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Reading at Home

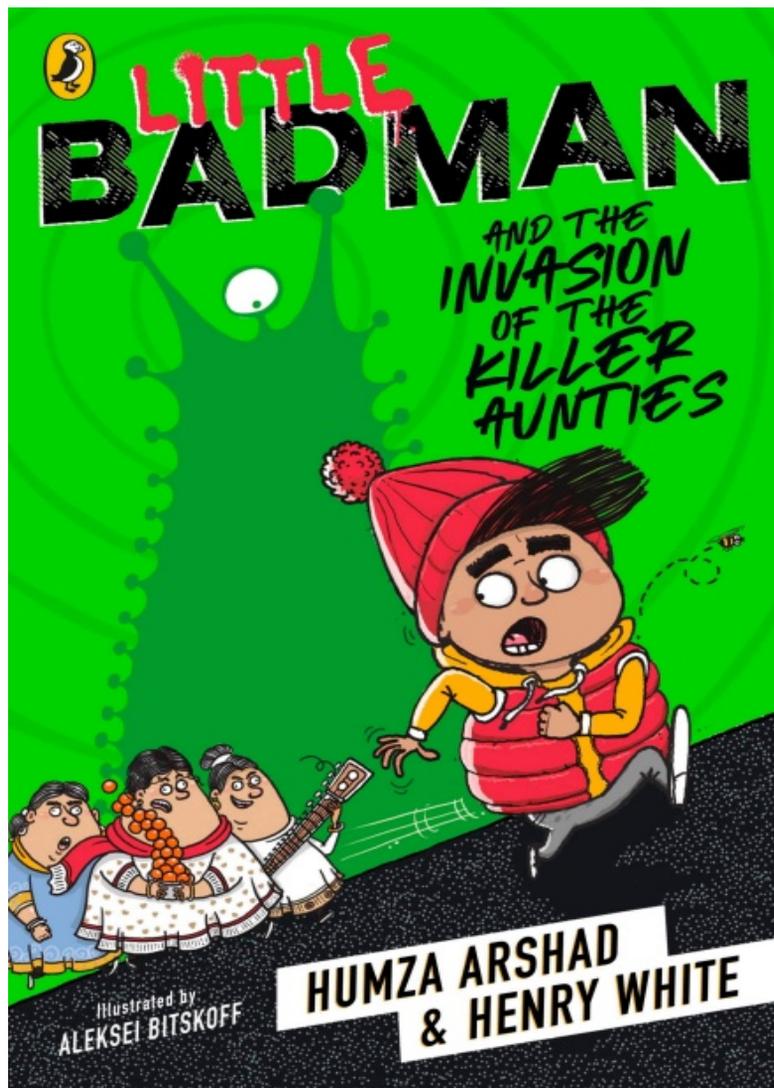
Years 7 - 8

Calling all year 7 and 8 students. We're in the process of expanding our library and we want your ideas on what new books to introduce. This booklet includes extracts from popular novels. It also includes activities to complete which aim to improve your reading skills. Once you've read all of the extracts and completed the activities, choose the book you would like to introduce to the MCA library and inform your English teacher.

Happy reading!

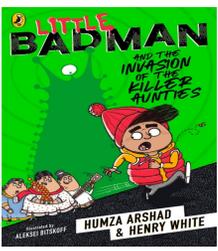
Table of Contents

Book Title and Author(s)	Page #
<i>Little Badman</i> by Hamza Arshad and Henry White	3-8
<i>Undercover Princess</i> by Connie Glynn	10-15
<i>High-Rise Mystery</i> by Sharna Jackson	16-20
<i>My Magical Life</i> by Zach King	21-27



Humza Khan is the greatest 11-year-old rapper Eggington has ever known. The problem is, school has got *really* weird: all the teachers are disappearing and suspicious aunties are taking over.

But when they start to mess with his music, Humza has to get to the bottom of what's going on. With the help of his friends Umer and Wendy, Humza must hunt for the truth. Can he stop the aunties before they carry out their evil plan?



Extract from *Little Badman* - Chapter 1

You've probably heard of me, right? Little Badman. No? Oh. Well. . . Doesn't matter. You will do one day. I'm gonna be big. And not like my Uncle Abdul, who ate his own bodyweight in samosas and ended up in hospital. The good kind of big.

