



# THE YOUNG MAGICIANS

AND THE  
THIEVES' ALMANAC

RESOURCE PACK

Hilarious  
mystery-adventure  
from rising star  
comedian



## NICK MOHAMMED



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# THE YOUNG MAGICIANS AND THE THIEVES' ALMANAC



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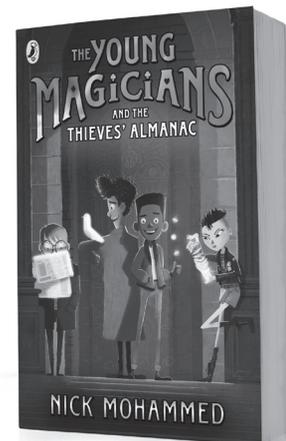
## LETTER TO TEACHERS

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### Dear Teachers,

Thank you for downloading these *Young Magicians* lesson plans. *The Young Magicians and the Thieves' Almanac* is a hilarious KS2 mystery-adventure, and the debut novel by rising star comedian, actor and real-life magician Nick Mohammed. The story takes readers behind the scenes of the shadowy, world-famous Magic Circle HQ, and is packed full of **mystery, magic, intrigue** and **adventure**. It's the perfect book to draw in reluctant readers, as well as a great class read.

The lesson plans in this pack offer ideas and activities that will encourage your class to think and learn about creative and persuasive writing, as well as building characters and settings.



### LESSON OBJECTIVES:

- To provide focused opportunities to discuss texts
- To encourage an imaginative response to what is read
- To encourage participation in performance and improvisation
- To develop pupils' own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or event
- To plan together and discuss ways forward in given tasks.





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## LESSON 1: CREATING A YOUNG MAGICIAN

### OBJECTIVES:

- To interpret the visual messages of illustrations
- To write in an appropriate form
- To predict what might happen from details stated and implied

### Task A

Inform the class that this is an introductory discussion session prior to them reading a great mystery-adventure novel centred around four young magicians.

Highlight that due to increased coverage on TV and in films, there has been a recent explosion in the popularity of magic, tricks and illusions, and that this genre appeals to both boys and girls.

Magicians range from close-hand street artists to grand stage performers. Magicians don't always wear a top hat, cape and white gloves, and girls certainly aren't restricted to being magicians' assistants!

- Invite pupils to relate any experience they have had of magic performances that they have seen or been involved in.
- Introduce the below illustration of the four young magicians who are the main characters in Nick Mohammed's dramatic novel *The Young Magicians and the Thieves' Almanac*
- Invite the whole class to brainstorm their **speculations** on things they might detect from **the clothes, the stance** and **the facial expression** of the individual characters, **all of whom have a great passion for magic.**

A few additional questions that could be asked:

- ★ Do any of the characters look like they would be good at guarding their magical secrets? Why do you think this?
- ★ Who strikes you as being a serious planner of tricks? Why do you think this?
- ★ Who do you think would be the most energetic performer? Why do you think this?

(Show illustration below on Interactive White Board, or hold it up for the class to see.)





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**Sophie**

**Johnny**

**Zack**

**Alex**



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## LESSON 1: CREATING A YOUNG MAGICIAN

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### Task B

Provide plain A4 paper for each pupil.

### Homework

Ask pupils to draw or construct a collage of a young magician they have created and label any interesting features, for instance hidden props, master of sleight of hand, or rule breaker.

At the bottom of the page each pupil should bullet point responses to the following three questions:

- How did your young magician get into magic?
- What is his/her specialist skill?
- What are his/her likes and dislikes?

### Task C

Tell pupils that in the early part of the novel (which they will shortly read) the four young magicians make their way to the Magic Circle headquarters for an induction week. The Magic Circle headquarters is 'a place of secrets, intrigue and utter wonderment' and 'was the place where a woman was first sawn in half (legally)'. (p.15)

### Writing Task – Through the blue door

Hand out the sheet below and ask pupils to work independently on a **short piece of descriptive writing (100 to 150 words)**. Tell them they are writing to capture the interest of other pupils in their class and to generate excitement.

Remind pupils of the importance of telling their readers what their character **sees, hears, feels and smells**.







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## LESSON 2: NEWSPAPER REPORTING

### OBJECTIVES:

- To discuss and evaluate the author's use of language
- For pupils to provide reasoned justifications for their views

### VAULTS OF BANK OF ENGLAND BROKEN INTO FOR FIRST TIME EVER! POLICE BAFFLED!

*Scotland Yard's Detective Inspector Caulfield completely and utterly BAFFLED!*



The baffled detective inspector has no idea how thieves managed to enter the Bank of England, but insists that he has everything under control.

