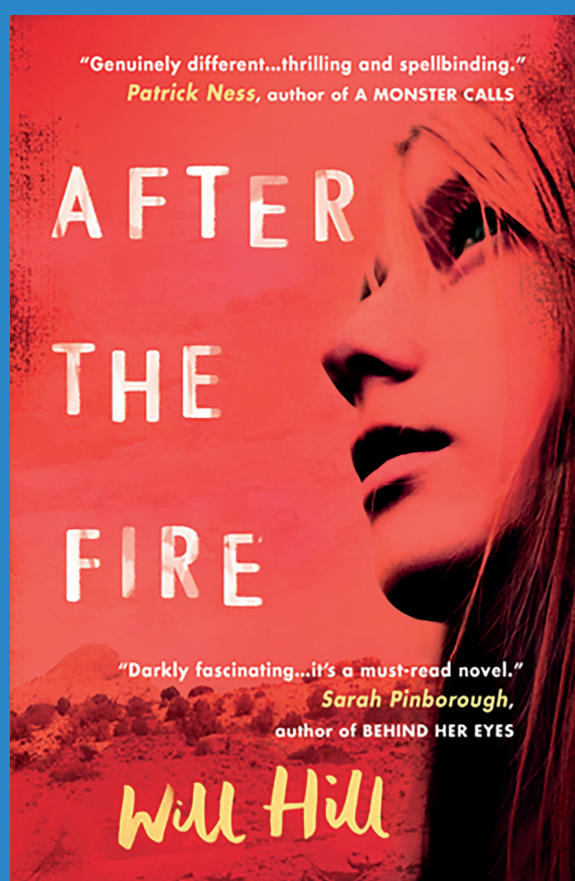


# The Carnegie Shortlist 2018



## EMC Resources: *After The Fire*



# After the Fire, by Will Hill

## Before reading

### Making predictions

- Working in a pair or in groups of three, choose two of the four prediction tasks, below.
- Pool all your ideas about the novel as a class.
- Keep a note of your ideas so that you can refer back to them as you read.

#### 1. The title

The title of the novel you are going to read is *After the Fire*.

- Working with your partner or group, discuss your ideas about the words in the title and the phrase 'after the fire'.
- Based on your discussion, work together to brainstorm ideas, questions and predictions about the novel, including what genre of story you might expect.

#### 2. Before and after

The book is split into chapters alternately called 'Before' and 'After'.

- Working with your partner or group, discuss why you think a novel might be structured in this way.
- Based on your discussion, work together to brainstorm ideas, questions and predictions about the novel, including what genre of story you might expect.

#### 3. What's in a name

- Look at the names of characters in the novel, below.
- Working with your partner or group discuss what you notice about names, e.g whether there is anything unusual about them, whether you could group them in any way.
- Based on your discussion, work together to brainstorm ideas, questions and predictions about the novel, including what genre of story you might expect.

Moonbeam	Horizon	Amos
Father John, also known as 'The Prophet', also known as John Parson	Dr Robert Hernandez, Head of Psychiatry	Agent Carlyle of the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigations)
Nurse Harrow	Honey	Father Patrick
Luke	Iris	Winter
Lonestar	Angel	Aurora
Rainbow	Bear	Jacob
Nate	Alice	

#### **4. The settings**

The novel takes place in two settings: The Base and The Hospital.

- Read and discuss your ideas about the words and phrases associated with the two settings, below.
- Based on your discussion, work together to brainstorm ideas, questions and predictions about the novel, including what genre of story you might expect.

##### **The Base**

The Legion

Brothers and Sisters

The Servants of the Serpent

The Centurions

The True Path

The Holy Church of the Lord's Legion

##### **The hospital**

A secure unit (a locked mental health ward where people are kept for their own safety)

Interview room 1

Psychiatrist

SSI: supervised social interaction (a small group meet together, watched by psychiatrists through two-way mirrors).

## During reading

### Keeping track of events

Before you start reading the book, you are going to create two maps that include the features listed, below.

- As you read, make a note of the main events in the relevant place on your maps. Number the events as you note them as this will help you to look back at the way the writer reveals information in the novel.

