



Teaching Resources

Ages 9-11

Themes: Mystery | Cosy Crime | Teamwork | Investigation

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CREATE YOUR OWN MYSTERY

The Mystery Club needs a new case and this time, you are the author! Plan your own mystery story by deciding what has happened, who might be involved and which clues will help your detectives uncover the truth.



Use each case file to build your mystery before you begin writing.

CASE FILE 1: BUILD YOUR OWN MYSTERY

THE MYSTERY

What has happened? Has something disappeared, has something strange happened, is someone keeping a secret or is there something nobody can explain?

THE SETTING

Where and when will your mystery take place?
Think about how the setting could make the story more mysterious.

THE DETECTIVES

WHO ARE YOUR DETECTIVES?			WHAT ARE THEY GOOD AT?	WHAT COULD MAKE THE CASE DIFFICULT?



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CREATE YOUR OWN MYSTERY

A good mystery gives readers more than one possible explanation. Your suspects can behave suspiciously without being guilty - they might simply have secrets of their own.



CASE FILE 2: SUSPECTS & EVIDENCE

SUSPECT 1

Who are they?	Why might readers suspect them?	What might they be hiding?

SUSPECT 2

Who are they?	Why might readers suspect them?	What might they be hiding?

SUSPECT 3

Who are they?	Why might readers suspect them?	What might they be hiding?

FOLLOW THE CLUES

CLUE 1 Something small that is noticed early on.	CLUE 2 Something that becomes important later.	CLUE 3 The clue that helps solve the mystery.

RED HERRING!

A red herring is something that seems like an important clue but actually leads the detective - and the reader - in the wrong direction. What will yours be?



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CREATE YOUR OWN MYSTERY

Now put your ideas in order. Make sure the mystery grows as the story continues and that your final reveal explains the clues you planted earlier.

CASE FILE 3: SOLVE THE CASE

1. THE BEGINNING

Something strange happens... How will you introduce the mystery?

2. THE INVESTIGATION

Things get more mysterious... What will the detectives discover? Who will they suspect?

3. THE TWIST

Surprise the reader... What changes what the detectives - and the reader - think is happening?

4. THE REVEAL

Mystery solved! Who or what was really responsible? Which clues suddenly make sense?

5. THE ENDING

What happens next? How will the characters react once the truth is discovered?

MYSTERY WRITER'S CHECKLIST

- ☐ an intriguing mystery to solve
- ☐ a detective or team of detectives
- ☐ at least two believable suspects
- ☐ clues that genuinely point towards the solution
- ☐ at least one convincing red herring
- ☐ a surprising but believable reveal
- ☐ an ending that explains the important clues

TOP TIP

The best mystery solutions are surprising and fair. When readers discover the answer, they should be able to look back and realise that the clues were there all along.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – EXTRACT 1

TO BE COMPLETED AFTER READING CHAPTER SEVEN

Extract taken from Chapter Seven of *Malory Towers*
Mystery Club: Kidnap at Midnight by Fleur Hitchcock.

'Of course!' said Bill, leading them across the yard. 'We have greedy Peewit, jumpy Jupiter and Sphinx the grey over there, and there's Ariadne, who is staying with us for a bit if you're feeling brave – she's awfully fast. Are you a good rider?'

Margaret nodded and opened her mouth as if to say something, but stopped. 'Yes,' she said in the end. 'I can ride quite well.'

'Excellent. Perhaps we'll go out at the weekend then: you, me and Sheila. There are some brilliant hacks round here.'

'Gosh,' said Marie, looking over the tops of the stable doors. 'I don't know much about horses, but these two white horses look exactly the same. I wouldn't know the difference.'

Bill laughed. 'One's a boy and one's a girl, but they are very alike. Ariadne, the one on the left, is a finer horse.'

'Who does she belong to?' asked Sheila, rubbing Ariadne's nose. 'She's a beauty!'

'She's a temporary guest. We're looking after her for a while because her regular stable is being renovated.'

Bill stroked Ariadne's neck. 'Not all the horses belong to girls at the school.'

'Oh!' cried Margaret from behind them. 'Sorry! It must be an allergy from the hay.' She turned away from the others, spluttering, tears streaming from her eyes. At the same time, Ariadne whinnied. She stamped her hooves and bashed the stable door.

'How strange,' said Bill. 'She's been placid until now. That's the first time I've seen her at all upset. There, girl,' she said, reaching further up Ariadne's neck. 'It's all right, just someone having a sneeze. Must be all the excitement,' she said to the others.