Rich, famous and respected. Like Jay-Z, or that old white man from KFC.

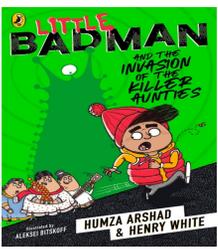
I was always destined to be big. Even when I was born my mum said it was like trying to fit a nappy on a dishwasher. I call it big boned. Whatever. Point is, I'm a big fish in a small pond. Like a shark in a fish bowl, or a pit bull in a hamster cage. Sooner or later, I'm gonna explode out of there and the world is gonna know my name. Humza Khan. But you can call me Little Badman.

My path to greatness wasn't always clear. Even a ninja-rapper-gangster like me has to start somewhere. And I started in the hood. Proper gangland territory: the Little Meadows Primary School, Eggington.

To say there was a lot of gun crime would be an understatement. There was loads. Just not in Eggington. Mostly in America, I think. Still, I reckon it shaped me into the twelve-year-old I am today.

But nothing, and I mean nothing, shaped me as much as my final year at primary school. I don't know if you've ever seen any war movies, about Vietnam or Iraq or the Galactic Empire, but none of that compares to what I went through in my final year at school. To call myself the greatest hero the world has ever known would be arrogant, so I won't do that. I'll leave you all to form your own opinion once you get to the end of my tale.

And, like so many of history's greatest conflicts, it all began with something so small. In my case, it was a bee named Mustafa . . .



Extract from *Little Badman* - Chapter 1

I was sitting in class next to Umer, when his pencil case started to vibrate.

'Is it me or is your pencil case ringing?' I asked, watching the little metal box rattle along the desk.

'Nah, that's just my bee,' replied Umer. 'He's always doing that.'

'Why've you got a bee in your pencil case, man? Let that bee go!'

'No way,' Umer said, trying carefully to peer inside the lid without the bee escaping. 'I'm keeping him. I've never had a pet before.'

'A bee ain't a pet. You can't stroke a bee or teach it tricks. A bee's a bee.'

'Doesn't mean it can't be a pet,' said Umer. 'My cousin had a worm named Liam.'

'Yeah, well, at least a worm ain't gonna sting you.'

'Mustafa wouldn't sting me.'

'Who the hell is Mustafa?'

'My bee,' replied Umer.

'You called your bee Mustafa?'

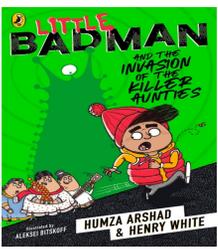
'Yeah, Mustafa Bee.'

'Why?'

'Because I . . . *must-av-a bee*.'

'I don't even know why we're friends, man.'

See, this is the kind of thing I have to put up with.



Extract from *Little Badman* - Chapter 1

I'm not saying Umer's an idiot, but you can only watch someone put their shoes on the wrong feet so many times before you start to wonder. Still, he *is* my best friend. Not forever, obviously. When I'm a famous ninja-rapper I'll probably be best friends with Busta Rhymes or Dr Dre, or one of the Power Rangers. But, for now, I've got to put up with Umer.

'Ow!' shouted Umer, slamming the pencil case shut.

'Did you just get stung?' I asked.

'No,' replied Umer, rubbing his swollen thumb.

'Well . . . maybe.'

'Oh great,' I said. 'Now you've killed him.'

'"Killed him"?' gasped Umer, staring at the pencil case containing his bee. 'What are you talking about? I haven't touched him!'

'You don't have to. Once they sting you, that's it – they die.'

'What? I didn't know that!' cried Umer. 'Why did you do it, Mustafa? Why?'

'Quiet down, man – we're gonna get in trouble.'

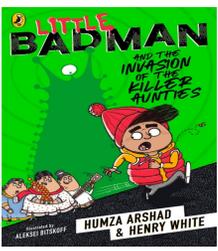
'Oh, Mustafa! Why?' wailed Umer, tears filling his eyes.

'You two!' came a voice from the front of the class. 'What's going on back there?'

'Uh, nothing, miss,' I replied. 'Umer just got stung by a bee.'

'He's dying, miss! He's dying!' bawled Umer.

'Who's dying?' said Miss Crumble, sounding panicked.



Extract from *Little Badman* - Chapter 1



‘Mustafa!’ replied Umer.