#### Map 1: The Base

- Draw a large oval to represent the perimeter fence. Label inside the fence 'The base'. Label outside the fence 'The desert'. Outside the fence, draw an arrow pointing 'To Layfield' (the nearest town)
- Inside the fence, add the following:
  - The yard
  - The Front Gate
  - A collection of wooden cabins
  - The West Barracks
  - The Chapel
  - The Big House
  - The vegetable garden

#### Map 2: The Hospital

- Interview room 1
- Moonbeam's room
- The SSI (group therapy) room

### Discussing structure: alternating chapters

- Read as far as page 96.

You will have noticed how the chapters alternate between what is happening to Moonbeam in the story in the present and her memories of the past.

- Talk about what you have learnt about Moonbeam from 'Before' chapters in which she explains her life on The Base.
- Talk about what you have learned about Moonbeam from the 'After' chapters.
- Talk about why you think Will Hill uses this alternating structure, for example:
  - how does it create tension?
  - how do the sessions with Dr Hernandez help us to understand her unusual upbringing?

### IN CAPITALS

- Read as far as page 135
- Working in a small group, divide up the chapters you have read so far between you.
- Look back through the chapters you have been allocated and make a note each time you notice a word with a capital letter that would not usually be given a capital. For example, 'Gone'.

- Share your examples and discuss why you think the writer decided to use capital letters for these words.

When Moonbeam hears Father John's voice in her head, this is also written entirely in capital letters.

- Again, discuss with your group why you think the writer chose to do this.

### **Why do people stay?**

- Read as far as page 280.
- Write from the point of view of an adult who decided to join the Lord's Legion willingly. Explain their reasons for joining and for staying with the group, as well as any secret doubts they may have had after joining.

### **Arrivals and Departures**

- Read as far as page 339.
- Working in a small group, discuss the significance of arrivals from Outside and departures from The Base, listed below. Use the prompts that follow to get your discussion started.
- What does each event reveal about Father John and his regime?
  - How does each event affect Father John?
  - How does each event affect the adults on The Base?
  - How does each event affect Moonbeam and her beliefs?

#### **Arrivals**

Nate Childress (arrives page 38)

Amos returns after being beaten up (arrives page 65)

Boxes addressed to James Carmel arrive at The Base (pages 73, 74, 158)

Jacob Reynolds (arrives page 145)

#### **Departures**

Amos takes Horizon to the doctor in Layfield (leaves page 191)

A group leave after The Purge (leaves page 216)

Death of Horizon (page 238)

Nate says goodbye (leaves page 254)

Moon's mother (page 302)

### **Understanding difficult choices**

- Read as far as page 452.
- Allocate the situations, below, to different small groups around the class.

In your group:

- Discuss the issues that the character would have had to weigh up before taking this decision. Think about the good and bad consequences of their actions.
- Decide whether you think they made the right choice.
- Together plan a short piece of feedback to the class about the situation you have been looking at.

### **The situations**

- Moonbeam's mother puts her forward as a 'Future Wife' for Father John.
- Nate Childress turns down the position of Centurion and decides to leave The Base.
- Honey refuses when Father John tries to claim her as a wife, even though her own mother will not support her decision.
- Moonbeam uses the secret mobile phone Nate gave her to ring the sheriff's office.
- Moonbeam shoots Father John.

### **Moonbeam's mother**

Read as far as page 467.

In the next chapter, Moonbeam is going to meet her mother.

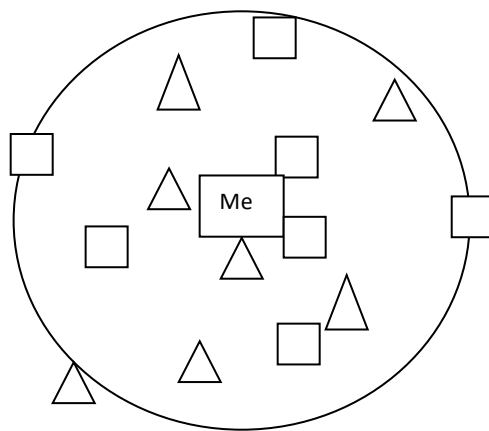
- Working in a group of four, share your ideas about Moonbeam's relationship with her mother, using the prompts, below, to help you.
  - How does Moonbeam feel about her mother in the first few chapters of the novel?
  - How does her understanding of the way her mother behaves change during the novel and why?
- Split into two pairs. Role play the way you think the meeting between Moon and her mother might go, based on what you know about their relationship in the rest of the book.
- Watch the other pair's role play and discuss similarities and differences in the way you though the meeting might play out.
- Read the next chapter.
- As a class, discuss the way the writer chose to present the meeting.

