



# The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal Shortlist 2018

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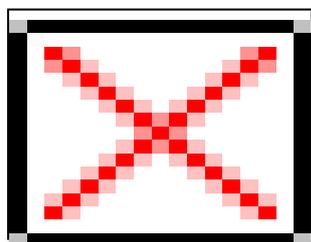
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The **Kate Greenaway Medal** 2018 shortlist appraised by **Derek Brazell**

Mixing the unsettling with the saccharine, the informative with the empowering, the **Kate Greenaway Medal** shortlisted books bring a breadth of visual approaches, depicting animals (of course), nasty bullies and a troll from another world, with stories emphasising how the lives of children - and adults - can be filled with uncertainty but also wonder.

The jury has chosen an interesting shortlist, one which includes Levi Pinfold's richly atmospheric images in **The Song from Somewhere Else**, which clearly had to make the final six, and **Night Shift**, an exploration of the debilitating nature of depression from Debi Gliori.



Filled with light and shade, **Town Is By The Sea** is a less explicitly dark story than others on the list, focusing on traditions and the rhythm of days. Living in a costal coal mining town, a young boy narrates how his days goes by - from the early morning sounds waking him up, to visiting his grandfather's grave by the sea to the family's meal at the end of the day. The sea is a constant throughout, exquisitely realised by Sydney Smith, whose paintings of the ocean in many moods effectively capture the dazzle of sunlight off the water or the soft wash of waves on the shore.

However a mantra emerges through the book ? ?And deep down under that sea, my father is digging for coal?, with the image revealing miners in a narrow coal face with rapid strokes evoking the oppressive denseness of the rock which bears down on them. An ominous sensation builds which undercuts any element of nostalgia in the tale - is father safe down there? Is he going to come home?

A touchingly tender illustration of the family snuggled on their balcony bench in the evening contrasts with Joanne Schwartz's text reminding us that father will continue to dig for coal beneath the sea they look out over. As the book draws to a close, the boy anticipates an already written future as a coal miner, while the adult reader with their knowledge of a dying industry, feels a simultaneous loss.

Two lives intertwine in **Thornhill** ? one in words and one in monochrome pictures. Pam Smy lures the reader in with the dark

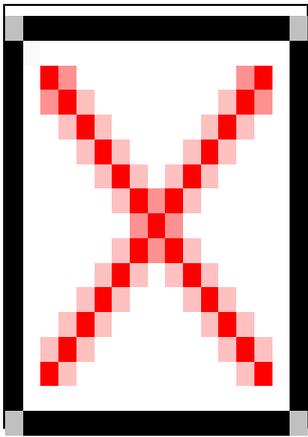
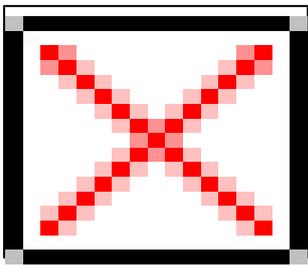


image of an abandoned building overlooked by Ella, a recently motherless girl, unpacking in her new home. Family connections are absent here. Diary entry texts from the early Eighties reveal the struggles facing an orphan dealing with the soul crushing behaviour of a gang-leading bully, both of them living in Thornhill orphanage before it was left empty. Images repetitively zoom in as the pages turn, heightening emotions as both Mary, in the past, and Ella in the present try to change their futures ? Mary by constructing her ideal adoptive family with puppets and Ella by changing the past to help the ghostly Mary whom she glimpses in the overgrown Thornhill garden.

The book is predominantly made up of illustrations, but both the visual and written stories reveal tension raising clues, with the soft grey and black tones of the images turning to solid black spreads between episodes ? an effective pause that leaves the reader hesitating over the next page turn.

Desperation builds and there?s heart in the mouth feeling as Mary?s seemingly hopeless situation closes down. Good stories don?t always go the way you expect them to, and Smy creates a compelling narrative through images constructed with realistic detail and concise text that let the reader choose their own pace while following the darkening story.

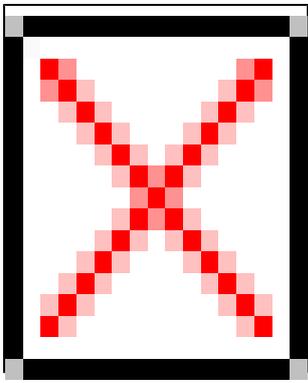


The graphic cover of **Night Shift** signals that this book isn?t aimed at young children. Its lone character is ageless, but she is carrying a burden that can afflict any age ? that of depression. Although initially visually represented by a fog, author illustrator Debi Gliori introduces the form of a spikey, clawed dragon to depict the weighty, constantly lurking and oppressive condition.

Absence of colour feels appropriate to the subject, and Gliori only introduces a shock of orange when the dragon batters the character with fire while she tries to find ?the ability to survive inside my own darkness?. Gliori creates strong visuals to emphasise her character?s struggles. Striking a match to light the darkness and being literally smothered by burnt matches becomes a powerful metaphor for repeatedly trying to find a way to lift the dark, without success.