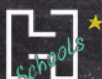


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Margaret nods and opens her mouth "as if to say something, but stopped". Why might the author include that detail? What could it suggest about Margaret?
- Marie says that the two whitehorses "look exactly the same". Why might that detail be important in a mystery story?
- How does Margaret react when she sees Ariadne? Give details from the text.
- Bill says that Ariadne has been "placid until now". How does Ariadne's sudden change help to build the mystery?
- Do you think Margaret really has "an allergy from the hay"? Why or why not?
- If you were Emma, Marie or Sheila, what would you write in the Mystery Club notebook after this moment?



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – EXTRACT 2

TO BE COMPLETED AFTER READING CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Extract taken from Chapter Sixteen of *Malory Towers*
Mystery Club: Kidnap at Midnight by Fleur Hitchcock.

Right! she thought to herself, doing the same and following Margaret to the very bottom of North Tower. While Emma lurked in the scullery doorway, Margaret paused by the outer door and looked out into the sheets of rain.

Is she going out into that? Emma wondered. But Margaret obviously decided that it was too wet.

Emma expected her to turn and go back up the tower steps, so she stepped inside the scullery to let her pass. She waited, listening carefully. To her surprise Margaret's footsteps faded off in a different direction.

No!

Emma sneaked out of the scullery and tiptoed down the last few stairs before finding herself at the end of the long corridor heading towards East Tower.

She could see Margaret ahead of her and watched as she stopped, listened for a moment, and then opened a door.

Taking her shoes off so that she'd be silent on the parquet floor, Emma slid, skidded and finally stopped outside the door that she thought Margaret had gone inside.

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Miss Grayling's office.

Goodness!

The door was closed, so Emma, checking that no one else was in the corridor, pressed her ear to the wooden panels.

She heard the muffled sound of someone dialling the phone, and then Margaret's whispered voice.

'Pater?'

There was a long pause and then Margaret began to talk urgently, but still in whispers.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why does Emma decide to follow Margaret? Which details in the extract make Margaret's behaviour seem suspicious?
- How does the author build tension as Emma follows Margaret through the school? Find details that make the scene feel secretive or suspenseful.
- Why do you think Emma takes off her shoes before moving along the corridor? What does that reveal about her at this moment?
- When Emma realises Margaret has gone into Miss Grayling's office, why is she so shocked?
- Margaret whispers "Pater?" into the phone. What might that tell us about the person she is calling, and why might the author leave this mysterious?
- Do you think Emma is right to listen at the door, or has she gone too far? Explain your view.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – EXTRACT 3

TO BE COMPLETED AFTER READING CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Extract taken from Chapter Twenty-Two of *Malory Towers*
Mystery Club: Kidnap at Midnight by Fleur Hitchcock.

in the soft darkness, but then the clouds drifted from the moon and the yard was illuminated.

'She's already gone,' whispered Sheila. 'They must have led her through the back of the yard, keeping her on the grass.'

'Oh, no!' said Emma. 'Once Persephone is in the horsebox they'll be able to escape. It'll be down to Rita to free her somehow. We can't possibly catch up.'

Sheila swallowed. 'There's one thing faster than a horsebox. Cloud. If Cloud and I can get to the gates before them, they'll have to stop. That would give Rita a chance to free Persephone from the box while she's still in the school grounds.'

Emma gasped. 'That would be awfully brave. Do you think you could?' she asked, standing back as Sheila swung the door to Cloud's stable open.

'Absolutely sure,' said Sheila.

Emma didn't believe her. 'I'll get his tack,' she replied, feeling very anxious about her friend. Could Sheila really outpace a horsebox and then stop it? On her own?

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Behind Emma, Cloud snorted as Sheila entered his stall.

Emma heard Sheila talking. 'Hello, boy. I know this is odd, but we're going for a ride in the middle of the night.' As Sheila calmed Cloud, who was definitely unsettled by the unexpected visitors, Emma slung the saddle over the door and approached Cloud with his bridle. He was quiet as the two girls got him ready and tightened his girth.

They'd taken less than a minute.

As they led Cloud out into the yard, they could hear giggling fading away, towards the drive. It sounded like Jack and the others had managed to engage in some delaying tactics.

Good.

Sheila was just about to swing up into the saddle when, startled, Emma yelped, 'Hey!'

'Bill!' breathed Sheila as a figure emerged from the darkness.

'Sheila? Emma?' asked Bill. 'What's going on?'

'Shhh,' said Emma. 'They're stealing Persephone – sorry, Ariadne.'

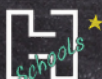
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why does Sheila believe Cloud is their only chance of stopping the horsebox? Use details from the extract to support your answer.
- Emma says, "That would be awfully brave." What does this show about how she sees Sheila's plan?
- Sheila says she is "Absolutely sure", but Emma "didn't believe her". What does that reveal about bravery in this moment?
- How does the author make the scene feel urgent and tense as the girls prepare Cloud for the ride?
- What does Emma's decision to help Sheila straight away reveal about their friendship and about Emma's character?
- Do you think Sheila's plan is brave, risky, or both? Explain your answer.