DI Caulfield was alerted to the news this morning, when Governor of the Bank of England Hugh J'Account phoned Scotland Yard in a panic,





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apparently also 'completely baffled' as to how thieves had managed to penetrate the vast subterranean vaults and leave undetected with sackfuls of gold. This baffling news comes just days after Hugh J'Account was boasting about how no one has ever broken into the Bank of England vaults before and how it would be impossible for anyone to do so undetected. 'The worry is,'

commented DI Caulfield, 'that we have no idea how the thieves accomplished this. And that is obviously our main concern right now. However, I do have absolutely everything under control, despite being quite baffled.'

For more photos of DI Caulfield and Hugh J'Account standing in the empty vault and looking baffled, see below.



## Task A

Ask pupils to work with a partner and reread the above local newspaper article presented on pages 87-88 of the novel.

Ask pupils to discuss the topics below and be prepared to contribute to a whole class feedback session addressing all aspects of the task.

Encourage pupils to jot down brief reminder notes during their discussions.





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## ACTIVITY SHEET 2: NEWSPAPER REPORTING

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### Photos and Headlines

Think about the main focus of this news report. It tells us of a most extraordinary raid on one of the most powerful institutions in the country and the place where the most gold in the world is stored.

- If you were writing this article, wanting to make it as eye catching and dramatic as possible, would you make changes to the headline and accompanying pictures? What would your changes be?

### The writer's choice of words

- Which word dominates this entire newspaper article and why do you think the writer purposely overuses this word? You may come up with several reasons.

- Which phrase is also repeated, in this case to give reassurance to the 'Evening Standard' readers?





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- Do you agree that the description below creates a powerful image in the reader's mind? Are there any word/s that you think are particularly striking here?

*'... thieves had managed to penetrate the vast subterranean vaults and leave undetected with sackfuls of gold.'*

- Journalists always try to reveal the information below in any article they write. Are all of these covered in this article?

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- How?

- What is your response to the writer's choice of names for the men in power – **Detective Inspector Caulfield** and Governor of the Bank of England **Hugh J'Account**





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- Finally can you add a little more thrill to the article by changing up to eight words? Strike through the words you would like to change in a coloured pen, and write your replacement words in the space between the lines.

The baffled detective inspector has no idea how thieves managed to enter the Bank of England, but insists that he has everything under control. DI Caulfield was alerted to the news this morning, when Governor of the Bank of England Hugh J'Account phoned Scotland Yard in a panic, apparently also 'completely baffled' as to how thieves had managed to penetrate the vast subterranean vaults and leave undetected with sackfuls of gold. This baffling news comes just days after Hugh J'Account was boasting about how no one has ever broken into the Bank of England vaults before and how it would be impossible for anyone to do so undetected. 'The worry is,' commented DI Caulfield, 'that we have no idea how the thieves accomplished this. And that is obviously our main concern right now. However, I do have absolutely everything under control, despite being quite baffled.'





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## LESSON 3: A SENSE OF PLACE

### OBJECTIVES:

- To motivate and enhance reading
- To engage in interactive reading
- To participate in discussion and presentation
- To build ideas and challenge views

This task is focused on re-reading a considerable section of Chapter Nine (pages 104-118), where the amazing Magic Circle Library is revealed.

The following quotations could be shown on the class Interactive White Board as an introduction.

### On the threshold of the library . . .

*'Sophie shone the torch where Jonny was standing. In luxurious writing the word LIBRARY had been carved beautifully into the wood, filled in with striking gold leaf. And then, underneath - as if to deliberately undermine the ornate finish - someone had stuck a large laminated sheet of bright lilac card pedantically listing the opening times and guidelines on how to use the library's loan system. It goes without saying that at 7.20 on a Tuesday morning this library was very much CLOSED thank you.'*

### Upon further exploration of the library, the young magicians find . . .

*'Wires, pulleys, robotic staff and the threat of immediate expulsion and imminent death - now, that's what everyone wants from their local library!'*

### Task A

Following a re-read of this section of Chapter Nine:

- In pairs, ask pupils to time each other to see if they can **keep talking for a whole minute** about this unbelievable library.
- Then ask pairs to consider what they see as the **five key moments** in this section of the story.

