

Me and the Robbersons

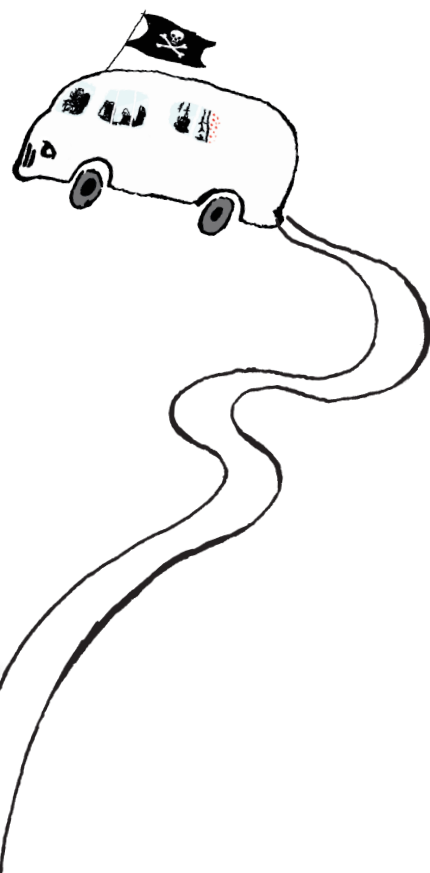
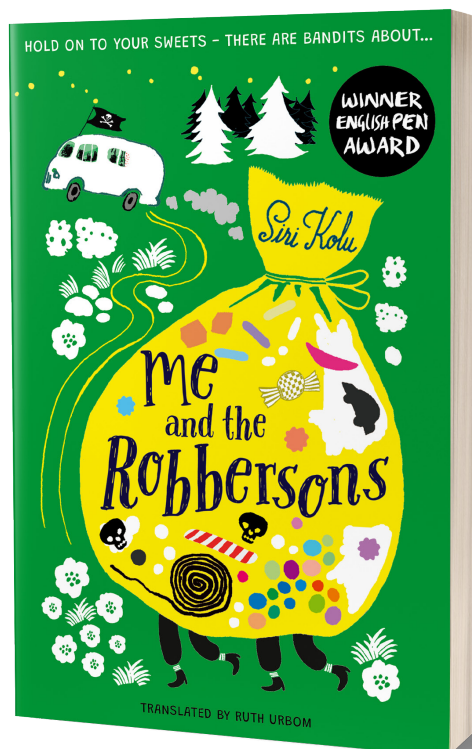
WRITTEN BY SIRI KOLU
TRANSLATED BY RUTH URBOM

**A MADCAP STORY STARRING A BANDIT FAMILY, A LOT OF SWEETS
AND A GIRL WHO IS READY FOR ADVENTURE...**

Maisie is convinced her summer holiday is going to be as boring as ever – until a bungled raid on her family's car sees her snatched by the Robbersons, a bunch of bandits with an insatiable appetite for sweets!

Soon Maisie realizes that life on the open road with the Robbersons is the adventure she's always longed for. They've even started to see her as one of the gang! So when she discovers that the police and her parents are hot on their trail, Maisie decides she isn't quite ready to be rescued...

A fresh and fun story about what it really means to escape, *ME AND THE ROBBERSONS* is perfect for fans of Roald Dahl, Danny Wallace's *HAMISH* series and *THE SUPER MIRACULOUS JOURNEY OF FREDDIE YATES*.





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FRONT COVER

(Cover and design by Tuuli
Juusela and Sophie Bransby)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Ask children the following when looking at the front cover:

- What do you think the book will be about?
- What things can you see on the front cover?
- Why do you think the book has the title Me and the Robbersons?
- What kind of story will it be? What genre do you think it belongs to?
- Who might enjoy it?
- Based on the cover, who might you recommend it to? Why?

Now read the blurb on the inside front cover – were any of your predictions correct?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write what children can observe (I can see ...); what they can infer (I think ... because ...); and what they want to question about the cover (I wonder if/what ...? etc.).