‘Who on earth is Mustafa?’ asked Miss Crumble, arriving at the desk.

‘My bee! My poor dead bee!’

‘A bee?’ she said, looking a little nervous and taking a step back.

‘You’re sure he’s dead?’

‘He’s a goner, miss,’ I replied. ‘Umer basically murdered him.’

‘I didn’t mean to!’ wailed Umer.

‘OK, as long as you’re certain he’s dead,’ she said, looking relieved.

‘I’m afraid so, miss,’ I replied, shaking my head.

‘He’s buzzed his last buzz. Gone to the great beehive in the sky. He’s making honey for Tupac.’

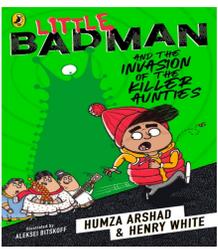
‘For goodness’ sake,’ muttered Miss Crumble.

‘It’s always something with you two, isn’t it?’

‘Don’t blame me,’ I replied. ‘Blame Mr Beekeeper here.’

‘Hey, look!’ Umer beamed, looking up from the open pencil case.

‘He’s not dead after all!’

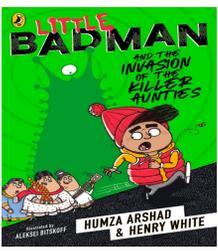


Extract from *Little Badman* - Chapter 1

Now it wasn't long after that that I learned some important lessons about bees. Firstly, not all bees die after they sting you – turns out that's just honeybees. Secondly, big hairy Mustafa was actually a bumblebee and had no intention of dying anytime soon. And thirdly (and this one was probably most important of all), Miss Crumble is, and always has been, super allergic to bee-stings.

Like crazy, serious, life-threatening allergic. Oops.

Miss Crumble let out a scream so loud and horrible that Wendy Wang's glasses shattered right there on her face. Miss C began to flail her arms around like a windmill in a hurricane, desperately trying to swat poor Mustafa.



Extract from *Little Badman* - Chapter 1

Critic's Corner

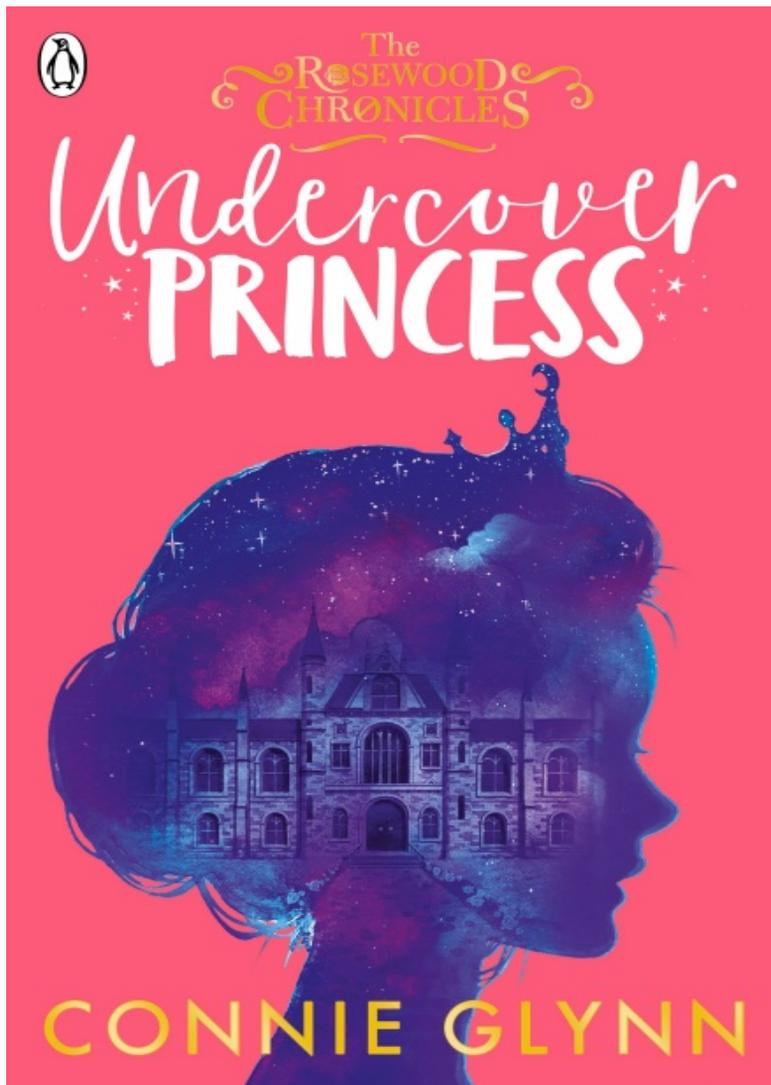
This extract was about

My favourite character so far is

Predictions for the novel:

My personal rating of this extract:





Lottie Pumpkin is an ordinary girl who longs to be a princess. Attending Rosewood Hall on a scholarship, she finds herself rooming with real-life princess Ellie Wolf, who hates being a Princess and would do anything to give up her royal duties.

In this extract, Lottie has just been mistaken as the secret Undercover Princess by her friends at Rosewood. Ellie, the real princess, helps her hatch a plan that will have huge consequences for everyone involved...



Extract from *Undercover Princess*

The tension in the room was so thick Lottie was sure she would suffocate under it. The awkward silence as the two stared each other down was only broken by the soft ticking of the clock above the door. Ellie's eyes were ablaze. She was truly furious and Lottie could feel the intense anger radiating towards her – that same storm she'd felt when she first saw Ellie at the school entrance. She willed herself to say something, anything to break the oppressive silence before it consumed them both.

'I tried to tell them it wasn't true.'

Ellie laughed humourlessly. 'You are so selfish – it's unbelievable.'

Lottie flinched as if she'd been slapped. That stung. She prided herself on being kind, on being welcoming, helpful. Selfishness was the exact opposite of her nature. She hung her head in shame. 'I'm so –'

'I bet it didn't even cross your mind once what this means for the real princess, did it?'

She couldn't argue with that; it hadn't. Not once had it occurred to her that the Maravish princess might actually be at Rosewood. She'd thought it all sounded like a fairy tale. She suddenly felt exceptionally stupid, not just because of her lack of thought but the idea that she could ever pass as an actual princess. A feeling she had never experienced had settled firmly in the bottom of her stomach, hard and cold, and wound its way up through her chest and caught in her throat. She was truly horrified. By not clearing up the misunderstanding as soon as it happened she'd been partly responsible for the rumour spreading. She prayed that this wouldn't affect Ellie's attempt at a normal life.

Ellie stared at her, but Lottie couldn't think of any way to make it better.

'I'm sorry. I tried to tell people it wasn't true, but it got out of hand.' Somehow the words felt empty and useless.



Extract from *Undercover Princess*

Ellie grunted in furious exasperation. She grabbed the photo of her and the mystery boy from her bedside table and sank into her bed, shoulders hunched over in a protective little shell. Her raggedy hair covered her face as she stared intently at the picture. Lottie wondered if the boy in the photo was her boyfriend.

Ellie sighed deeply, placing the picture frame back on the table. 'I'm not going to tell anyone it's not you,' she said firmly.

Lottie was incredibly confused. If Ellie was saying this to make her feel better, then she had to stop her – she couldn't face that much guilt.

'You can if you want to. I know I should have tried harder to correct everyone.'

Lottie sat opposite her on her own bed with a new feeling of resolution. 'You can shame me as much as you want; I completely deserve it.'

'No, you don't understand,' replied Ellie. 'I'm not even mad at you. I'm mad at the situation but . . .' She looked down at the photo again. 'This might actually be a blessing.'

Lottie blinked a few times, trying to understand how this could be a good thing for either of them.

'Maybe –' Ellie paused and took a deep breath – 'maybe it'll be OK if we keep pretending it's you.'

'What?' There was no way she'd heard that right. Ellie responded with her usual little side smile.

Lottie quickly composed herself. 'I mean, if that's really what you want?' The idea that she would actually get to pretend to be a princess sounded like a story she'd made up as a kid.

This caused Ellie to burst into fits of laughter. Lottie was starting to get the feeling she might be better suited for the title Princess of Mood Swings.



Extract from *Undercover Princess*

Ellie wiped the tears forming at the sides of her eyes as she snorted. ‘It’s just so funny. I would do *anything* to be in your position, Lottie. All I’ve ever wanted is to not be a princess . . . And then I end up getting roomed with a girl who’s obsessed with them.’ She let out a long breath. ‘You know before I came to Rosewood I’d only met twenty people in my life? Twenty!’