## After reading

### Who can you trust? A Circle of Intimacy

- On a piece of plain paper, you are going to draw a diagram to show the relationships between yourself and the people who are important in your life.
- In the centre, put yourself. Triangles represent girls or women and squares represent boys or men. Now place the people who are important in your life on the diagram. The closer they are to the centre, the more you trust and feel you can rely on them. There is no need to label your diagram with people's names, it's probably better if you keep this information private. This is called a 'circle of intimacy'.

An example of one person's circle of intimacy is shown below, as an example.



- Now work with a partner to do a similar diagram for one of the characters in the novel, for example Moonbeam, Father John, Nate Childress or Honey. What do you notice? Did you find that the diagram would look different at different stages of the novel?
- As a class, share some of your findings and discuss what your diagrams tell you about the way Father John controls the people on The Base.

### First person narrator

- Choose a short section of the novel and re-write it in the third person.
- Join with a small group and take it in turns to read out the original text and then your version in the third person.
- As a group, discuss why you think the writer chose to use a first person narrator in this novel. You could think about the following questions.
  - Does the use of the first person make the story seem more realistic? Why/why not?
  - Does the use of the first person make you care more about what happens to Moonbeam? Why?
  - Does the use of the first person give you a new perspective on things we generally take for granted, such as whether society's rules and punishments are any fairer than the ones inside The Base?
  - Does the use of the first person create more suspense and tension? Why/why not?

## **Moonbeam and Agent Carlyle**

You are going to imagine that Agent Carlyle is writing up his own notes from the sessions with Moonbeam, explaining what he has found out, what state he thinks Moonbeam is in and his own thoughts and feelings about the case.

- Working with a partner, find three key moments in Moonbeam's relationship with Agent Carlyle. Find one from near the beginning of the book, something in the middle and something from near the end.
- Discuss what you notice about the changes in Agent Carlyle and his relationship with Moonbeam.
- Working on your own, write Agent Carlyle's notes from each of the three moments, bringing out the way things change over the course of the novel.

## **Cults**

The writer says that events of the Waco siege, involving a cult called the Branch Davidians, sparked the story but that his novel is only loosely based on the real events.

- Research the real events of Waco. How far has the writer stuck to the facts? Where has he made his own way?
- What does a story allow a writer to do that a non-fiction account does not?
- Why do you think the writer decided not to tell a fictionalised account of real events?

## **Reading the reviews**

The extracts, below, are all from Amazon reviews of the book and have been grouped under headings: 'The Structure of the Novel', 'Moonbeam', 'Father John' and 'This book is about...'.

- Working with a partner, choose one of the groups of reviews. Discuss which reviewer comes closest to your own view of the book.
- Working on individually, write your own paragraph to express your views about this aspect of the novel. You can draw on the review extracts you have read if you wish.
- Share your ideas as a class.

### **1. The structure of the novel**

A. The 'After' sections don't hold as much tension or action as the 'Before' chapters, but they also have their fair share of drama: some of the survivors are finding it difficult to acclimatise to life Outside, and even as Moonbeam opens up and shares details - however painful - of her life at The Base, there is something she is still reticent to share. After all she's told them, what could be so terrible she feels compelled to never share it with anyone?

B. One of the reasons I liked this book so much was the writing of the sessions between Agent Carlyle, Moonbeam and Dr Hernandez. I loved the idea of caring, cautious Dr Hernandez and fiery, enraged Agent Carlyle having some seriously heated conversations out of Moonbeam's earshot. Dr Hernandez having dealt with numerous cases like Moonbeam's before is much more able to cope with Moonbeam's situation, but we see Agent Carlyle have a really tough time with it, especially as he has a daughter of his own. His anger and distress was really understandable and added a dimension that made this book feel so real. I loved their dynamic and especially the journey we see Agent Carlyle in particular go on through the book.



C. Flicking back and forth between 'Before' and 'After' really helped to build the intrigue and mystery around Moonbeam's secret. What exactly had happened in the compound? How did Moonbeam end up in the 'After'? It was a really great way to explore Moonbeam's character and get to know her through snapshots of her earlier life. It's definitely one of the reasons I felt such a strong pull towards Moonbeam as a character. I really felt like I was living through each conversation with her and there was plenty to shock and enrage me.