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ART • After reading the book, use what you now know to draw alternative covers for the book.





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CHAPTER 1

in which we find out what a bandit van is like and about Wild Karl's spur-of-the-moment hold-up

(pages 1-15)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- When does the person telling the story in this chapter get stolen?
- What were the two sisters arguing over in the back of the car? Have you ever had an argument with a sibling or relative like this?
- What is a bandit?
- Who is telling the story in this chapter? What did Maisie take with her when being stolen by the bandits?
- What does it mean to do something on the 'spur-of-the-moment'?
- In your own words, can you explain what a ransom is?
- Which other characters are we introduced to in this chapter? What do we learn about them? Are they similar at all?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a short recount of a time when you went on a family holiday. Remember to include the 5Ws (Who? What? Where? When? Why?) within your writing.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

DRAMA • In small groups, re-enact the stealing scene in the bandit van. Freeze frame at different points and reflect on what each character is feeling. Don't use any dialogue. Make sure to show the reactions of Maisie and her family towards the Robbersons.

PSHE • This story starts off with Maisie being stolen from her family by the Robbersons. Is the act of stealing ever right?





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CHAPTER 2

which is quite short, but long enough for Maisie to escape

(pages 16-19)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Where did they pitch camp?
- What does Maisie plan to do? Why and how does she think she will go about it?
- Do you think her plan will work?
- How do we know that Maisie is feeling nervous whilst trying to escape?
- What does it mean to have a 'hankering' for something?
- How is Hellie described? What can you infer about her character?
- What is an 'excursion'? Have you been on one?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a character profile for Maisie including all the information that you know about her already and anything you can infer so far.

Write a plan of action detailing how Maisie could escape from the Robbersons.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

OUTDOOR EDUCATION • As this chapter mentions camping and excursions, use this as an opportunity to explore the local area around your school or to use the outdoors. Learn how to pitch a tent, make a shelter and some outdoor skills.





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CHAPTER 3

in which we learn the basics
of real robber cooking
(pages 20-24)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What did Maisie smell upon waking up?
- Who is responsible for guarding Maisie at the beginning of this chapter?
- What items of food are on the table? List as many as you can.
- Do you agree with Wild Karl when he says that 'breakfast is the most important meal of the day'? Why?
- How is eating breakfast with the Robbersons different for Maisie compared to eating with her family back at home?
- Why is breakfast so important to the Robbersons?
- How do you think Maisie is feeling at the end of this chapter?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a diary entry detailing what eating breakfast at your house is usually like. Is it more like Maisie when she eats with the Robbersons or back at home with her family?

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SCIENCE • There is a saying that 'breakfast is the most important meal of the day'. Talk more about how eating breakfast is a significant part of the day. Research the foods that are good to eat for breakfast, such as those with slow-release energy, and create a presentation about the effects of eating a healthy balanced breakfast.





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CHAPTER 4

in which there is a
whole load of robbing
(pages 25-36)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is a highway robbery? Have you heard of any famous highwaymen throughout history?
- What is the difference between a frontal attack, a chase and an ambush?
- Which simile is used by Wild Karl to compare the act of a chase to?
- What do the Robbersons do when they are robbing to show they are taking over? Why do they hoist the pirate flag?
- What does it mean to 'grimace' at someone? Can you act this out with a partner?
- Who seems like the Robbersons' favourite child? How do you know this? Refer to the text to help you explain.
- What do you think might happen to Maisie and the Robbersons next?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Using the list of ten qualities needed to become a good bandit listed in this chapter, re-order them in the order you think they should go in from most important to least important. After you have done this, explain your thinking.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

HISTORY • Research more about the history of highwaymen, especially during the eighteenth century. Find out more about famous highwaymen like Dick Turpin, John Rann and Twm Sion Cati.

ENGLISH • Read, learn and perform the poem 'The Highwayman' by Alfred Noyes. Record your performances.