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CHARACTER STUDY – EMMA SWIFT



While reading *Malory Towers Mystery Club: Kidnap at Midnight* by Fleur Hitchcock, gather information about the main character, Emma. Add to each category as the story develops and you learn more about her.



What do you know about Emma?

How do Emma's thoughts and feelings about Malory Towers change?

What does Emma notice and discover as the mystery develops?

How does Emma's role in the Mystery Club develop?



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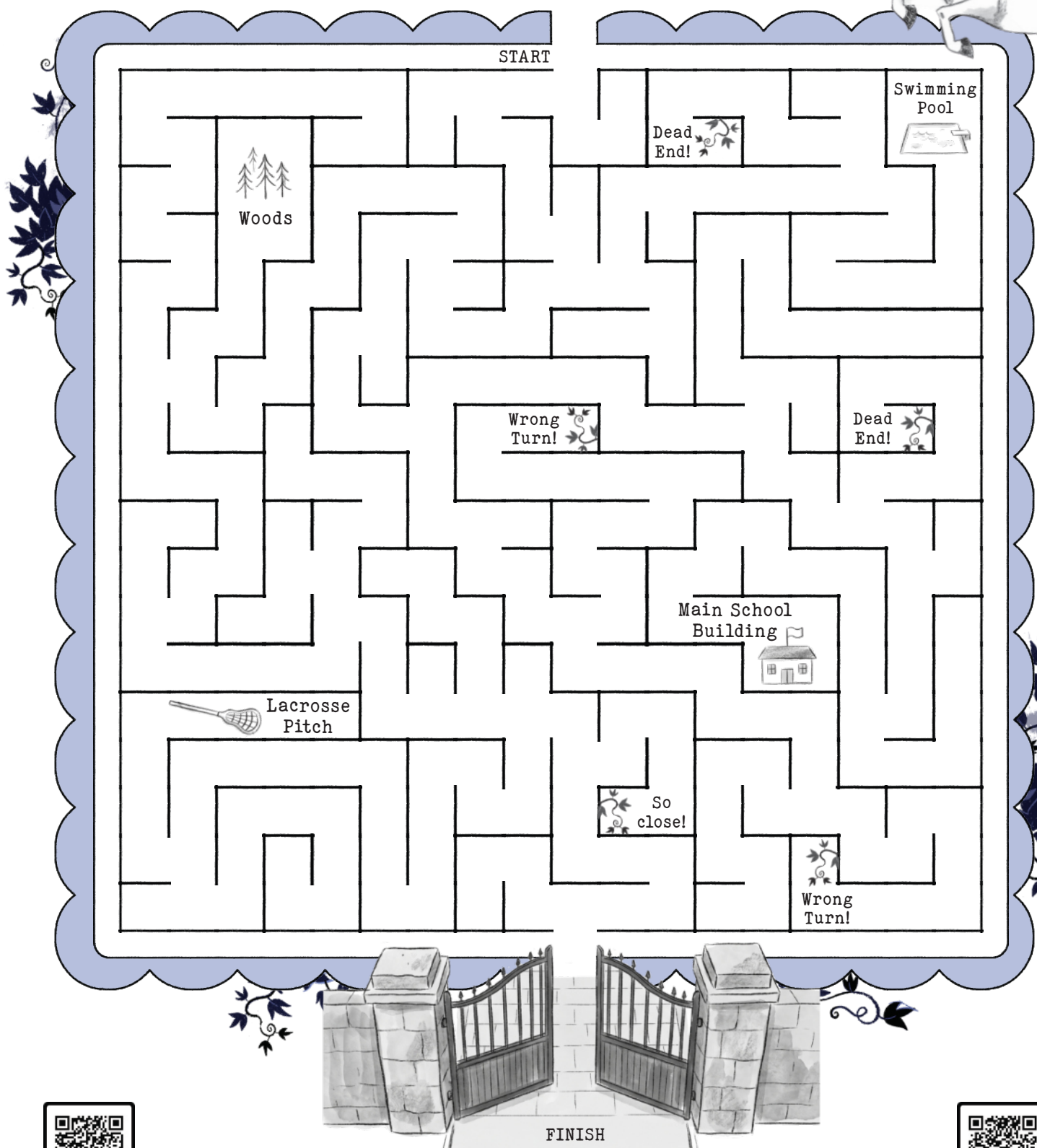


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MIDNIGHT MYSTERY MAZE

The horsebox is heading for the gates and Sheila, Emma and Cloud need to get there first! Help them race through the Malory Towers grounds and reach the school gates before the horsebox escapes. Watch out for wrong turns, dead ends and distractions along the way. Can you guide them to the finish in time?



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