To aid this task, use the outline below of notable events matched to relevant page references.





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Page	Event
105	First impression of a library unlike any ever seen before
107	Overlooking a vast cathedral-like room
108	Restricted section: this way!
109	A web of wires
110	Restricted section: you are here!
113	Encounter with a robot
114	Messages from the automaton
116	A trick question!
117	The mechanical arm points to the green cabinet

## Task B

- Ask students to join another pair and compare their chosen key moments. Ask pupils to then follow this with a negotiating session to establish an agreed five key moments between them.

## Task C

If time allows, this activity would benefit from developing over two or more lessons.

- Tell each group of four that they are to work towards a 5 minute class presentation of their key moments.

Their presentations could include:

- ★ A direct dramatic reading from the short sections they have chosen from the novel
  - ★ A striking retelling of the library description and events in their own words
  - ★ An introduction of sound effects if desired or the addition of suitable snatches of music
  - ★ A freeze frame drama or cardboard speech bubbles.
- Introduce the words and phrases below to encourage pupils to think about how they will link the five key points in their presentations.





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## Time passing words:

Minutes later . . .

Eventually . . .

Once they had caught  
their breath . . .

## More transitional phrases:

Moving forward . . .

Nothing prepared them for  
what followed . . .

Their next discovery was . . .

In complete surprise . . .





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## LESSON 4: TURNING THE NOVEL INTO A BOARD GAME

### OBJECTIVES:

- To reinforce understanding of the plot
- To focus on character and setting
- For pupils to communicate information, ideas and opinions effectively

After reading the whole novel, this task will need to take place over a number of lessons.

Throughout this task stress the **need for simplicity** – explain how easy it would be to become carried away with trying to construct a very complex board. Constantly remind pupils that the **main aim is to represent some events, settings and character actions from the novel**.

To keep the task controlled, **impose time restrictions on activities** when appropriate. E.g. *you have 10 minutes to write the five rules for your game.*

### Stages in the task:

1. Divide pupils into groups of four or five (aim to ensure all groups have at least one confident artist)
2. Investigate existing board games – see outline of lesson 1 below.
3. In individual groups, brainstorm possible ideas they would like to take from the games they encountered in the previous lesson.
4. Ask pupils to look at the 'Design Ideas' chart and the 'Additional Ideas' activity sheet (below) to stimulate their thinking on using the novel to feed into all aspects of the board game.
5. Give groups time to develop design ideas of their own.
6. Groups to complete their 'Young Magicians' game board.
7. Groups to write a simple set of rules for their game.
8. Groups to test out each other's games and offer feedback.
9. Boards to form a class display.





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## Investigating existing board games

### Prior to Lesson

To provide this lesson's resources, ask pupils to bring in board games from home. Try to ensure that there is a box of *'Snakes and Ladders'* in the selection – a good model of a simple, straightforward game.

Hand out B5 pieces of white card that pupils can bend in half to create a cardboard stand. These will be placed in the middle of each group's game to provide information when used in class.

Ask pupils to write these details on one half of the card:

Game title	Top 2 or 3 Rules	How the winner is decided	The best thing about the game
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### Classroom arrangement

Set up the classroom with six or more tables each offering a laid out board game and its card stand – try to ensure a good range if possible.

### Activity

In their given groups, pupils are allowed approximately ten minutes per table to consider the layout of the board and the outline of the rules and the fun it offers its players, before moving on to the next table.





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## ACTIVITY SHEET 3: CREATING A BOARD GAME

### What makes a winner?

- Arriving at the Palace and the end of the theft
- Becoming a member of the Magic Circle

### Movement on the board

- Sliding down banisters
- Moving down a zip wire

### Some Design Ideas

### Names for squares on the board

- Tree House
- Inside the safe
- Library
- Grand Theatre
- Buckingham Palace

### Pickup cards

#### Bonus Card

- Successful hypnosis of Henry
- Successful magic trick

#### Penalty Card

- Lost key to safe
- Caught spying in cupboard

### Additional Ideas

CHALLENGES: overcome hurdles/beat your opponents to the finish line/avoid pitfalls/get home before your rivals

LOCATIONS: circles/squares/rooms

MOVING AROUND THE BOARD: counters/characters/roll dice and land on certain squares/choose a room to visit

EXTRAS: game pieces/use of questions and answers cards/penalty cards/bonus cards/players props/keys