Lottie’s jaw literally dropped at this statement. ‘Wow!’ she said in amazement. ‘How is that possible?’

Ellie chewed her lip and began fiddling with her locket. ‘I’m the sole heir to the throne of Maradova, but I never wanted to be announced or play the part of the perfect princess so . . . the only option was to hide me away in the palace until one day I’d be ready to take on my role.’

Lottie listened with fascination, her heart aching for the lonely little girl Ellie.

‘Don’t get me wrong. I’d sneak out sometimes, but that started some rumours and my parents had to put me on lockdown. So here I am, fifteen years old, and only the most trusted members of the royal Maravish household even know what I look like.’ Ellie didn’t look up as she finished speaking.

Lottie had thought her life had been challenging, but at least she’d been free to make her own choices.

‘I’m not obsessed . . . with princesses, that is.’ Lottie said the words before she had even processed them. ‘I know it probably seems really childish but –’ Lottie paused but she owed Ellie the truth considering she’d just shared so much with her – ‘it’s my mum. See . . . I got this tiara from my mum before she passed away . . . and she taught me this silly phrase that I say to remind myself to be like a princess when I’m anxious or frightened.’ She was sure Ellie was going to laugh at her, but she couldn’t stop herself. ‘I say “*I will be kind, I will be brave, I will be unstoppable*”. And then everything seems clearer and I’m OK again . . .’ Lottie looked away, scared to see the reaction on Ellie’s face at her childish mantra.



Extract from *Undercover Princess*

‘It’s not silly,’ Ellie said sternly, surprising her. ‘You’re not silly, Lottie – you’re very smart.’

Lottie looked up to see Ellie looking at her with complete and utter candour. She felt the sting of tears prick at the corner of her eyes. She hadn’t realized how much she needed the validation until she got it.

‘Thank you,’ she said softly.

