outwardly appearance and what this suggests about her character on the outside of the outline.

Read the diary entries dated '16<sup>th</sup> February 1982' (p.35) to '17<sup>th</sup> February 1982' (pp.36-37). Revisit the character outline devised for the narrator in session two and using a different colour note the pupils' observations about the narrator based on the additional insights gleaned from the diary entries up to this point.

Revisit the Venn diagrams drawn in session two. Ask the pupils to add a third circle to make their diagrams a three circle Venn diagram. Ask them to label the third circle 'her.' Invite the pupils to reflect on the differences and similarities that they have observed about the three characters depicted so far.

Once the pupils have had time in their groups to discuss and note their observations, facilitate a whole class discussion to evaluate the ways in which the lives of the three individuals compare and contrast up to this point.

### Session 5

Use the visualiser to share the illustrations that follow the diary entry dated '17<sup>th</sup> February 1982,' up to the next blacked out double page spread. Take the time to reveal each double page spread one at a time, inviting pupils to comment on what they notice, how they feel and how the illustrations work to evoke these responses.

Revisit the outlines of the two characters and invite the pupils to reflect on what they have observed in the sequence of illustrations viewed. Note their reflections using a different coloured pen.

Invite the pupils to discuss what they might do if they had seen what Ella had seen. Would it arouse curiosity or fear? Would they want to investigate or ignore it? Would they share what they saw with someone else?

Read the diary entry dated '25<sup>th</sup> February 1982,' (pp.54-57). Revisit the outline of the narrator and invite the pupils to reflect and comment upon how the interaction depicted deepens our knowledge and understanding of the narrator. Note their reflections using a different coloured pen.



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Using your visualiser, share the sequence of illustrations that follow the diary entry dated 25<sup>th</sup> February 1982 up to the next blacked out double page spread. Take the time to reflect upon the details in each illustration and the way in which tension, suspense and curiosity are built upon with the unveiling of each double page spread. Encourage the pupils to consider the choice and use of animals, overgrown shrubbery, statues, signage, text, weather, different textures, variations of different types of physical and domineering barriers that make it challenging to navigate the grounds, as well as the way in which the illustrator plays with the positioning of Ella to create varying degrees of intrigue and tension. Note their responses.

Drawing on their reflections, invite the pupils to write their own diary entry from the perspective of Ella and her experience of exploring the grounds.

### Beyond Session 5

Continue to share the remainder of the book pausing intermittently to discuss the evolution of the three key characters and using the three circle Venn diagram and character outlines to frame and capture the reflections and responses.

What does Jacob's arrival at the end of book suggest? Is it the fate of every child who is intrigued by Thornhill to join Mary? Alternatively, is Thornhill a magnet for misery and individuals who are lonely and isolated?

This sequence of activities was designed by CLPE for the Greenaway shortlist. To access more free resources from CLPE, visit: [www.clpe.org.uk/freeresources](http://www.clpe.org.uk/freeresources)

In depth teaching sequences for over 200 other high quality texts can be found at:  
[www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading](http://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading)

Further resources to support children's understanding of picturebooks for all ages and research on the importance of using picturebooks across the primary years can be found at:  
<https://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures>

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# THORNHILL

By Pam Smy

David Fickling Books

2018 Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist,  
eligible for Amnesty CILIP Honour

**'Adept use of illustration drives the narrative in this remarkable piece of pictorial storytelling. The illustrations have a cinematic quality.'** *Judging panel*



## UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**Article 5:** Nobody has any right to hurt or torture us or treat us cruelly.

### ABOUT THIS BOOK

This eerie book is two stories set in different times about Mary and Ella – one told in diary format, the other in striking art – whose lives converge in a mysterious foster home called Thornhill. 1982: lonely orphan Mary is incessantly bullied, and has become an isolated mute stuck in her room making puppets. 2017: Ella has moved to a new town and she sees a girl in the derelict Thornhill house opposite. The book paints a vivid picture of the pain that results from bullying and understanding what causes it. The tragic ending shows that all children have the right to belong, and be safe, cared for and listened to.

### HUMAN RIGHTS IN THIS STORY

Right to live in freedom and safety; to a home; to freedom from harm; to a good life; to education; to meeting friends; to be treated with respect and compassion; to be cared for and protected; to freedom of opinion and expression.

### QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE HUMAN RIGHTS

- How would you describe the illustrated pages of the book?
- What do the blank, black pages symbolise and how do they make you feel?
- From her room, Mary watches 'regular, real people with regular, real families' (page 30). What does she mean? How would she describe herself?
- How do you feel when 'she' hurts Mary? Why is 'she' cruel? And why do the others join in?
- Mary says: 'I am surrounded by adults at school and at Thornhill, but none of them can really see what is happening. They don't want to know' (page 172). Who should be protecting Mary and Ella? Who could you turn to if you had a problem?
- Why has the author chosen death as the answer for Mary and Ella? What alternative endings can you think of?



## ACTIVITY

Write or draw an epilogue to the book showing what happens to Jacob. Will he be looked after or vulnerable like Mary and Ella?

## RESEARCH

There are references to *Jane Eyre* and *The Secret Garden* in the book. How are these stories relevant to Thornhill? Find them in your library or look them up online. Why do you think Mary liked the books so much?

## WE ARE ALL BORN FREE AND EQUAL

The atrocities of World War II sparked a determination to protect the rights of all human beings everywhere. On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The preamble says it must be shared, learned by children and be a part of all our lives.

When using these notes, you can download for reference:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights simplified version, especially useful for younger children [amnesty.org.uk/udhr](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/udhr)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [unicef.org/crc](https://www.unicef.org/crc)

For more free educational resources from Amnesty International go to [amnesty.org.uk/education](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/education)



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