

## EDUCATOR GUIDE





## About the book

**Hunting ghosts and solving the case before checkout? ...All in a weekend's work.**

When JJ Jacobson convinced his mom to accept a surprise invitation to an all-expenses-paid weekend getaway at the illustrious Barclay Hotel, he never imagined that he'd find himself in the midst of a murder mystery. He thought he was in for a run-of-the-mill weekend ghost hunting at the most haunted spot in town, but when he arrives at the Barclay Hotel and his mother is blamed for the hotel owner's death, he realizes his weekend is going to be anything but ordinary.

Now, with the help of his new friends, Penny and Emma, JJ has to track down a killer, clear his mother's name, and maybe even meet a ghost or two along the way.

**The questions and activities are structured to meet Common Core Standards.**

Some questions may be harder for the lower grades, so consider answering the more complex questions together as a class.

Have fun, and thanks for reading!

**P.S.** This guide and class questions are written in Verdana font, in case (like JJ in the book) your students have trouble reading, as this font is proven in studies to help.



## A note from the author

Thank you for choosing to read *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel* with your class! I had so much fun writing the book, and I hope that translates as you're reading.

This book really started with my love for mysteries, a love that was born long ago when I was about JJ, Penny and Emma's age. I was a very avid reader, but without a YA section (there wasn't one at the time), I moved from kids' books to the grown-up section pretty quickly. At the recommendation of a librarian, I read *The ABC Murders* by Agatha Christie, and I've been hooked on mysteries ever since.

I wanted to write a mystery for kids that has some of the same ingredients of Agatha Christie's books: a good mystery, several suspects, and an interesting, closed-off setting. After visiting the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park (of the famous *The Shining* movie), I knew I had all the ingredients for a fun—and spooky—mystery for kids.

What made the journey even better was the passion from my editor Aneeka Kalia and everyone at Viking Children's to make the book the best it could be, and the illustrations from Xavier Bonet, which really brought the story to life. I'm really proud of this book, and hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it!

If your class has questions, or if you just want to talk books and mystery, contact me for a Skype or Zoom visit; more information is on my website:

[www.ftbradley.com](http://www.ftbradley.com)

All best in reading,

Fleur



## PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### What is a mystery?

*Midnight at the Barclay Hotel* is a mystery: the kid characters in the book are trying to solve the crime and find the killer.

#### Activities:

1. What do you know about mysteries? What ingredients does a mystery story usually have? Write down what you know.
2. Are there any words you would expect to find? Try brainstorming some of the terms you know as a class. Make a vocabulary list.

\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Craft and Structure RL. 5.4, 6.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L. 5.4, 6.4

### 2. Ghost stories

*Midnight at the Barclay Hotel* is also a spooky book: there are ghostly elements as part of the story, and JJ (one of the main kid characters) loves to go ghost hunting.

#### Activities:

1. Can you identify what ghostly elements might be in the book from looking at the cover? Write down what clues you see.
2. What makes something spooky? A dark room, strange noises? Discuss as a class what you think is scary, and what you think could be in the book.

\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 5.3a, 5.3b, 6.3a, 6.3b; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 5.4, 6.4





## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES WHILE READING

### 1. Character study

The first part of *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel* introduces us to all the characters—it even says: *Liars, Liars or, The Players*. We meet each of the characters as they receive their invitation to the Barclay Hotel, and we get to know them a little better.

#### Activities:

1. Choose one of the characters in the book, and create a character introduction. Add their name, physical description (as you can draw from the text or illustration), and character traits.
2. During your next classroom session, each student should introduce themselves to the teacher and class without mentioning the character's name. Can you guess who is speaking?

\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 5.3a, 5.3b, 6.3a, 6.3b; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 5.4, 6.4

### 2. Making A Character Cube

*Midnight at the Barclay Hotel* brings together three kid main characters: Penny, JJ and Emma. Each are introduced in Part I of the book.

#### Activities:

1. Choose one of the kids as your character to make a character cube. Write down five characteristics of your chosen character. Where did you find these in the text? Reference the book, and write the page number and passage next to each of your five characteristics.

2. Create a character cube by writing each of the characteristics on a side, and draw an illustration on the last side. You can use this link:

[http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/cube\\_creator/](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/cube_creator/)

**\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3**

### **3. Liar, Liar**

Each of the suspects (and even the three kids) has a secret. By the end, all secrets are revealed, and not just why one of the suspects killed Mr. Barclay.

#### **Activities:**

1. Write down each of the kids' and suspects' names. Can you find their secret mentioned in the text? Reference the page number and where you found the secret first mentioned.
2. When were their secrets revealed? Reference the text again.
3. Discuss with the class: is it okay to tell a lie? Can you say why, or why not? What do JJ, Penny, and Emma think?

**\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Craft and Structure RL. 5.6, 6.6; Key Ideas and Details RL. 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 5.4, 6.4**

### **4. The Barclay Hotel's Most Wanted**

In chapter 29, Penny, JJ and Emma create a suspect list. They add sticky notes with motives, to figure out who could have killed Mr. Barclay.

#### **Activities:**

1. Do you think you know who the murderer is? Create a Wanted poster, adding an illustration of the character, any characteristics, motive, and alibi (if any).



You can go to this link to create a Wanted poster: <https://www.tuxpi.com/photo-effects/wanted-poster>

2. Do you think JJ, Penny and Emma missed any clues? Add them to your own sticky notes, and add them to your Wanted poster.

3. Discuss with the class who could have committed the crime, and why. Talk about your prime suspect, and why you think that character is guilty.

**\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 5.1, 6.1; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 5.4, 6.4**

## **5. How is it all going to end?**

By the start of Part IV, the investigation is really heating up, and big revelations have been made. Take a moment to do these activities before reading the rest.

### **Activities:**

1. How do you think the story will unfold? Based on your Wanted poster and prediction of Mr. Barclay's killer, how will things play out? Write down, in a few sentences, how you think the story will end.

2. Are there parts early in the story that make you come to your conclusions about the ending? Find references in the text, and write them down.

3. Discuss with the class what you each think will happen next, and why.

4. Once the class is done reading *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel*, look back at these thoughts. Did anyone predict the ending, or who is guilty of the crime?

**\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards: Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 5.1; Craft and Structure RL. 6.5; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 5.4, 6.4**



## 6. Character Changes

By the end of *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel*, JJ, Emma and Penny have all changed. Each has learned something from their mystery solving, and each had a secret that was revealed.

### Activities:

1. Write down each of the three kids' names, and what they were like before the story began. Look back in the book, and reference the text. Did they have a secret, something they didn't feel they could share with anyone?
2. How did their secret get revealed? Reference the text.
3. How have JJ, Emma and Penny changed individually? Could they have told the truth sooner? How would that have made the story different?
4. Telling the truth is a big theme in *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel*. Discuss with the class what you think of the reasons that each of the kids didn't tell the truth.

**\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Craft and Structure RL. 5.6, 6.6; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 5.4, 6.4**

## 7. Sticky Notes Mystery Vocabulary

JJ has a hard time learning his sight words, and still has trouble reading sometimes. In *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel*, JJ and his mom use sticky notes to communicate with each other. As JJ, Penny and Emma go on to investigate, they learn some new terms and investigative techniques to solve the mystery.

### Activities:

1. Find words in the book that relate to mystery books, and investigating a crime. Are there any words you didn't know before reading the book? Check your pre-reading list.





2. Add the words to sticky notes, or write them down. Can you find their definition in the text?

3. JJ and his mom would take three words and turn them into a story, so JJ would remember their spelling. Can you take three words and use them in a sentence together?

4. Create a vocabulary bingo: on [http://www.technology.com/web\\_tools/materials/bingo/5/](http://www.technology.com/web_tools/materials/bingo/5/) by entering words in random order. You can print these boards and use them later for review.

**\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Craft and Structure RL. 5.4, 6.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L. 5.4, 6.4; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 5.4, 6.4**

## **8. Letter to the Author**

Did your class like *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel*? You can write a letter to the author! These activities are a great practice to write a standard letter and address an envelope.

### **Activities:**

1. Write a letter, including an introduction in paragraph one (where you tell the author about yourself and your class), any questions you may have, and comments about the book—what did you like? Was there anything you didn't like? Close with your name.
2. Share your letter with a fellow student, and revise where you think it's needed.
3. Print out the letters, and prepare to mail. Contact Fleur at [fleurbradley25@gmail.com](mailto:fleurbradley25@gmail.com) for an address. Show students how to address an envelope.

**\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing W. 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6**



## **9. Hotel Map**

The Barclay Hotel is a huge mansion, with many fun activities for kids. But it's also a confusing place, if you don't have a map...

### **Activities:**

1. If you were going to build a hotel, what fun stuff would you put in it? Make a list, and add drawings.
2. Build your own hotel! Make a map, and add drawings like in the book, where possible.
3. Who would visit your hotel? Can you imagine the stories that could take place?

**\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3.**

## **10. Barclay Hotel Travel Brochure**

In the epilogue at the end of the book, JJ, Penny and Emma are back at the Barclay Hotel. There's an invitation for all the kids in Aspen Springs to visit the hotel.

### **Activities:**

1. Make a list of all the fun places kids can visit inside the Barclay Hotel. Add things to do for the adults as well.
2. Create a travel brochure, using the information you gathered from the book. How would you entice people to visit the Barclay Hotel?

You can go to: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/travel-brochures-highlighting-setting-961.html>

**\*\*Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 5.3; Craft and Structure RL. 6.5; Writing: Text Types and Purposes.**



### **Extra Activities:**

1. Are there any haunted locations in your area? Make a list, and look for historical facts about your location (just like Penny did). Research the stories that are associated with these locations.
2. Can you disprove the evidence of haunted activity? Oftentimes, what looks like a haunting is just a shadow, or a trick of the eye. You don't have to be a sceptic like Penny to have a critical eye.
3. Visit historically significant places with the class, either in person or online; often, there are a lot of stories and lore surrounding these locations. Discuss the difference between historical fact and stories that may have gotten bigger over time.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fleur Bradley is the author of the (spooky) middle-grade mystery *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel* (Viking Children's), set in the fictional Barclay Hotel, inspired by the Stanley.

Her story *The Perfect Alibi* appeared in Mystery Writers of America's middle-grade anthology *Super Puzzletastic Mysteries*, edited by Chris Grabenstein (HarperCollins).

Fleur regularly does school and Skype visits, as well as librarian and educator conference talks on reaching reluctant readers. Originally from the Netherlands, she now lives in Colorado Springs with her husband and two daughters, and entirely too many cats.

**Find out more about Fleur Bradley**, and learn how you can invite her for a (virtual) author visit at [www.ftbradley.com](http://www.ftbradley.com)

**Email** Fleur: [fleurbradley25@gmail.com](mailto:fleurbradley25@gmail.com)

#### **About *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel*:**

"My kind of mystery! Quirky, fast paced, and full of fun!"

—**Chris Grabenstein**, *New York Times* bestselling author of the Mr. Lemoncello series.

"A madcap mystery that I couldn't put down!" —**Jennifer Chambliss Bertman**, *New York Times* bestselling author of the Book Scavenger series.

"Agatha Christie references abound, and the hotel setting shines. A quirky, kid-friendly introduction to the murder mystery." —**Kirkus** Reviews