## **2. Moonbeam**

A. I loved reading Moonbeam as a main character and had such huge sympathy towards her. It was clear from the beginning that there was more to Moonbeam's story than first meets the eye and the intrigue intensifies as the story moves on and we see Moonbeam coming to terms with her life inside the cult and learn to trust those who have rescued her. Without a doubt Moonbeam has been through a traumatic experience but her ability to trust her own instincts and be able to question everything she thought she knew is such a huge value in her character.

B. Moonbeam is a powerhouse. Her strength and tenacity in the face of something that has torn her small world apart is amazing. I really felt for her and the guilt that she carried around with her. Her resolve in the face of overwhelming odds and terror is truly remarkable. She is not portrayed as a super hero, or an un-relatable character, but as a young girl who has come to the realisation that her whole life has been based on lies, and the adults who surround her are not the protectors she thought they were.

C. Moonbeam is a bit too good to be true. If she really had grown up in that situation from being a very small girl and had then experienced the trauma of losing both parents, I don't see how she could have the strength to fight back against Father John. That didn't seem very realistic to me.

D. The most striking thing about this book for me was how effectively it made me see things from the Moonbeam's perspective. Reading this and looking in from the outside, especially as an atheist, it would be easy to think that it's ridiculous for people to have believed Father John and committed themselves to this way of life. But, through Moonbeam, Will Hill manages to communicate in such a way that I could really see why people believed and to realise how easy it must have been for them to get caught up in it all, either from true belief or from fear, because nothing encourages obedience more than fear.

## **3. Father John**

A. It's very easy for one to spot the flaws, outright lies and deceit that Father John imposed on his flock. It's very easy to say, 'who would believe this?' or why would they believe such an obvious scaremongering tactics. Being on the outside looking in gives us the clarity to question. However, when one has been in such a cut off & intense environment for years, or even born into it, they're so far out of touch with facts and reality that they have no basis for 'normality'. They've been indoctrinated to fear the outside world and told that despicable, vile things will happen to anyone who enters it or questions the way of the True Path. And fear is a very powerful tool.

B. Luke...was just as bad, if not worse than Father John, but then this was probably due to the brainwashing he was subjected to through his life.

C. Like most good villains, the face of evil is hidden beneath a mask of charm and charisma. It's much easier to believe lies when they're told to you sweetly, the way your parents might disguise the truth so that life makes more sense.

D. Moonbeam slowly comes to terms with her life inside the cult...It's a difficult process, especially with the voice of Father John still in her head, reinforcing fears and doubt in these outsiders, the way he did when she was still within the compound. Even though the presence of Father John and his 'CAPITAL LETTERS AND EXCLAMATION POINTS!!!' is an unpleasant experience, it's also familiar to Moonbeam and because she had associated his voice with security for so long, she perhaps hangs onto the moments a little too much in this strange and new environment.

#### **4. This book is about...**

A. For me, the main theme of the book was control. Whether it was Father John's control over these people or Moonbeam trying to get some kind of control back in her life; everyone is driven by it in their own way; which made the book so fascinating to me. How control can just utterly consume your life. What I really loved was the control that Moonbeam got back when talking to her psychiatrist. She could choose what she told him and when and for someone that's never had control of anything in her life, this was monumental, and it was written so beautifully, that you truly believed in her character.

B. *After the Fire* is an exploration of faith and humanity, but most of all it is a story of survival.

C. This is a mesmerising story of one girl's life before and after The Fire.

D. A look inside a religious cult explaining how and why people's faith becomes twisted and dangerous along with the aftermath and hopeful recovery of young people who have been exposed to this culture.

#### **The ending**

- With a partner, agree where to place the ending of the novel on each of these continuums.
- Join another pair and compare where you decided to place the ending each time.

Happy ←—————→ Sad  
Realistic ←—————→ Unrealistic  
Satisfying ←—————→ Unsatisfying  
The kind of ending I like ←—————→ The kind of ending I don't like

## Cards for Literary Analysis

These cards have been designed for use with any short story or novel. You can select a particular card to work with or rely on your teacher to give you a particular area of focus. You could then work through the bullet points on your card or select a few that seem most interesting or relevant for a particular text.

