

The Adventures of  
**Zoe & Alex**

The Disappearing River

Book 1

David Mittan and Gail Mittan

MakeThinkers

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ISBN: 1-946125-06-7

ISBN-13: 978-1-946125-06-4

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The more that you read, the more things you will know.

The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.

~Dr. Seuss~

# The MakeThinkers Method

Our books use three steps from our patent pending Read-Think-Do Method to help students unlock their natural creativity and critical thinking skills.

**Read** one of the ten exciting chapters in the story!

Each chapter is designed to take under 15 minutes to read.

**Think** through the challenges after each chapter!

The characters in the story need your help to solve the challenges in order to move on to the next chapter.

**Do** the creative activities at the end of each chapter!

After reading the chapter and completing the challenges it's now time to turn that creativity and critical thinking into action.

Repeat the steps until all ten chapters are complete.

Have fun doing the reading, challenges, and creative activities!

# Contents

1	The Wooden Box	1
2	The Sprites of Yellowfield	13
3	Crystal Clear Dew	23
4	Groks	35
5	The DoubleYews	47
6	Walking on Clouds	59
7	Grokland	71
8	The Chase	81
9	Wintermulligans	91
10	Home Sweet Home	101



## Chapter One

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### The Wooden Box



Zoe opened the curtains in the attic and a reflection from the corner of the room caught her eye.

“Alex, what's that?” she asked.

She pointed to a pile of dusty old maps. Alex carefully moved the maps aside and picked up a golden-colored wooden box. It was no bigger than a shoebox. There were bright blue shapes all over it—triangles, diamonds, big squares, and one little circle. They had never seen anything like it before. It was magnificent!

Zoe Flynn and Alex Everhart were best friends. They both lived on Harriet Street, in a quiet, small town near New York City, where you could always find them exploring—which led to many adventures in the parks, the beaches, and even their own backyards. They also shared a secret that no one else in the world knew.

During their summer vacation, something fantastic had happened; something that had changed their lives forever; something that had led them to spectacular new adventures.

Back in the attic, Zoe tried to open the wooden box. Nothing happened. Alex thought maybe he could twist it open. Still nothing! It just wouldn't budge.

“What’s wrong with this box? I can’t find any place to open it!” exclaimed Zoe in frustration.

They looked all over the box for a keyhole or an opening and found absolutely nothing. How strange! Determined to figure it out, Alex and Zoe kept looking, making sure to handle the wooden box carefully since they didn't want to damage it, or break whatever might be inside. Could you imagine figuring out how to open the golden-colored wooden box, only to find what was inside completely ruined?

As she continued to turn it over in her hands, the box reminded Zoe of an old family tale. She asked Alex if he knew the story about their great-grandmothers, Alice and Olivia, who were also best friends. Many, many years ago, they had found an unusual box in the woods just a few blocks from the house where Zoe's family still lived.

"Yes, I've heard that one. Wasn't it a make-believe story?" asked Alex curiously.

"I'm not sure," said Zoe, "but I think there was something magical in that box."

"Didn't they lose the box?" asked Alex.

"I really don't know, but I do remember my mom showing me an old photograph of Alice and Olivia holding a strange-looking box," replied Zoe.

She and Alex stood staring at their own box and thinking...

Was this the missing box? What was inside of it? How could they open it?

Alex and Zoe would be in for quite a surprise if they did manage to open the golden-colored wooden box. They had no idea, nor could they, that inside the box were one of a kind, extraordinary things called Sweaks, made by magical

creatures called the Sprites of Yellowfield. They also didn't know that the Sweaks had disappeared from the world almost 100 years ago!

All of a sudden, as Zoe and Alex stood thinking about their great-grandmothers, the attic window opened. They stepped back completely startled. As the wind blew through the trees outside, it sounded like mysterious voices singing. They were both puzzled by the sound.

Were they hearing things? They closed their eyes and listened again. This time, they paid closer attention to what they heard and realized: YES, they were right!

The sounds *were* voices, and they were singing the same words over and over again:

“Gently push me down. Half of me is a smile, the other half a frown.”

Zoe looked at Alex. “Did you hear that?” she asked.

“I did, but what does it mean?” wondered Alex

After thinking for a little bit, Zoe jumped up smiling. “The singing voices are trying to tell us how to open the box!”

“You're right!” said Alex, and he gave Zoe a high five.

# The Disappearing River

## Chapter One Challenge One

**Can you solve the riddle?**

“Gently push me down. Half of me is a smile, the other half a frown.”

**Answer the questions to help you solve the riddle.**

Can you list the shapes that were on the wooden box?

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What does a smile look like? Draw it.

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What does a frown look like? Draw it.

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The Disappearing River

What do you get when you put a smile and a frown together?

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**Now solve the riddle!**

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## Chapter One Challenge Two

Zoe and Alex were lucky to find a clue to open the wooden box.

How would you open the wooden box if you weren't given any clues?

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### Follow-up questions:

What different types of tools, devices or household items could you use to open the box?

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The Disappearing River

Would they damage the box? Explain your answer.

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What questions would you ask if you found this box and wanted to open it?

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## Chapter One Challenge Three

Write your own creative question and answer about the chapter!

Question:

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Answer:

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## Chapter One Creative Activity

Make a golden-colored box with a secret opening!

Once you have finished reading this adventure with Zoe and Alex, try and think about what else you would like to add to, or put inside, the box.

**There are more fun challenges and different creative activities on our website that your teacher can print out.**



## **Additional Adventures with Zoe & Alex**

Holes, Moles, Snails and Slime

Shell Shock

The Teeny Tinies

## **Other Series and Titles from MakeThinkers**

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Footprints

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# The MakeThinkers Team

## David Mittan

David was born in South Africa and he has lived in the US for almost 20 years. He is an avid cross-training fan, a voracious reader, loves learning new languages, and playing chess. David holds three degrees, including an MS from UT Austin and an MBA from MIT. He is a lifelong learner with interests in finance, human health, robotics and the future of education. He's also a highly experienced investor who enjoys solving complex problems. When he isn't busy sharing MakeThinkers with parents and educators across the world, David can be found spending time with his family, playing soccer with his two lovely daughters or strumming the guitar.

## Gail Mittan

Gail is a superb elementary school educator with over 40 years of dedicated experience. She uses this extensive background to ensure that all our content is designed to maximize one goal—to help children unlock their natural creativity and powerful critical thinking skills while having fun. When she isn't busy creating delightful content with David at MakeThinkers, Gail enjoys spending time with her six grandchildren in New Jersey and continues to teach. She is also passionate about competing in walking races, crossword puzzles and gourmet cooking.

## Sahngmie Lah Graven

After growing up in southern California, Sahngmie earned a B.A. in English from Harvard before promptly moving overseas to feed her love of teaching and travel. She lived in cities like Seoul, New York, Paris, and Shanghai, where she spent over a decade connecting with students, refining her craft, eating amazing food, and traveling every chance she got. In addition to her teaching experience, Sahngmie holds an M.A. in education from Columbia and remains passionate about both literature and education. When Sahngmie isn't busy using her global background in education to provide meticulous editing and superb content advisory at MakeThinkers, you can find her working as a freelance writer and editor in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she loves spending time with her husband and three children.