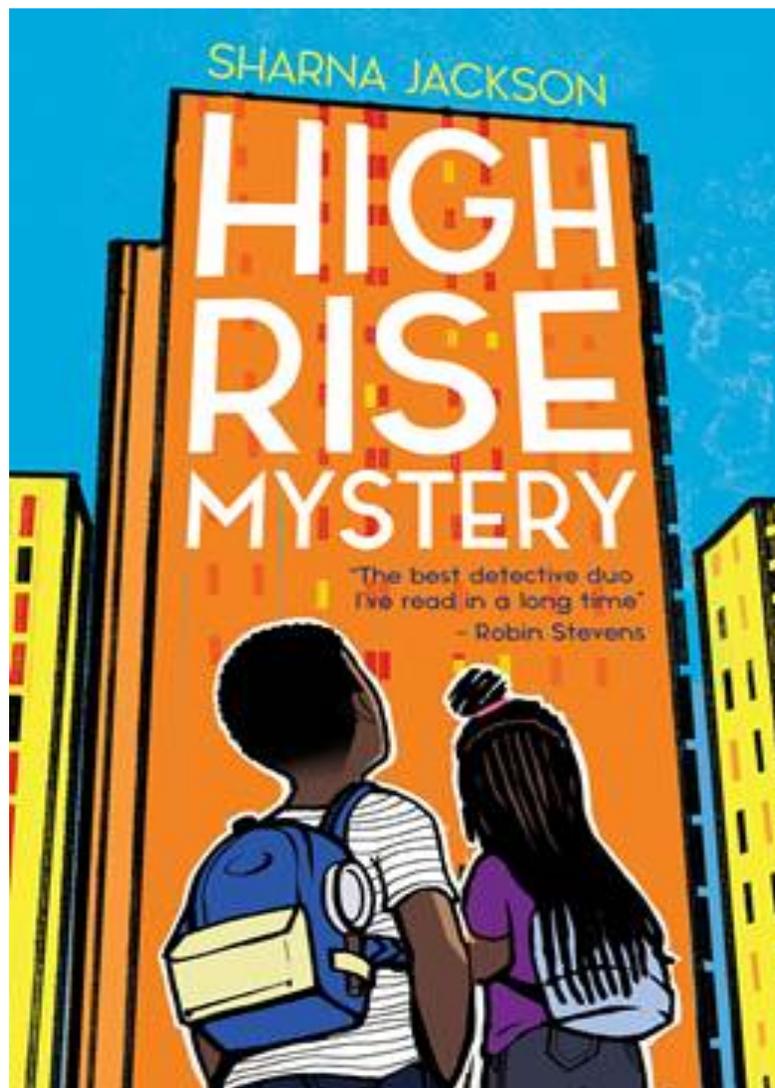


Extract from *Undercover Princess*

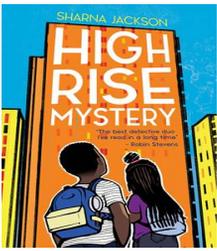
Crystal Ball Predictions

Inside the crystal ball, write at least two things that you think will happen to Lottie in the novel. Outside the crystal ball, make at least two predictions about Ellie.





After finding their community art teacher murdered on their tower block estate ('The Tri'), sisters Nik and Norva are determined to solve this terrible crime. Swinging into action even before the police have arrived, the whip-smart detective duo develop a list of suspects and a plan to identify motives and methods. But over the following days, the evidence starts to point in a confusing direction, one that they really don't want to contemplate...



Extract from *High-Rise Mystery*

If you think finding a body is a fun adventure, you're 33% right.

Hugo Knightley-Webb, 45. Antiques dealer and occasional art teacher. Curly white hair. Straight-up dead.

This was a fact. One I could confirm personally because we – Norva and I – just found his body. 14:27 on July 23rd. The hottest day of the year so far. Thirty-five degrees, and rising.

We knew we'd find him. It wasn't coincidence, or happenstance. No. We knew. But prior knowledge didn't make the discovery any less shocking, or painful.

Or smelly.

We located the body using a system I call my Triangle of Truth. Naturally, it has three angles:

- Facts
- Evidence
- Deduction

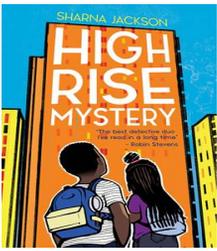
That's just how I work. Me: Anika 'Nik' Alexander, 11. Science-led with a shaved head.

Norva Alexander, 13. My sister. Long braids, short temper. My partner in (solving) crime.

She has her own system. She feels things in her:

- Stomach
- Bones
- Waters

Whatever waters are. I try not to think about Norva's liquids too much.



Extract from *High-Rise Mystery*

That's an apt summation of our collaboration, actually. Norva shouts theories and says seemingly stupid stuff. I then organise those words, and think about them critically. This is, according to Norva, teamwork. According to her; she's the Gut and I'm the Nut. I should be offended, but I'm not. I'm used to it.

To be fair to Norva, we both strongly suspected something was wrong through our noses. It smelled wrong on The Tri since Saturday.

Dead wrong.

The Tri is, apparently, a very special estate. It doesn't feel like it to many of us, though. We made models of it in Art Club once. Straws and papier-mâché. Glue and gravel. Hugo said The Tri was a 'seminal example of Brutalism', but Hugo used to say a lot of random things.

He won't be saying so much now, unfortunately. Ugh, this situation is terrible. I promised myself I wouldn't cry. Again. I'll hold it together.

Yes, The Tri.

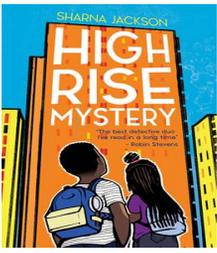
Norva says 'These ends are a scorching hotbed for stories.'

She's not wrong. We've long-solved 'The Graffiti Games', 'Where the Ball At?' and 'The Cat Farm Chronicles'.

But this is different. Bigger. Scarier. Dangerous. The stakes are so much higher.

We'll start a real detective agency one day. A local business, for local people. Give something back to the estate. Our tagline would be: 'If something's going down at The Tri, we know what's up!'

Norva shouted 'Branding!' at the end of that sentence, and flicked her hair in my eyes.



Extract from *High-Rise Mystery*

So that's why we – I – keep files.

The Tri Files.

The files are a top-secret folder that includes but is not limited to:

- Logs
- Checklists
- Tables
- Photographs
- Screen grabs
- Recordings – both audio and video

Which we use to:

- Track movements
- Register events
- Keep logs
- Follow leads
- Find culprits
- Serve justice

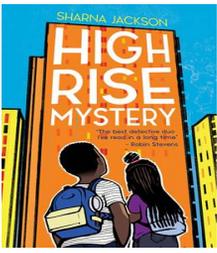
I store the documents online so we can access and update them on our phones – and on our almost-obsolete computer.

