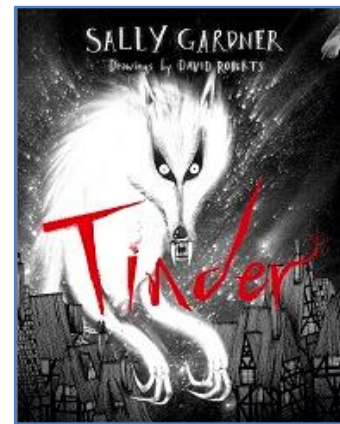


Title: **Tinder**

Illustrator: **David Roberts**

Author: **Sally Gardner**

Publisher: **Orion Children's Books**



First look

- Sally Gardner's *Tinder* is a very powerful book. It may be too challenging a read for younger pupils so for Greenaway shadowers for whom reading the whole novel would be inappropriate, it is possible to concentrate on the visual text. If that is necessary, explain the themes of the story to the shadowers – the elements of fear, magic and mystery – before looking through the book at all the illustrations.
- Chat in pairs or as a group about whether they like the pictures and decorations in *Tinder*. On first encounter, what did they like or dislike about the illustrations – and why?

Look again

Sally Gardner's novel, *Tinder*, is set towards the end of the Thirty Years War which ravaged Europe from 1618 to 1648. The artist, David Roberts, is greatly admired for his illustrations of children's books; his artwork for *Tinder*, which provides a visual interpretation of time, setting and character, deserves as much attention by readers as does the writing. After looking through at all the illustrations, it may be beneficial to select three or four for particularly close consideration. Start by leading youngsters into the visual text with the following steps:

- Look at the title on the cover of the book – *Tinder*. What is tinder? Are the colour and shape of the lettering well chosen for this title? What other small but significant marks add to the meaning of the word 'tinder'? If you have a hardback version look at the images under the dust jacket.
- Open the book at the first end paper. The space is filled with red, etched lines criss-crossing it like a spider's web. As you look at all the artwork, keep in mind how the artist has chosen to use colour, line, shape and space. Not just drawings but every mark and shape will be significant. For example, what is special about the dark patches with white writing?
- The illustrations are all in shades of black on white (called 'grayscale' on computer printers) except for the use of red. Why is red an effective choice if colour for this story? What feelings do you associate with the colour red? Look for the way red is employed throughout the book?
- 'I saw Death walking.' From the endpaper, turn page by page, looking closely at the images, until you reach page 6. What can you see on each page? You have gradually been introduced to the opening scene. Did you see Death arriving before you saw him on page 7?
- Go through chapters 2 and 3 looking at how page layout works to enhance both words and image. Look at how generous the designer has been with white space. Page 29 has a particularly haunting representation of loneliness and fear as the young man wakes from a nightmare. How is this achieved?
- Keeping in mind the use of colour, space and David Roberts' skilful use of line and shape – go through the book observing the crucial role played by the images in making a significant contribution to meaning making as well as creating atmosphere.

Talk about any visual aspect of the book that interests you, i.e. end papers, font choices, title pages and layout. How do the graphic 'extras' contribute to the overall impact of the book?

Interpreting the texts

It is always beneficial, when studying a book, to use tasks which require imaginative response to encourage students to engage fully with the text. The following suggestions may help the group of young readers to become engrossed in the book.

Reference texts to explore

If possible make up a collection of books, websites, artwork and historical pictures that will support the understanding of life and death in 17th century Europe. It would be useful, for instance, to have:

- a copy of the original tale of *The Tinder Box*
- information about werewolves
- texts about warfare in the 1600s.

Discussion

We can read this story at a literal level without seeking further meanings. Or we can see deeper metaphorical meanings in both the word and visual texts. What is your opinion? Do you think it has deeper meanings? Can you make any links between the fate of the young soldier following his harrowing war experience and events happening today? Share your conclusions with the whole group.

Creative Arts

It would be possible, given time, to put together a presentation based on *Tinder*. A combination of the following suggestions would entail a total immersion of the text by all taking part. However, each suggestion can also work as a separate activity.

- Choose part of the story as a focus for a dramatic improvisation. Make the interpretation of the text in as vivid a way as possible using any techniques that you wish for drama, mime or movement.
- Use instruments or other ways of creating sound to create music or sound effects to evoke the feeling of the story.
- This story is written in beautifully crafted language. Using words you have chosen from the story (the dream sequences would work well for this) prepare a public reading. It could be organised for one voice or by a group of readers.
- Using only white pastel, chalk or crayon on black paper draw a werewolf, a battle field or a ghostly figure from the story. Add a touch of red to your drawing.