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CHAPTER 5

in which a kiosk is held up and
an important matter known as
alien puke is discussed

(pages 37-51)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why are the words 'breakneck speed' used to describe the way Hilda drives the van? What does this suggest?
- What is alien puke?
- How does Maisie's mood change when spending more time with the Robbersons? What does this show about her?
- Why does she feel she has to act glum towards the Robbersons?
- Can you find a synonym to describe a robbery in this chapter? (heist)
- How does Hellie act towards Maisie? Why does this remind her of her relationship with Primrose?
- What causes Maisie to react by snapping her diary shut?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a prediction paragraph about why you think the Robbersons visit the cottage.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SCIENCE • During this chapter, we are introduced to the love of sweets that the Robbersons have. Using confectionery, classify and sort a selection of different sweets according to a range of criteria. You could think about characteristics or features such as: main ingredient, structure, shape, size or colour.

ART & DESIGN • Create your own super sweet and sketch it.





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CHAPTER 6

in which Maisie becomes
a proper bandit
(pages 52-64)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is Maisie's full name? Why is this included in the report? Does it tell the reader anything more about her?
- Which family do the Robbersons want to be like? Why do they compare themselves? What does this show about them?
- How is the relationship between Maisie and Hellie developing?
- What game do the Robbersons play to decide who gets to sleep where?
- Why do the Robbersons still try to help Wild Karl to win the game even though Maisie says that he has not won?
- What does Maisie's room look like at home?
- Who do you think Maisie's suggested target is when she talks about doing another heist at the end of this chapter?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Using the beginning of the report in the newspaper in this chapter as inspiration, write your own newspaper report commenting on Maisie's disappearance.

Write a short description of your room at home and what you have in it. Explain the significance of some of the things you have.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

DRAMA • Present a television broadcast breaking the news that Maisie has been missing from her family. Interview the family members to show their reactions.

ART • Using the description in this chapter, sketch what Maisie's room looks like.





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CHAPTER 7

in which Maisie commits
her signature crime
(pages 65-75)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What are Maisie's mother and father's names?
- Why does her father not believe it is Maisie initially?
- Who is behind the newspaper articles?
- Can you identify a moment in this chapter when the atmosphere changes? Why and how does it change?
- How is the setting of the cinema different for the Robbersons compared to their usual robberies? How does each character show that they are unfamiliar with how to act here?
- What is Maisie's signature crime?
- Why did Hellie look at Maisie in an envious way?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a diary entry from Hellie's perspective detailing the events of this chapter about how she thinks and acts towards Maisie.

Write a setting description of the cinema.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

HISTORY • This chapter mentions a signature crime. Find out more about how crime and punishment has changed throughout the ages. Find out how crimes are solved using modern technology such as forensics and fingerprinting, compared to in earlier historical time periods.





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CHAPTER 8

in which Operation Captain's Coat is launched

(pages 76-88)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why do the Robbersons trust Maisie more now?
- How would you describe the character of Charlie so far?
- What is Wild Karl's 'captain's coat'?
- Why does the author choose to show Hilda's uncertainty for the first time in this chapter?
- Do you feel any sympathy for Wild Karl during this chapter?
- Why does he place so much importance on what he wears?
- Why does he want the captain's coat to be black?
- How does Maisie feel when she hears the names that the Robbersons give to people, especially the way that Hellie describes her father?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine you are Wild Karl. Write an impassioned speech to rally your family together to keep morale high as the Captain.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ART & DESIGN • Plan out a design for the perfect captain's coat for Wild Karl. Label the materials needed to make it. Create a captain's coat out of materials available in the classroom using simple sewing techniques.





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CHAPTER 9

in which some unusual
relatives turn up
(pages 89-94)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why had breakfast been particularly grand that day?
- Why does Hilda forbid Wild Karl to wear his jacket before the Summer Shindig?
- What is a laundrette?
- How do we see that Maisie is starting to develop a conscience towards the robbery victims?
- Where do the Robbersons plan to stop off on the way to the Summer Shindig?
- What is a shindig? Why does Maisie plan to make her escape here?
- How does the woman show that she knows Wild Karl very well? What relation is she to Wild Karl? Who is this woman's alter ego?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a continuation of this chapter, describing what you think happens next when they go into Kate's house.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

GEOGRAPHY • The Finnish flag is mentioned in this chapter. Learn more about the country of Finland, its history and its landscape. Using the internet and a Venn diagram, compare it to the country where you live.





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CHAPTER 10

in which the rules of
Chocolate Sixes and Wild
Karl's story are revealed

(pages 95-103)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why do both Hellie and Charlie kick Maisie in the shins when she asks her question to Kate?
- How is Kate similar to the Robbersons? How is she different?
- How do you play Chocolate Sixes? Summarize the explanation of the game.
- What term of endearment does Kate call Wild Karl? What does this show about her character?
- Why does Maisie act defensively when Kate says that she shouldn't get used to the bandit life?
- Why did Wild Karl choose the bandit life? What new information do we learn about his past?
- How would the Robbersons have been feeling the first year they were on the road?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

After listening to the backstory of Wild Karl from Kate, write a backstory for the character of Hilda to show her history and how she may have chosen the bandit life.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

DRAMA • Work with a partner to act out the exchanges between Maisie, Kate and the other family members during this chapter. Think about body language, expression and tone to convey emotion.





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CHAPTER 11

in which they finally reach
the Summer Shindig

(pages 104-111)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why was it astonishing for Maisie to see Hellie make breakfast?
- Which three adjectives would you choose to use to describe Charlie?
- What does Maisie think about Kate? Does she like her? How do you know?
- Where is the Summer Shindig held?
- How does Hilda feel towards Mrs Farnaby?
- What does Maisie mean when she ends the chapter by saying 'I clearly still had a lot to learn'?
- What does she realize about her feelings towards the family?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write about a time when you have gone to a new event like Maisie does when she arrives at the Summer Shindig. What was it? What did it feel like? What sights did you see?

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ART & DESIGN • Illustrate the scene of the Summer Shindig based on what you know about it from this chapter.





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CHAPTER 12

in which there are
plenty of challenges
(pages 112-119)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does the abbreviation G&G stand for?
- Who usually wins the B&B competition? What does this show about Hilda's character?
- How does the author create tension between Maisie and Hellie in this chapter?
- What is a monogram?
- Why are all the Farnaby wearing clothes with their monogram 'F' on them?
- What does it mean to be a 'commander-in-chief'? Do you know any other jobs or roles where this title is used?
- Why does Hellie wink at the end of this chapter?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Create a timeline of events in the story so far which you can build on as you continue to read.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ART & DESIGN • Create your own monogram using your initials. How can you link your initials in a single design?





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CHAPTER 13

in which the games begin

(pages 120-130)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What was the task for the G&G elimination round?
- How many seconds would they get to guess the contents of the car boot?
- Who do you think Golden Pete means when he says, 'it wasn't hard to guess who smashed up Lenny's train'?
- What do we learn about Charlie and Hellie's relationship in this chapter?
- What is the name of the wrestler that the Robbersons think will be a challenge for Hilda? Why do they say this?
- Which ingredient has been added to the competitors' pies?
- How does this chapter end on a cliff-hanger?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Rewrite this chapter from the point of view of AK Mikkonen, recounting how she felt when defeating all her wrestling competitors to get to the final.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

PHYSICAL EDUCATION • As the sport of wrestling is mentioned in this chapter, learn more about the sport and perform some moves using hall equipment such as mats to land safely.





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CHAPTER 14

in which everything goes
wrong, leading to a car chase
(pages 131-140)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What words are used to describe Maisie's father when she sees him at the petrol-station cafe?
- Why wasn't she surprised to see him there?
- What caused Maisie's dad to feel that he had to come looking for her?
- What advice does Hellie give to Maisie? Why does Maisie not follow Hellie's advice?
- How would you describe the mood in the camp between the Robbersons and the rest of the families?
- Why had the camp turned on the Robbersons?
- What does Hellie mean when she says that the family are more like 'do-badders' than 'do-gooders'?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write your own ending to the story predicting what you think will happen to Maisie and if she will return home to her father.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

MUSIC • Use different instruments to soundtrack for the moment the camp turns against the Robbersons. Think about the volume, tone and tempo of the music to describe the atmosphere.





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CHAPTER 15

in which pros and cons - and
a disguise - are weighed up
(pages 141-150)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does Kate feel upon seeing the Robbersons again?
- How do we know that Maisie feels more serious about being with the Robbersons than she did in the beginning?
- Why does it mean when it says that Kate tried to 'lighten the mood'?
- Who has more power in the sibling relationship of Kate and Karl? Refer to the text to explain your thinking.
- What does Karl always seem to do when things get tough?
- Who called the cops?
- How has the van changed in appearance? Does Karl like it?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write an internal monologue of what Wild Karl thinks about the change in colour and appearance of the van.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ART & DESIGN • Using the description of how the colour of the van has changed, sketch what it looks like now.





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CHAPTER 16

in which a serious
discussion takes place
(pages 151-156)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does Hellie react when Hilda suggests that Karl should retire? Why?
- What is whittling a stick?
- Why is Karl defensive towards Hilda's suggestion?
- How does the writer create tension in the opening of this chapter?
- Why does Charlie want to return back home and go to school?
- What comparison does Maisie draw about the mealtime with the Robbersons?
- What advice would you give Maisie to help her solve the situation between the Robbersons?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a series of questions that you would ask yourself if you were Maisie and had to interview yourself.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

DRAMA • In pairs, one child takes on the role of Maisie and one child takes on the role of questioner. Hotseat the character of Maisie to interview herself and find out what she thinks about how she is going to solve this situation.





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CHAPTER 17

in which Maisie
demonstrates how to give a
bandit van a makeover

(pages 157-164)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Who is the only member of the family Maisie tells about her plan?
- What is a traitor? Why does Wild Karl think Maisie is acting like one?
- What does it mean when Maisie says she's glad the money wasn't 'forged'?
- How has the character of Maisie developed since the start of summer?
- Why does the author show Kate wanting to join the Robbersons? What does this tell us about Kate?
- Why does Maisie describe Kate as a 'woman of steel'?
- How does Maisie help the Robbersons to disguise the van?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a one-paragraph summary of the events in this chapter.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

MATHS • In this chapter, there is the mention of visiting a bank and setting up a bank account. Find out how to open a bank account and the advantages of using one to grow your knowledge of financial education and money.





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CHAPTER 18

in which robbing enters
the 21st century
(pages 165-171)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does the author show that Hellie has not used a computer before?
- What did Maisie's dad use his computer for?
- How did Maisie's dad treat his collection of coins? How was this different to the way he treated Maisie and her sister?
- What is a mutiny?
- Define what it means to do something 'in unison'.
- What are the three conditions that Maisie says?
- How do you think Maisie is feeling at the end of this chapter?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a character description of Kate, now we know more about her.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

COMPUTING • In this chapter, it appears that Hellie has never used a computer before until Maisie shows her. Learn a new computer skill such as word processing, programming or coding and in pairs, help to teach it to a friend.





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CHAPTER 19

in which they go on a trip and
Maisie's plan becomes clear
(pages 172-180)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Find a phrase in the beginning of this chapter that means the same as 'to seek some kind of information'.
- How do we know that Maisie and Hellie have become friendlier towards each other?
- Read to the end of page 129. Predict the destination where they are going.
- What do Hilda and Kate do when Karl tries to make an objection?
- Do you agree with Maisie's plan to help the Robbersons?
- Is there anything Maisie could or should have done differently in this situation?
- How do you think the Robbersons will respond or react to this plan?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a diary entry from the perspective of Charlie showing how you feel about things, especially the relationships you have with Hellie and Wild Karl.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

DRAMA • Role play the scene with Maisie and Hellie. What is the impact of each character's actions? How can you show through their actions that they are becoming friendlier towards each other?





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CHAPTER 20

in which there is a vote
that determines Maisie and
the Robbersons' future

(pages 181-185)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is a majority in a vote?
- Why does Karl's hurt feelings stop him seeing the good points of the plan?
- Why does Golden Pete always follow the lead of Wild Karl during important decisions?
- What does this show about him?
- What does it mean to do things 'unanimously'?
- What does Wild Karl realize about her plan? What else now makes sense?
- What decision do they reach at the end of the chapter? What will happen to Maisie?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a diary entry from Golden Pete, explaining your innermost thoughts about why you feel you have to follow the lead of Wild Karl when making decisions.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

PSHE • In this chapter, the family takes part in a vote. Find out what happens when adults vote, what democracy is and what happens in an election to understand more about a majority.





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CHAPTER 21

in which the bandits' reputation
gets around, for better or worse

(pages 186-192)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why are the words 'This is such a pain' in italics?
- Can you explain what the value of money is?
- What does it mean to lose your cool?
- What is an 'optimistic estimate'?
- How does Hellie become an entrepreneur in this chapter?
- What are the only things that Hellie is interested in?
- How does Maisie feel about Hellie at the end of this chapter?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

What a short explanation about what it means to know the value of money.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

MATHS • The phrase 'value for money' is used in this chapter. Learn more about the history of money, why money was invented, and how you can develop your awareness of value for money in terms of spending.





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CHAPTER 22

which features a shopping
trip - Robberson-style
(pages 193-202)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does it mean if something has 'good intentions'?
- Which foodstuffs did Kate have a six-month supply of?
- Why do Maisie's instincts tell her that things might go spectacularly wrong?
- What type of disguises does Maisie have in her bag for the Robbersons?
- How do we know that the Robbersons have never been to a supermarket before?
Explain your thinking using the text.
- Why are the words 'shopping trolley barricade' an effective way of describing this?
- In what unconventional way do the Robbersons pay for the shopping they have stolen?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a report for the local newspaper describing the strange and hilarious events of seeing the Robbersons in the supermarket.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

DRAMA • Use props to create your own disguise. What clothes would you wear to disguise yourself?

SCIENCE • Learn more about animals that use camouflage to disguise themselves in nature.





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CHAPTER 23

in which they end up in
a familiar car park

(pages 203-216)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does it mean when Maisie says the pasties got 'singed'?
- Why was the morning the best time to get things done?
- What is a 'recce'? Why would Hellie go out on one?
- Why does Maisie feel a 'pang of regret' inside her?
- How do the family always seem to know how the novels written by Kate will end?
- What type of sweet has Golden Pete finally found?
- When does Maisie realize she is close to being back home? What does each of the Robbersons do to say goodbye?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write about a time when you have returned home after a long time away like Maisie does when she is brought back home by the Robbersons. What did it feel like? What did you miss?

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

PSHE • In this chapter, it talks about feeling a 'pang of regret'. Discuss as a class about a time where you have felt the feeling of regret. What caused this feeling? Why?





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EPILOGUE

which takes place during the walk
from the car park to the lift

(page 217)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is an epilogue?
- Why does Maisie think this was the best summer ever?
- What did she become?
- What did she learn?
- Why is the phrase 'I learned' repeated on this page?
- How has her character changed since being with the Robbersons?
- Why are the final lines of this book 'I can hardly wait for next summer'?

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a book review based on your thoughts about the story.

Write a letter to the author, Siri Kolu telling her all about your thoughts and feelings about the book.

Compare your predictions from the start of the story to now – were you right about anything?

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

LITERACY • For each of the main characters in the story, write a sentence summarizing what they have learned about themselves.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING • Prepare and present a one-minute presentation about who is your favourite character in the story and why.