Where we go, they go. If we know, there are notes. The files – in this format and configuration – have been active for eleven months.

I won't ever stop updating them. Not now there is a real case, with a very real body. A body that belonged to someone I cared about.

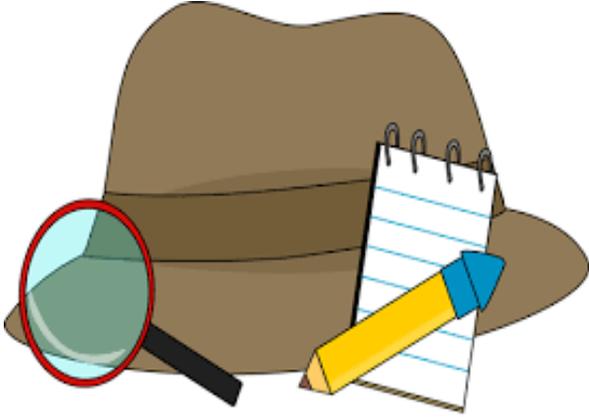
Now now they're actually important. Now now we need to find who did this to Hugo. And why.

I told Norva this document would come in useful one day.



Extract from *High-Rise Mystery*

Detective Duty



Pretend you are a detective helping out with the murder at The Tri. Complete the profile of what you have learned so far and then predict what you think may have happened.

Who is the victim:

What happened:

Where did the murder occur:

When did it happen:

Why did it happen:

How did it happen:



Eleven-year-old Zach has magical powers...he just hasn't found them yet.

But when he starts at a regular secondary school with 'normal' children, his powers are unlocked and a bit of magic leads to him going viral on YouTube.

It attracts the attention of Rachel, the loveliest girl at school, but with everyone wondering how he does his tricks, and mean girl Tricia plotting a major prank to bring him down, Zach's got his work cut out to keep his secret and survive Year Seven!



Extract from *My Magical Life*

“Just one more try, please?”

Zach King sat on a swivel chair, hunched over a counter full of seemingly ordinary household objects – a light up yo-yo, an old umbrella, a twenty-four-foot tape measure, a pair of fuzzy dice, and a snow globe from San Francisco. One of these, Zach felt sure, had to be his magical object. He pushed his black hair out of his eyes and looked up at his teacher, who also happened to be his dad. They were in the basement of his home. The Kings lived at the end of a private road, down a long, overgrown gravel driveway, in an ordinary-looking white and red farmhouse. Their home wasn’t hidden, per se, but you definitely had to know where to look if you wanted to find it.

Zach’s parents had converted the downstairs into a classroom for Zach and his younger sister, Sophie. They were both homeschooled, because their family wasn’t like most other families – and Zach and Sophie weren’t supposed to grow up to be like the other kids. The Kings were magic. Their entire family – from both of Zach’s parents to his aunts, uncles, cousins and nephews. Everyone was magical, it seemed, except for Zach. He was already eleven, and try as he might, day after day after day, he had yet to find his magical thing, the object that would unlock his magic abilities.

Zach looked out the sliding-glass window, which offered a view of their backyard. He saw his mother setting up picnic tables for tomorrow’s big family reunion. Zach was absolutely determined to figure out what his magic was before his whole extended family arrived.

“I don’t know.” Mr. King glanced at his old-fashioned wristwatch, a bronze timepiece with a faded engraving of an eagle in the center. It was his father’s magic object. He could use that wristwatch to turn back time. “Maybe we should call it a day. I promised your mother that I’d help her get ready for the party tomorrow.”

“C’mon, Dad,” Zach pleaded. “One more try, that’s all I’m asking for.”

“All right,” Mr. King said, giving in. “I suppose I can make time for one more go.”



Extract from *My Magical Life*

Mr. King furrowed his brows and slowly gave his watch dial a turn. Zach felt that familiar static-like tingle as he noticed the clouds outside reverse course and roll back past the sun. The glass of juice that Zach had just drunk filled back up. The apple he'd snacked on became magically whole again. The digital display on the entertainment center started counting backward, while the hands on an antique cuckoo clock turned *counter* clockwise. A carved wooden cuckoo bird flapped backward above Zach's head before returning to its house-shaped clock. And like that, Zach and his Dad had a few extra minutes to find Zach's magic.