### Setting

- In which different settings does this story/novel take place? What part does each setting play? Which setting is most significant and why?
- How important is setting to the story/novel as a whole? Does the setting have a particular impact on the story/novel, or could it be set almost anywhere?
- What difference would it make if this story/novel was set somewhere else? E.g. another country, a rural rather than urban setting, in space!
- How effective do you think the writer has been in creating a sense of place? Are there any particular examples of setting you think are particularly well written? If so, why?
- Is there anything particularly interesting or special about the way setting is used and presented? In what ways is it similar or different to stories/novels that explore similar themes and ideas, or that are written in the same genre?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about setting. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

### Characters

- Who is your favourite character, and why?
- Who do you think is the most important character, and why?
- Who are the other significant characters? What different roles do they have?
- What is special or unusual about the way one or more of the characters is presented?
- Which character would you most like to be friends with, and why? Which character might significant adults want you to be friends with, and why?
- Are characters paired or grouped in any particular ways? E.g. friends, rivals, etc. What ideas are raised by these pairs or groupings?
- Are the characters typical of ones found in this kind of story/novel? Are they distinctive and individual, or stereotypes? Explain your answer.
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about characters. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

### Form and structure

- What do you think is interesting about the way this story/novel begins?
- What were the key moments in this story/novel? How did they shape the story/novel as a whole?
- If you had to describe the path of this story/novel, what would it be? E.g. journey from childhood to adulthood, from grief to happiness etc.
- What did you notice about the end of this story/novel? Was it what you were expecting? Did it tie up loose ends, or leave some things unresolved?
- Does this story/novel belong to a particular genre? If so, how does it fit in with other stories that you know in the same genre?
- Does the story/novel use just one form or does it include more than one E.g. letters, diary entries, poems, newspaper reports
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about form and structure. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### Themes and ideas

- What, to you, are the five most important themes and ideas in this story/novel? If you had to narrow your list down to one theme or idea, what would it be and why? In what ways is this theme presented? E.g. if the theme is love, what exactly does the story/novel have to say about love?
- Does this story/novel deal with big issues that affect the whole world, or small ones that affect individual lives? Give reasons for your answer.
- Does this story/novel contain any themes or ideas that have made you look at the world in new ways? If so, what are they, and how have they changed your views?
- Does this story/novel contain any themes and ideas that explore how people should act and behave? If so, what are they and do you agree with how they are presented?
- Are the themes and ideas presented in ways similar or different to other stories you have read, including stories of the same type, or in the same genre?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about themes and ideas. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



## Language

- Identify one or two of your favourite passages in the story/novel where language is used particularly well? Explain how it is used.
- How would you describe the language used in this story/novel overall? E.g. poetic, plain, chatty etc.
- Would you say the language in this story/novel is original or creative in any particular way? If so, how?
- Are there any patterns in the language used? If so, what are they, and what is their effect? Are there any other patterns, such as of imagery and symbolism?
- How is dialogue used in the story/novel? Do characters, for example, speak in particularly distinctive ways?
- Is the language similar to how it is used in similar kinds of stories/novels? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about language. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



## Narrative

- How does the writer try to capture and keep the reader's attention? How successful are they in doing this?
- Is the narrative told in order from beginning to end (a linear narrative), or does it move backwards and forwards in time? What is the effect of the order in which events are told?
- Can you think of any other ways the story/novel could be told? For example, by a different character, or in a different order? How would this affect your experience of reading?
- Would you say that this story/novel is told in a particular original or creative way? If so, how?
- Is this story/novel told in a way that is typical for its genre?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about narrative. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### **Point of view and voice**

- Through whose eyes do we see the events of the story/novel? Do readers get just one point of view or several?
- What do you find interesting about the point or points of view presented?
- If the story/novel is told from different points of view, how does the writer do this?
- What would the story/novel be like if told from someone else's point of view? Whose point of view would you choose, and why?
- How would you describe the tone of voice used to tell the narrative? Does the narrative draw attention to itself by using a particular tone, or is the tone pushed to the background? What is the effect of the choice made by the writer?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about point of view and voice. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### **Audience and overall personal response**

- Who do you think this story/novel was written for, and why? Are there any other groups of people who you think should read it?
- What was your experience of reading this story/novel?
- What would you recommend about this story/novel to other people?
- Which parts of this story/novel did you most enjoy? Were there any parts that you didn't enjoy?
- Do you think this story/novel could be improved in some way? If so, how?
- What other stories (or films, TV, plays etc.) does this story/novel remind you of? In what ways?
- Who do you think should read this book and why?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about personal response and audience. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