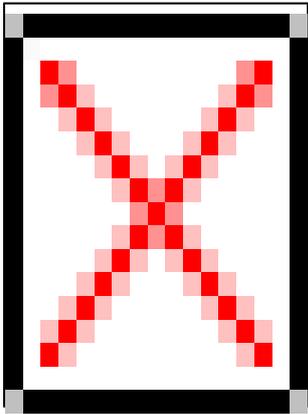
An indication of a change on a seashore ends this short book, with an engaging visual shift, the ever-present dragons turning to diving seabirds as the character discovers a thing of beauty, a feather, that may inspire a ?shift? in her.

There are no such burdens in **Under the same Sky**, whose delicately coloured textural artwork doesn?t do enough to elevate



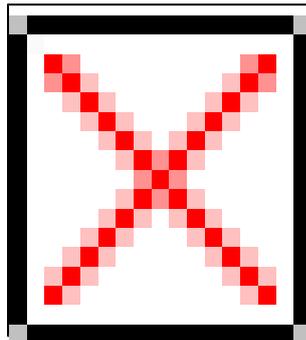
Britta Teckentrup's message of togetherness. It may remind Londoners of the facile messages written up in tube stations exhorting travellers to recognise the brightness in their day. Little children may be puzzled by the book's conclusion that 'we all share the same dream' when that dream is unspecified. Although attractive, there's not enough going on in the images to give the book enough weight.

In contrast **The Song from Somewhere Else** has a riveting story by A.F. Harrold combined with wonderful, disquieting illustrations by Levi Pinfold. The image placement is exemplary here, illustrations spread across double pages, full pages or vignettes creating a parallel tension as the emphasis shifts from text to image without ever interrupting the flow. Trees twist out the darkness and shadows hint at threats from another world. Pale textural marks cross the edges of the main text spreads binding the pages of the book in one whole.



Pinfold's monochrome illustrations are beautifully composed, perfectly mirroring the atmosphere of the written story as young Frank discovers a new friend's link with another world through following a strange, tantalising music at his home. Even a double page image of stinging nettles 'Frank is dangled over them by bullies' is conveyed with mysterious menace. Sound is difficult to convey in an image, but Pinfold does this very effectively, brush stroke shapes swirling across the picture representing the alien music.

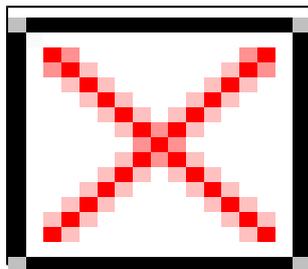
The variety of techniques Petr Horáček brings to his illustrations for **A First Book of Animals** are a distant contrast to the flat Charley Harper influenced graphic approach which many non-fiction books are embracing. Pencil, paint, pastel, watercolour and collaged elements all feature. Those spreads packed with creatures jump out: rows of many coloured beetles and a flock of arctic turns darting across the pages engage the eye. Other pages feel more muted and don't appear to capture the essence of the depicted creature, although some fantastically rich colours lift the artwork. An



orang-utan dazzles in a green canopy, and a deep blue night sky sets the scene for Nicola Davies' text contrasting the singing of a nightingale with that of a humpback whale.

Laura Carlin's soft tones and textural marks are perfect to introduce a story of a young Italian boy relocated to a smoky, rainy mining town in the UK (like **Town Is By The Sea**, set in a mid-century past). The undefined edges of the images

in **King of the Sky** give an impressionistic vision of the grey town, which leaps to a golden yellow as the boy recalls his sunny native country.



Befriending an old man who races pigeons, the boy is given a bird and names him King of the Sky. As the man's health deteriorates the boy takes over the pigeon duties, finding a purpose in their care and training ? can his bird win an important race? Carlin creates expressive body language in her depictions of the boy as his emotions shift, and with his mother and baby sister often glimpsed in the illustrations she conveys his background life. The subtlety here is a pleasure.

I wouldn't have chosen all of these books for the shortlist, but several of them communicate one of the best things about illustration ? the power to move - with mood impressively conveyed through black and white tone illustrations bringing a focus and power to composition, and expressive palettes of colour feasting the eyes. Whoever wins, it's always great to see the Greenaway putting illustration in the spotlight.

Derek Brazell is Publishing and Projects Manager at the Association of Illustrators.

**King of the Sky** [3] illustrated by Laura Carlin and written by Nicola Davies (WalkerBooks)

**Night Shift** illustrated and written by Debi Gliori (Hot Key Books)

**A First Book of Animals** illustrated by Petr Horá?ek and written by Nicola Davies (Walker Books)

**The Song from Somewhere Else** illustrated by Levi Pinfold and written by A.F. Harrold (Bloomsbury)

**Town is by the Sea** illustrated by Sydney Smith and written by Joanne Schwartz (Walker Books)

**Thornhill** illustrated and written by Pam Smy (David Fickling Books)

**Under the Same Sky** illustrated and written by Britta Teckentrup (Little Tiger)

Page Number:

14

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