He focused his attention on a shiny silver flashlight and lifted it out of the box like he was picking up a sharpened sword.

"This is it," he said hopefully. "I know it!"

"Maybe," Mr. King said. "Give it a shot."

Zach took a deep breath and switched on the flashlight. He swept the beam over everything in sight, waiting for something *amazing* to happen. He had no idea what exactly he was hoping the flashlight could do, but it *had* to have some sort of magical power. It had to!

Zach gripped it tightly in both hands. He focused all his energy out of himself and into it, just like his parents had taught him to do. He imagined the flashlight cutting through solid objects like a laser blade and then having X-ray powers. He wanted it so badly to work, but it didn't. The flashlight was just a flashlight. It just lit things up.

"Oh well," Mr. King. "It was worth a try."

"No, wait!" Zach gripped the flashlight even tighter; his hands were starting to hurt.

"Give it time..."

The flashlight's beam landed on a vacuum cleaner resting in a corner. All at once, the vacuum roared to life.



Extract from *My Magical Life*

The vacuum started zooming around the room by itself, its headlights glowing like cat's eyes. Zach dropped the flashlight.

"Yes!" Zach exclaimed. "I knew it! Look at it go!"

The Vacuum was a deluxe model built by one of Zach's uncles, who was something of a mad-scientist magician. It was way more powerful than the average vacuum. It had been built to clean up even the most dangerous of magical messes. But it had never operated by itself before.

I'm doing this, Zach thought. *By magic!*

"Are you seeing this?" he asked his dad.

"Uh-huh," Mr. King said.

Waving the flashlight like a wand, Zach tried to control the self-propelled vacuum cleaner, but he hadn't yet gotten control of his new powers, he guessed. The machine came charging at him, sucking up dirt and dust and potato-chip crumbs from the carpet as though it was starving.

"Halt! Stop! Whoa!"

"I can't stop it," he heard his sister yell.

"What the...," Zach yelled as he backpedaled and then tripped over his own two feet. The vacuum rammed into him, catching the hem of his pants legs and sucking them right off him. Zach was suddenly on the ground, on his back, in his underwear.

The vacuum cleaner choked and sputtered as the pants got stuck in its suction. It juttered and then shut down with an exhausted sigh and a cloudy dust burp.

"Sophie," Mr. King said firmly. "That's enough."



Extract from *My Magical Life*

“What?” Zach said as his little sister appeared out of nowhere, standing behind the vacuum. Sophie was only nine and barely half Zach’s height, but she’d already found her magic. A pair of hot-pink eyeglasses allowed her to be invisible whenever she wanted to.

“Sorry,” she said. “I lost control.”

Zach’s heart sank as he realized that Sophie has been operating the vacuum all along.

The flashlight was just a flashlight, and Zach was still just an ordinary kid.

“You shouldn’t play tricks on Zack like that,” Mr. King scolded Sophie.

“I was just trying to help,” she insisted. “I thought that if he had a little more confidence, it’d help him find his magic.”

“Thanks,” Zach said grumpily, “but I don’t need your help. I’m going to find my magic soon. I can feel it.”

“I know you will, big bro,” she said, rubbing his shoulder. “Don’t give up.”

“Thanks,” Zach said again. He loved his sister. She always meant well and he knew she was always looking out for him, but sometimes Zach wondered who really was the big sibling in the family.

“Daddy,” she said as her father wrenched Zach’s pans free, “if you have to go help Mom get ready for the reunion, I can stay and work more with Zach.”

“I’m good,” Zach said, frowning. “I think I need a break from everyone’s help.” He tossed the useless flashlight in with the other discards.

“I’m sorry, son.” Mr. King patted Zach on the back. “We’ll practice again after the reunion. You just need to be patient.”



Extract from *My Magical Life*

Easy for you to say, Zach thought. Most Kings found their magic when they were little kids. It'd been a long time since anyone in their family had been as old as Zach and still had nothing.

He couldn't help but wonder if he'd ever find his own magic... or if it wasn't already too late for him.



Extract from *My Magical Life*

Critic's Corner

This extract was about

My favourite character so far is

Predictions for the novel:

My personal rating of this extract:

